



# Veterans Benefits Administration

## Education Service

### AVECO 2019 Annual Conference

*Stephanie Price, Colmery Executive Officer &  
Schnell Carraway, Colmery Policy Lead  
Education Service, Veterans Benefits Administration  
July 2019*



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# Agenda

- **Education Service Highlights**
- **Colmery Act**
  - Highlights
  - VET TEC
  - STEM
  - Future changes
- **SCO Training Changes**
- **Legislative**
- **Section 107 & 501 Reset**
  - WEAMS Validation Project
  - Colmery Communications Initiative
- **Tools for Students**



# Education Service's Mission

## Mission

- To provide ready access to and timely & accurate delivery of education benefits to Veterans, Service members, and their families.
  - Effective and efficient claims processing
  - Creating the informed consumer
  - Protecting the integrity of GI Bill benefits

## Stakeholders

- Stakeholders and clients of the programs administered by Education Service include educational institutions, State Approving Agencies (SAA), Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), and other Federal and private sector partners

# Education Service Highlights

- Administers six educational benefits programs
- Processes approximately **4 million** claims each year
- Distributes **\$12B/year** to one million beneficiaries
- Average Days to Complete Education Claims
  - Original applications: 28 days
  - Enrollments (each academic term): 14 days
- Payment accuracy > **98%**
- Post 9/11 GI Bill by far the largest education benefit
  - Since inception (Aug 2009), **\$98.3B** to over 2 million trainees



# Harry W. Colmery Veterans Education Assistance Act

- Enhances and expands educational benefits for eligible Veterans and their dependents through several technical adjustments, calls for investment in IT systems, and fundamentally changes the way we view the GI Bill®
- Became known as the “Forever GI Bill” because of its most recognized feature – the removal of the 15-year time limitation for Veterans who transitioned out of the military after January 1, 2013, and eligible dependents to use their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits
- Thirty-Four Sections:
  - 29 of 34 Sections implemented on time



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# Colmery Act Highlights

## Eligibility Restoral for REAP Sunset

- Sent letter and election form to over 3,000
- Transferred 1,923 months to Chapter 33

## Restoration of Entitlement

- Applications Received: 4,223
- Restorations: 2,056
- Entitlement Restored: Over 16,000 months

## Independent Study at non-IHLs

- Information available on GI Bill Comparison Tool
- Offered at over 1,000 schools

