

# VA

# Veterans Benefits Administration Education Service

## **2021 AVECO Conference**

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Veterans Benefits Administration

July 27, 2021



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# Agenda

**01** **GI Bill Future State**

**02** **Digital GI Bill**

**03** **The Isakson–Roe Act**

**04** **Compliance Surveys/Outcome Measures**

**05** **VRRAP**

**06** **Round Out Policy Change**

**07** **Communication Campaigns**

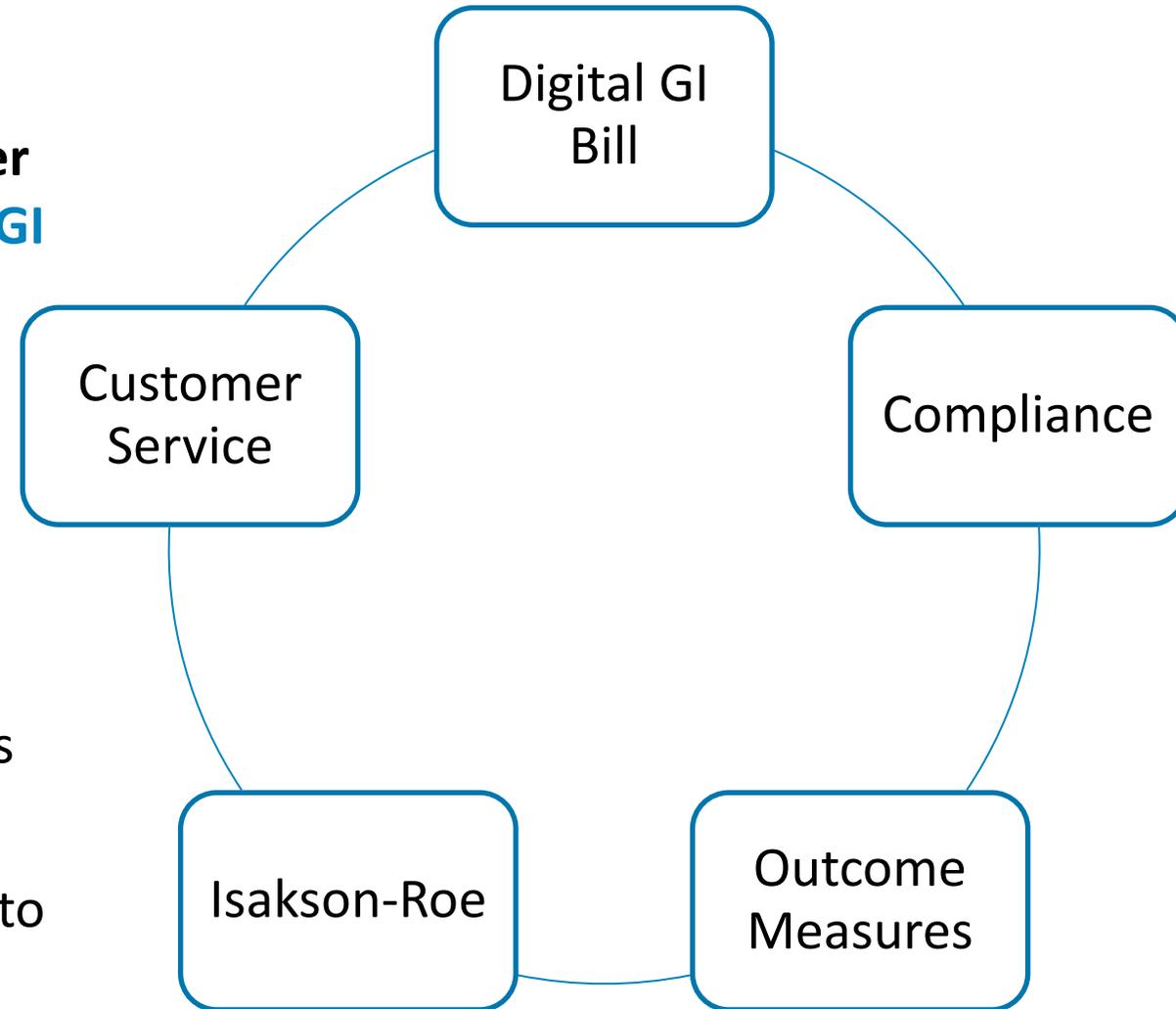
**08** **Resources**



# Transformational Change

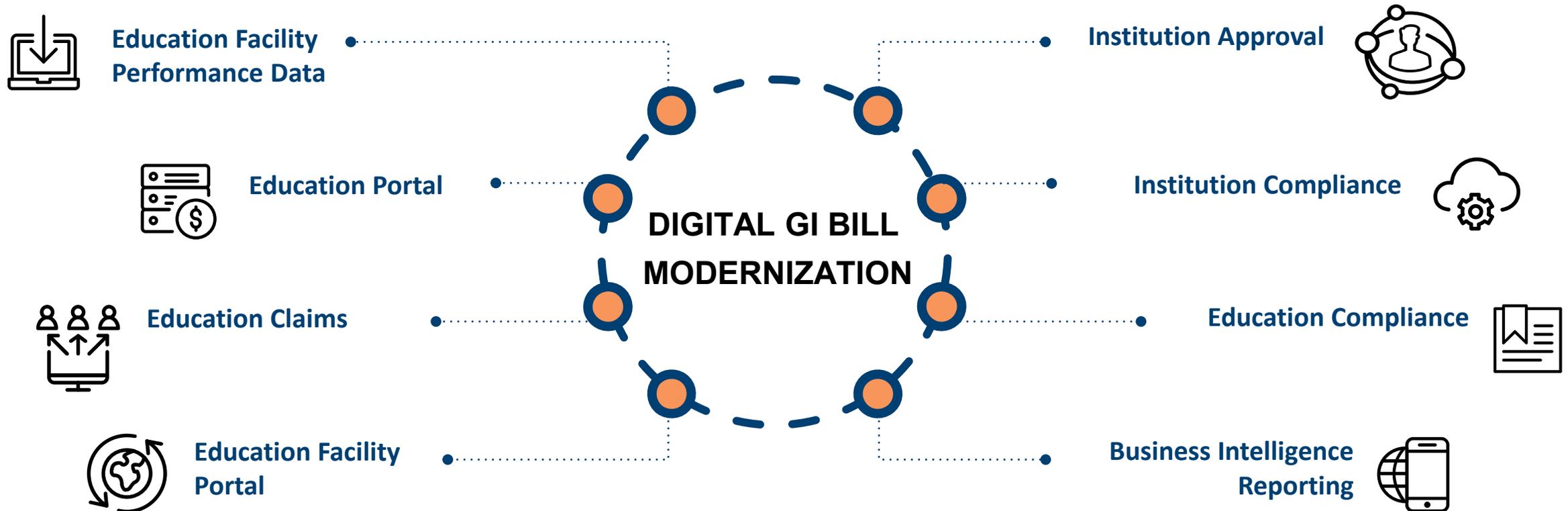
Education Service is creating ongoing transformational change to:

- **Modernize** and **create** world-class GI Bill customer service and benefit claim service through **Digital GI Bill**
- **Develop** end-to-end systems integration and business intelligence tools
- **Improve** benefit delivery through **outcome measures** and **feedback**
- **Expand** resources, communications, electronic outreach and intake tools to support beneficiaries
- **Strengthen** compliance and oversight activities
- **Support** new legislative requirements and **adapt** to policy changes



# Digital GI Bill Overview

**Digital GI Bill (DGIB)** is a modernized digital platform that will transform VA technology systems, improve GI Bill students' user experience, and optimize benefits processes for millions of beneficiaries. This platform will be a single interface across the education ecosystem.



# Vision for the Future

GI Bill benefit claim services and customer service functions will modernize through:

Benefits  
Portal

Real-Time  
Statuses

Claims  
Processing

Streamlined  
Payments



Improved  
Customer Service



- ✓ Timely and accurate delivery of payments
- ✓ Real-time eligibility and benefit information

End-to-End  
Management



- ✓ Ensure proper compliance of GI Bill programs, and the use of data
- ✓ Monitor and measure school and student outcomes

Electronic  
Outreach



- ✓ Engage with VA through call, email, text
- ✓ Chat for real-time service

Legislative  
Compliance



- ✓ Support new policy requirements
- ✓ Keep up with ever-evolving academic and job market changes



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# Digital GI Bill | Focus Groups

- The DGIB team conducted focus groups with different stakeholder groups to understand their user experience and develop stakeholder journey maps.
- Journey maps will be leveraged to inform training and communications efforts.

