



Department of
Veterans Affairs

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 31, 2012

New Education Benefit for Unemployed Veterans Has Strong Response *VA Outreach for Veterans Retraining Assistance Program Garneres Over 12,000 Applicants since May 15*

WASHINGTON – Within two weeks of being announced, a program to give skills training to some unemployed Veterans has garnered over 12,000 online applications, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

“VA is committed to supporting Veterans as they seek employment. This initiative will help provide education and training so that Veterans have an opportunity to find meaningful employment in a high-demand field,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “We will continue to build on the success of our initial outreach efforts to Veterans.”

Called the Veteran Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), the program allows qualifying Veterans between the ages of 35 and 60 to receive up to 12 months of education assistance. Maximum payments are equal to the full-time rate for the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty, currently \$1,473 monthly.

Under VRAP, Veterans apply on a first-come, first-served basis for programs that begin on or after July 1. VA began accepting applications on May 15. Forty-five thousand Veterans can participate during the current fiscal year, and up to 54,000 may participate during the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 2012.

The goal of the program is to train 99,000 Veterans for high-demand jobs over the next two years.

To qualify Veterans must:

- Be 35 to 60 years old, unemployed on the day of application, and have been issued discharges under conditions other than dishonorable;
- Be enrolled in education or training after July 1, 2012, in a VA-approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school leading to an associate degree,

non-college degree or a certificate for a high-demand occupation as defined by the Department of Labor;

- Not be eligible for any other VA education benefit, such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the Montgomery GI Bill, or Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment;
 - Not have participated in a federal or state job training program within the last 180 days;
- and
- Not receive VA compensation at the 100 percent rate due to individual unemployability.

While the initial response has been encouraging, VA officials stress the need for a sustained effort to reach potential VRAP applicants.

“Besides the Veterans themselves, we are asking anyone who knows of an unemployed Veteran to help us get the word out so everyone can take advantage of this new benefit,” said Curtis Coy, VA’s deputy undersecretary for economic opportunity. “With the help of our Veterans community and our partners in the Department of Labor, we hope to reach as many eligible Veterans as possible.”

In addition to its national outreach campaign, VA will seek out potential VRAP-qualified Veterans through online applications and at the National Veterans Small Business Conference being held in Detroit June 26-28. During 2012, VA representatives will also provide VRAP information and assistance at hiring fairs sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce through the Hiring Our Heroes campaign.

For more information on the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) program, the Hire Heroes Act of 2011, VRAP, high demand occupations, and application procedures, visit the website at www.benefits.va.gov/VOW, or call VA National Call Center toll free at 1-800-827-1000.

Veterans may also access the VRAP application online at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov> through eBenefits, a joint project between VA and the Department of Defense.

Veterans are also encouraged to visit the nearly 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers across the nation for assistance from staff, Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives (LVERS), and Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists. Center locations are listed at www.servicelocator.org.

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