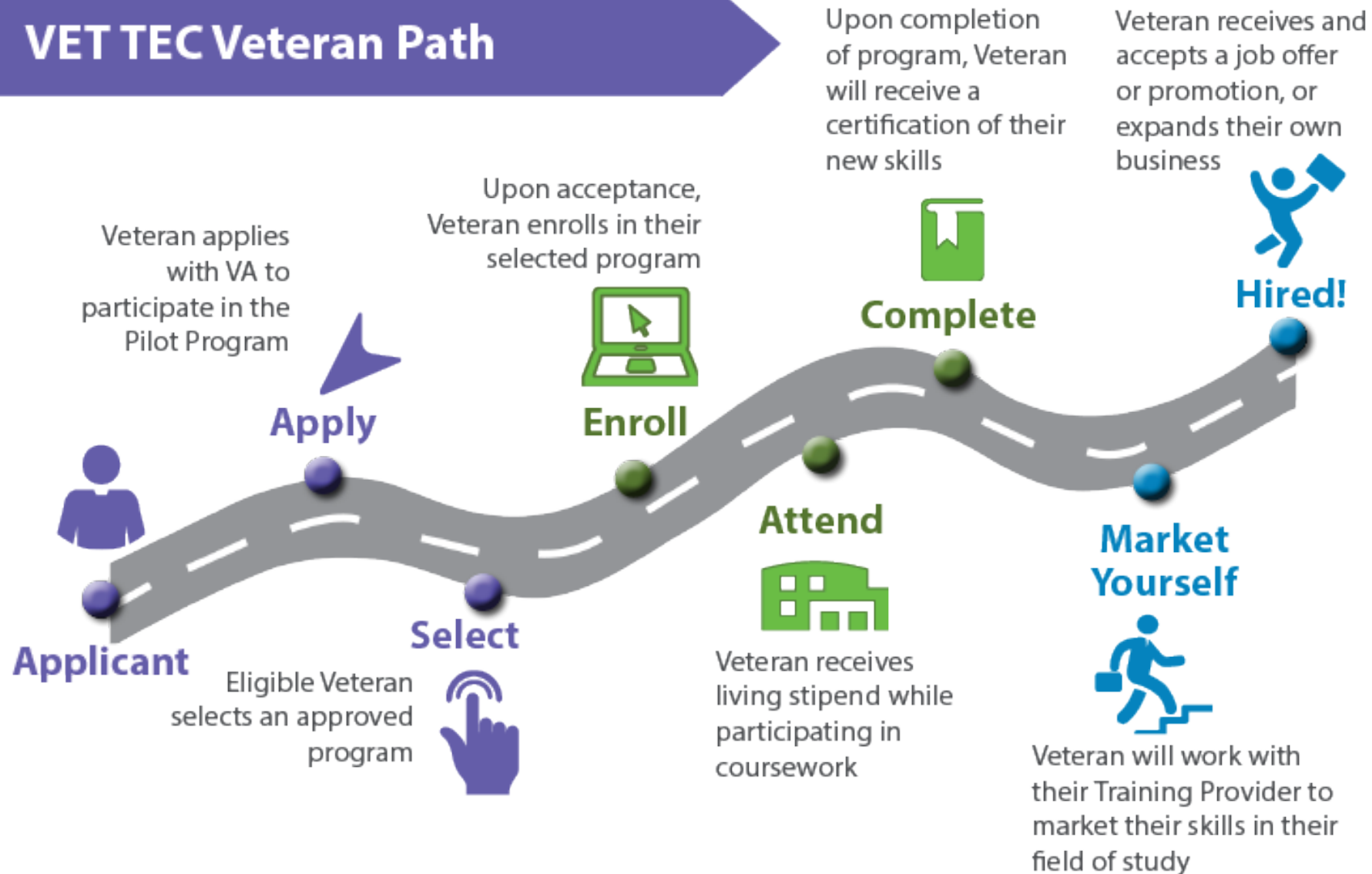
# Colmery Act Highlights - VET TEC



- Launched February 2019
  - 5-year pilot program for eligible Veterans to help them secure meaningful employment in the talent-hungry tech sector
  - \$15 million annual funding based on pay-for-success model
- Continuing to seek Training Providers
  - 5 Approved; 2 with Preference
- Veteran application (22-1999) available on VA.gov
  - Over 3,000 applications; First students enrolled in programs

# VET TEC - Veteran Path

## VET TEC Veteran Path



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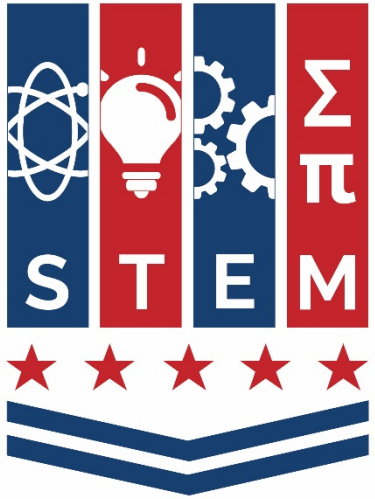
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# Rogers STEM Scholarship



- Up to nine extra months of benefits (may not exceed \$30,000) for Science/Technology/Engineering/Math Programs, if a student
  - Is currently enrolled in a STEM program requiring more than 128 semester (or 192 quarter) hours
  - Has completed 60 standard semester (or 90 quarter) hours
- Additional benefits can't be transferred to dependents
- Priority given to those entitled to 100% of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and to those who require the most credit hours

# Colmery Act – Future Changes

- **Consolidation of Benefit Levels (section 105)**
  - Eliminates the 40-percent benefit level and expands the 60-percent benefit level under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.
  - Effective August 1, 2020
- **Yellow Ribbon Extension to Active Duty Servicemembers (section 104)**
  - Active duty servicemembers eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program.
  - Effective August 1, 2022



# SCO Training Changes

- Training requirements must be met on an annual basis
- Training is available in 2 phases
- New SCOs must complete training on specific topics
- Existing SCOs will be required to complete a combination of training topics, of their choosing based on individual needs