## MAJOR THEMES

- **Personalized communications** are preferred by GI Bill beneficiaries
- **Digital communications** with email, app and text as preferred methods
- **Self-sufficiency** to allow users to learn about a new system on their own time at their own pace.

*"I prefer personalized emails, so I know it's not spam. I don't care what VA is doing [if it doesn't relate to me]."*

## POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

- **Segmented communications** based on the stakeholder, so students receive information on topics that affect them
- **Developing** opportunities to push communications via text and/or an app
- **Producing videos and step-by-step guides along with setup wizards** allowing student to have self-learning opportunities.

*"I'm more interested in hearing how changes would affect my benefits."*

## STAKEHOLDER SESSIONS



Education Call Center (ECC)



GI Bill Beneficiaries



Veteran Claims Examiners (VCEs)



Chief Education Liaison Officers (CELOs) & Supervisory Compliance and Liaison Specialists (SCLS)



School Certifying Officials (SCOs)



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# Digital GI Bill | Current Development

Development priorities as part of DGIB Program Increment 2 are:

01

## Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) Enrollment Verification

With NCD enrollment verification kicking off this summer, the team will focus on planning the expansion and performing load testing so enrollment verification can be rolled out for all Post-9/11 GI Bill students in the coming months.

02

## Original Claims Automation (Intake)

Full and partial automation of original claims will improve processing times, providing faster eligibility and entitlement adjudication so beneficiaries can focus on starting their education journey.

03

## Increase Automation of Supplemental Claims

Implementing new User Interfaces and Services will enable direct integration and near real-time processing of enrollments, allowing beneficiaries to focus on classes with the confidence their tuition, fees and MHA are being processed quickly.

04

## Human Centered Design (HCD) Wireframes & User Testing

HCD Wireframes and user testing of prototypes for My Education Benefits Original Claims Application, Enrollment Manager, Institution Manager

05

## Training, Communications, Analytics

Improving user adoption through a comprehensive training strategy, consistent communications and improved analytics



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# Compliance Surveys/Outcome Measures

## COMPLIANCE SURVEYS

- Education Service has a statutory requirement to conduct compliance surveys at Education and Training Institutions.
- The compliance survey identifies deficiencies and violations to ensure the integrity of GI Bill® benefits.
- Compliance surveys are conducted by VA and State Approving Agency (SAA) personnel.
- A contract was recently awarded through a service-disabled Veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB) set-aside to provide more capacity for these surveys.

## OUTCOME MEASURES

- Education Service (EDU) is seeking to improve its data and reporting capabilities to better support GI Bill® student outcome measures.
- This data and reporting will be used to inform guidance for beneficiaries and help them make more informed decisions about their educational path so they can get the best return on investment (ROI) for their GI Bill benefits.
- ROI will be measured by indicators like civilian workforce success, income, disability and homelessness status, non-reliance on public assistance, educational attainment, and student debt and default rates.
- Contract proposals are being reviewed and an award will be made by August.



# Isakson & Roe Improvement Act 2020

Public Law 116-135 was signed into law January 5, 2021

*Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020*



- Transformative effect on Education Service
  - Mission: Expand EDU's ability to provide ready access to, and timely and accurate delivery of, education benefits to Veterans, service members, and their families
  - Vision: Further enable Education Service to empower GI Bill beneficiaries to achieve their vocational and career goals



- Over 30 provisions that impact the administration/oversight of GI Bill benefits
  - New requirements for enrollment verification
  - Expanded restoration of entitlement opportunities
  - Sunsetting of the Montgomery GI Bill
  - Substantial changes to VA oversight of GI Bill approved schools



- Education Service is working to implement provisions timely and efficiently
  - 15 “date of enactment” provisions have already been implemented
  - 8 more provisions were implemented June 30, 2021
  - 5 more provisions will be implemented August 1, 2021