**Note: SCOs who are not subject to training requirements (i.e. existing SCOs whose school has less than 20 VA eligible students enrolled) are welcome to take the training and will have access via the GI Bill Website for School Administrators**

# Legislative Update

## Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018

### Section 102

- Requires VA to provide beneficiaries with a document showing their monthly housing allowance rate; document must be available online

### Section 103

- Upon receiving a COE from a CH31 or CH33 student, a school must allow the student to attend class for up to 90 days while waiting for VA payments
- Schools may not charge penalties, late fees, or deny access to school facilities while waiting for VA payments; Schools that don't meet these criteria will be disapproved for all GI Bill benefits
- Additionally, VA shall take steps as may be necessary to ensure payments NLT 60 days from the date the school certifies tuition and fees, and must report semi annually on any claim over 60 days old



# Legislative Update - Continued

## Section 104

- Under section 103, schools can require the student to apply or take additional actions to receive the section 103 benefits
- VA will track which schools require additional actions for students under section 103
- Schools requiring additional actions will be identified on the comparison tool

## Section 105

- VA will calculate housing for VET TEC by the location of the campus where the individual attends a course
- This puts VET TEC under the same rules as chapter 33

# Colmery Act - Reset

## WEAMS Validation Project

Due to the reset of Section 107 of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, Public Law 115-48, as announced in November 2018, Education Service is required to identify extension campus locations. The extension campuses will be assigned a unique identifier to ensure Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) payments for Post 9/11 GI Bill students are accurately processed based on the campus location where the student physically takes the majority of his or her resident training.

As of June 27 –

- 95% of the states / territories are completed
- 4,662 Total Extension Campuses have been identified



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# Colmery Communication Initiative

VA will continue to host a series of additional roundtables leading up to December 1 Go-Live. Roundtables and Focus Groups held thus far include:

1

## FOREVER GI BILL STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLES

Topic: Forever GI Bill Section 107 and 501 Overview

### DATES

April 16, April 17, May 13

### ATTENDEES

Schools, VSOs, SAAs

2

## FOREVER GI BILL FOCUS GROUP

Topic: Forever GI Bill Section 107 and 501 Communications

### DATE

May 23

### ATTENDEES

Schools

3

## FOREVER GI BILL FOCUS GROUP

Topic: Retroactive Payments

### DATE

May 29

### ATTENDEES

Schools, VSOs

4

## FOREVER GI BILL STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE

Topic: Communications Toolkit Review

### DATE

June 19

### ATTENDEES

Schools, VSOs

5

## FOREVER GI BILL STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE

Topic: Top 10 Frequently Asked Questions

### DATE

June 26 & 27

### ATTENDEES

Schools, VSOs, SAAs

## Engagement Activities Overview



8

Stakeholder Roundtables



5

Focus Groups



500+

Total Attendees

*Interested in attending a future focus group? Email:*

[FOREVERGIBILL.VBAVACO@va.gov](mailto:FOREVERGIBILL.VBAVACO@va.gov)

# Tools for Students

- **GI Bill® Comparison Tool**
  - Find a school and determine GI Bill benefits while attending
  - Website: <https://www.va.gov/gi-bill-comparison-tool>
- **GI Bill® Feedback System**
  - Provides avenue for student complaints concerning non-compliant POE schools
  - Website: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/Feedback.asp>
- **Website:** [www.benefits.va.gov/gibill](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill)
  - Information on how to apply for education benefits
- **Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/gibillEducation](https://www.facebook.com/gibillEducation)
  - Provides a forum for EDU information updates to over 105K followers
- **Education Call Center** – 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4552)



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# Focus Group: Forever GI Bill Sections 107 & 501



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# Agenda

**01** PURPOSE AND  
OUTCOMES

**03** VIRTUAL OPEN  
FORUM

**02** WHAT TO  
KNOW:  
SECTION 107 &  
501

**04** NEXT STEPS



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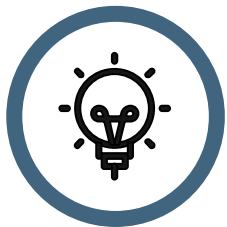
# Purpose and Outcomes

## PURPOSE



**Set you up for success** by providing you the information you need to know about the upcoming changes, and **gather your feedback**.