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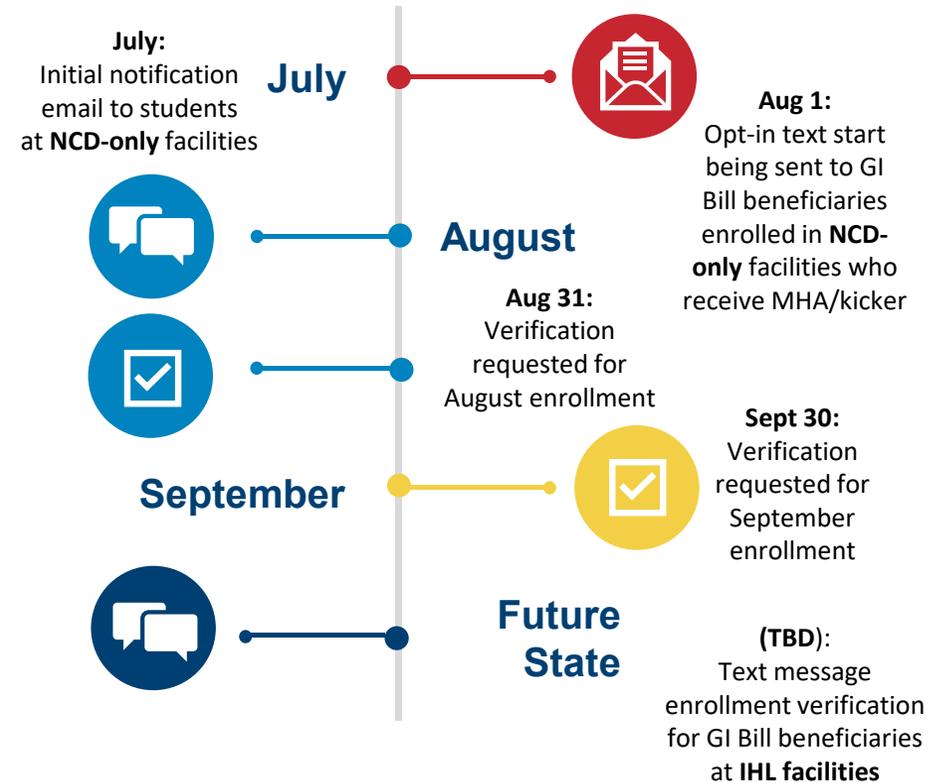


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# Enrollment Verification

## Verification of enrollment to receive Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits

- Beginning August 1, 2021, Post-9/11 GI Bill students enrolled in NCD facilities receiving their Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) and/or kicker payments must verify their enrollment each month.
- This requirement will expand to students at Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) in the coming months.



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# Enrollment Verification

NCD students will be able to verify their enrollment status in one of two ways:



## Text Messaging

Students who select VA's "opt-in" feature will receive a text message each month prompting them to verify their enrollment status.



## Phone

Students may call the Education Call Center (ECC) at [888-442-4551](tel:888-442-4551) to verify their enrollment status.

How MHA payments are impacted by this process:



Students who confirm their enrollment status hasn't changed will have their **MHA payments released as usual.**