## OUTCOMES

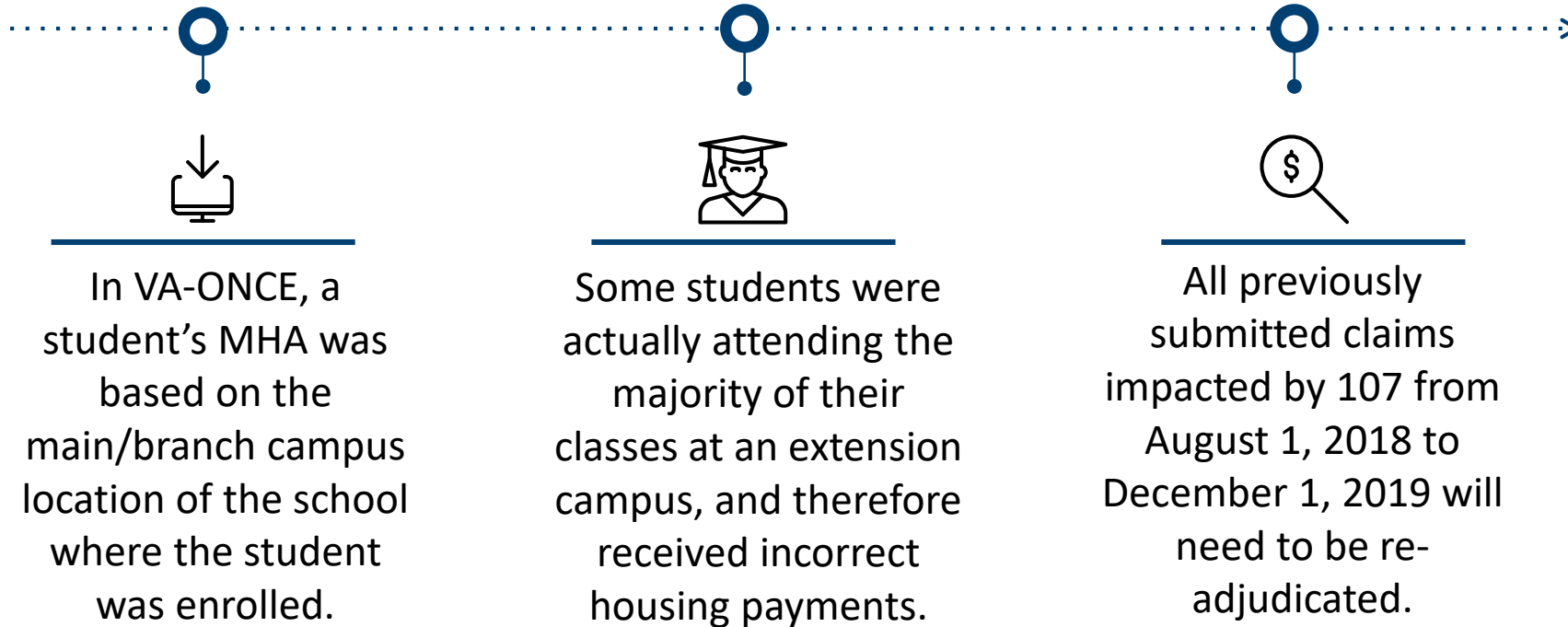


VA will use your feedback to **design future communications** efforts, and incorporate into the implementation plan to **ensure our process meets your needs**



# Section 107: What to Know

**Section 107:** Effective August 1, 2018, a student's Monthly Housing Allowance is calculated **based on the main, branch or extension campus location where they physically attend the majority of their classes.**



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# Section 107: Campus Definitions



## BRANCH CAMPUS

A location of an educational institution that is geographically apart from and **operationally independent of the main campus of the educational institution**; has its own administration; and offers courses leading to a degree or other recognized education credential.



## MAIN CAMPUS

A location where the **primary teaching facilities** of an educational institution are located.