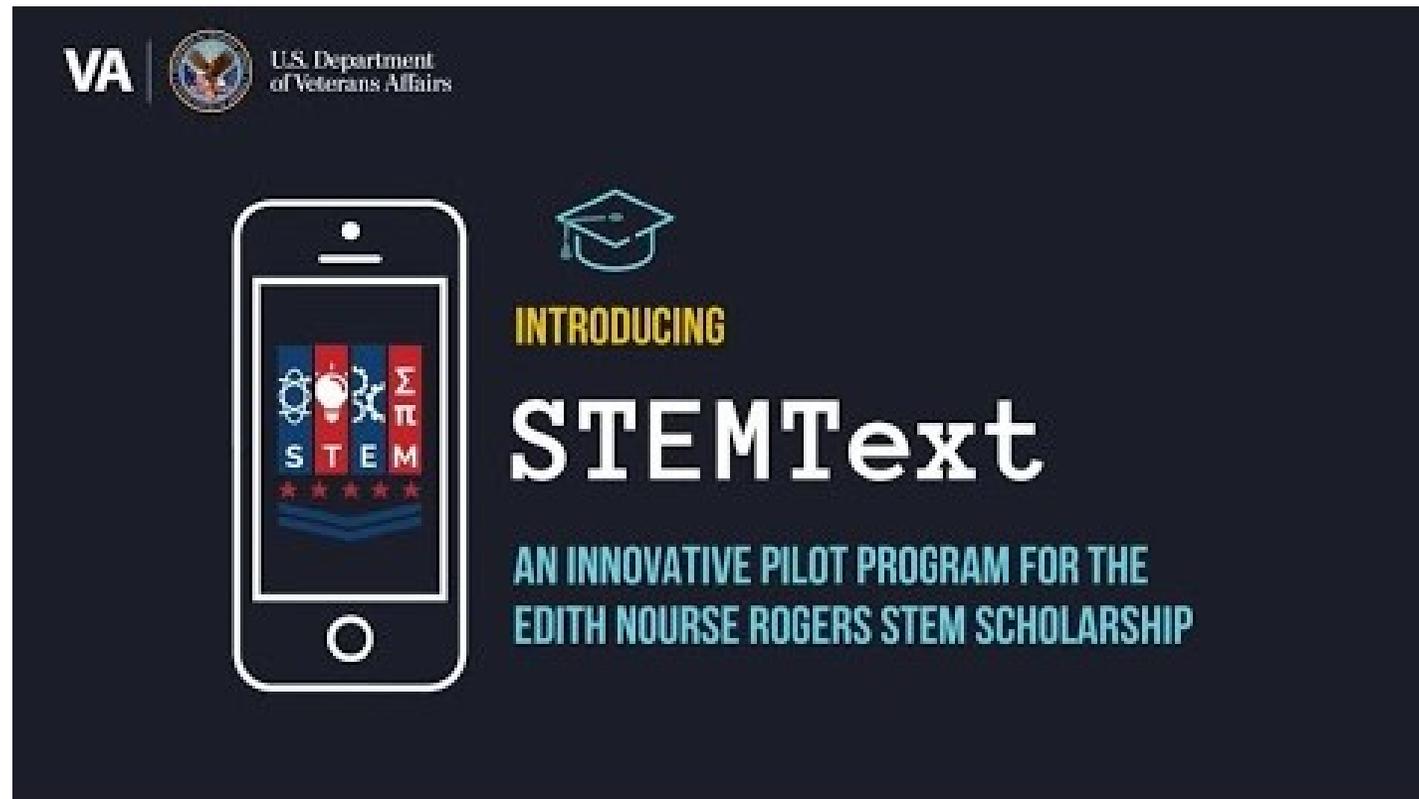
Students who report a change in enrollment will have **MHA payments held** until updated information is received from the SCO.

**If a student fails to verify enrollment for two consecutive months, VA will withhold future MHA payments until they call the ECC to verify.**



# STEMText

GI Bill students told us that they wanted to hear from us via text messages.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diBCc8lQcis>

# Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program

The [Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program](#) (VRRAP), enacted on March 11, 2021, is part of the American Rescue Plan. VRRAP is part of VA's continued effort to support Veterans seeking retraining and economic opportunities in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

VA in partnership with the Department of Labor published a list of [high-demand occupations](#). The list includes healthcare, education, media, engineering, and high-tech opportunities



- [Eligible Veterans](#) receive up to 12 months of tuition & fees and a monthly housing allowance based on Post-9/11 GI Bill rates



- To be eligible for VRRAP, a Veteran must meet the following criteria:
  - ✓ At least 22 years of age and less than 67 years of age
  - ✓ Unemployed due to COVID-19 pandemic
  - ✓ Not eligible for GI Bill or VR&E benefits



- Limited to a maximum of 17,250 participants and up to \$386 million
  - ✓ Received 6,432 Veteran Applications
  - ✓ 3,884 Veterans have been issued Certificates of Eligibility
  - ✓ 1,292 enrollment certifications with \$8.7 million obligated
  - ✓ 625 [educational institutions](#) have been approved



# Round Out Policy Change

- New policy, effective August 1, 2021:
  - “Round out” practice will continue but in a focused manner
  - Old round out rule allowed student to choose any class regardless of its compatibility with the student’s program of education
  - Now round out courses must be associated with the student’s program of education
  - Round out courses will be limited to those that, even though not required for the specific beneficiary to graduate, are included within the beneficiary’s program of education and would count toward an enrolled individual’s graduation requirements for such program
  - Round out classes must be specified by name in the approved program curriculum from which the student is graduating



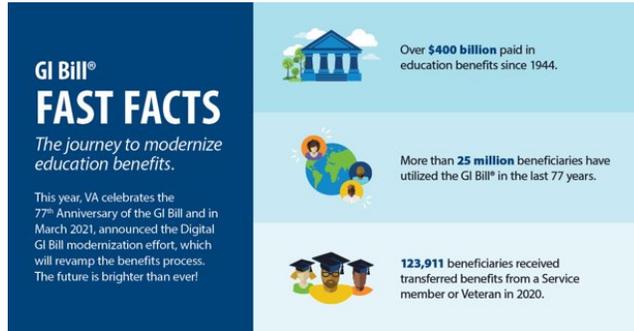
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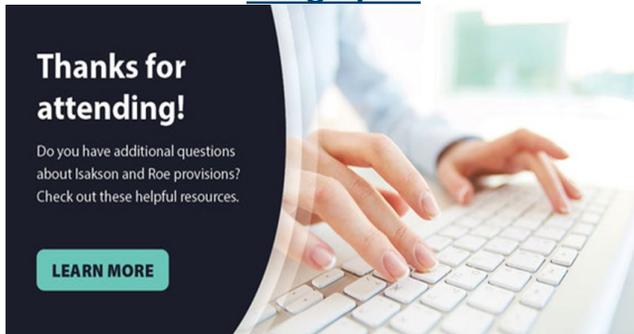


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# Communication Campaigns



[GI Bill 77th Anniversary: Fast Facts Infographic](#)



[Isakson and Roe Office Hours with SCOs](#)



[Digital GI Bill Introduction](#)



[Satellite Media Tour June 2021](#)



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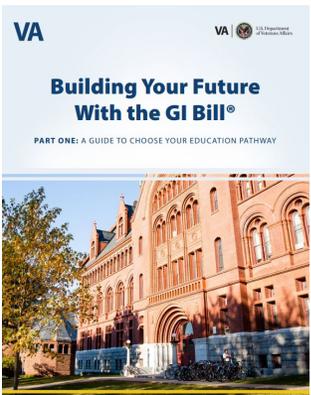
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# Student Resources

## Building Your Future With the GI Bill®



This series assist GI Bill® students in navigating their education pathways, using benefits and finding employment:

[Part One: A Guide to Choose Your Education Pathway](#)

[Part Two: A Guide to Understanding Your Benefits](#)

[Part Three: A Guide to Navigating your Career](#)



[VET TEC Postcard](#)



[STEM Postcard](#)



[Test Proration Postcard](#)

## Dedicated Phone Line for Survivors



A child or surviving spouse can contact the Education Call Center at 1-888-442-4551 and select Option 5. A highly trained agent will be ready to assist the caller with their education benefits or survivor-related resources.

Agents will be available M-F from 7am-5pm CST

Note: All resources listed on this slide are clickable to their appropriate page.

## Stay up to date on GI Bill® benefits



@[GIBillEducation](#)



@[VAVetBenefits](#)



[Website](#)

[www.benefits.va.gov/gibill](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill)



[Ask a Question](#)

<https://gibill.custhelp.va.gov>



[Education Call Center](#)

1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551). For students outside the U.S., call 001-918-781-5678



[GI Bill Feedback System](#)

<https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/Feedback.asp>



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# School Administrator Resources

## SCO Ratio



Received direct feedback from constituents and created a ratio recommendation of one full-time School Certifying Official (SCO) to every 200 GI Bill students

## COVID-19 Website Updates



[COVID-19 Student Frequently Ask Questions](#)



[COVID-19 Paperless Guidance](#)



[COVID-19 School Certifying Officials Frequently Ask Questions](#)

## Stay up to date on GI Bill benefits



[@GIBillEducation](#)



[@VAVetBenefits](#)



[School Resource Page](#)



[SCO Training](#)



[FAQs](#)



[School Certifying Official's Handbook](#)

Note: All resources listed on this slide are clickable to their appropriate page.



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# Questions