## EXTENSION CAMPUS

VA currently defines “extension campus” as a location of an educational institution that is **geographically apart from and is operationally dependent on the main campus or a branch campus** of the educational institution.

Off-campus training MHA (including internships, practicums, externships, clinical rotations, and residencies) will be paid **based on the location of the campus where the student is enrolled**, as long as the “off-campus training site” does not meet the campus definition requirements.



# Section 107: Zip Codes & Facility Codes

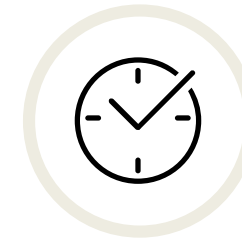
VA is no longer using zip codes. Instead, we will be using facility codes and sub-facility codes for campuses. **Each campus will have a unique facility code/sub-facility code. For Extension Campuses, the 3<sup>rd</sup> character will be a X.**



VA is **currently** compiling information on campus locations, based on approved extension campuses submitted by SAAs to VA



We're aiming to have that information available in the VA-ONCE, WEAMS, ECAP systems in **August**.



Once data has been validated, schools will submit all enrollments that begin on or after January 1, 2020 to the campus where the student is attending classes



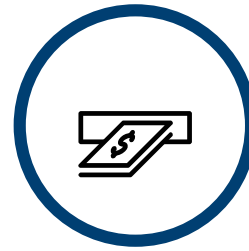


# Section 501: What to Know

**Section 501:** Effective January 1, 2018, for those using the Post-9/11 GI Bill for the first time after that date, student's rates set to the slightly lower Department of Defense's E-5 With Dependents Basic Allowance Housing (BAH) rate.



Students who started using their Post-9/11 GI Bill before January 1, 2018, **will continue receiving MHA payments** based on the slightly higher VA rate eliminated by this change.



Until the IT solution is in place **VA will pay students at the slightly higher VA rate for the academic year VA rate**



Starting in December, payments to students will be made **in accordance to rates mandated by the Colmery Act.**

# Before December 1: Extension Campus Data Upload

In August, extension campuses will be available in the ECAP, WEAMS, and VA-ONCE applications.



## SPRING 2020 ENROLLMENTS

- SCOs will be able to, and will be instructed to, submit enrollments that begin on or after January 1, 2020 using Extension Campus Codes



## ENROLLMENTS BEFORE SPRING 2020

- For any enrollments that begin prior to January 1, 2020, SCOs will be instructed to continue the current process to submit enrollments using the main or branch campus facility code
- Do not recertify enrollments from August 1, 2018 – December 1, 2019 until instruction from VA



## AVAILABLE EXTENSION CAMPUSES

- All Extension Campuses that were approved by SAAs and previously submitted to VA will be available in VA-ONCE



## ADDING ADDITIONAL EXTENSION CAMPUSES

- Each school must have **ALL** extension campuses in VA-ONCE
- All additional extension campuses will be submitted by SCOs to SAAs through current processes and procedures



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# December 1: Sec.107 & 501 Implementation

Sections 107 and 501 will be implemented so that all future enrollments will be processed according to the Colmery Act.



## MONTHLY HOUSING ALLOWANCE CHANGES

- On December 1, updates will go live in VA's education processing systems, and future MHA payments will be made in accordance with Sections 107 and 501 of the Colmery Act.



## IMPACT TO STUDENTS

- **501:** VA will identify students whose MHA should have been the same rate as the Department of Defense's E-5 with dependents basic allowance for housing (BAH) rate, but instead received MHA payments based on the slightly higher VA rate.
  - All students will receive a letter informing them of whether they were underpaid, overpaid or not impacted.
- **107:** Once the IT system has been updated, VA will need additional information from schools in order to identify students who were not paid the housing rate of the location where they physically attended the majority of classes.



# After December 1: Replacement Enrollments

Schools will need to replace enrollments for students who took classes outside of a main campus location between August 1, 2018 to December 1, 2019.



## IMPACT TO STUDENTS

- Schools will be required to re-submit enrollments of students who took courses outside the main or branch campus location between August 1, 2018 to December 1, 2019. VA will provide additional information on this process. After VA has that information, it will be able to identify impacted students.
- All students will receive a letter informing them of whether they were overpaid, underpaid, or not impacted.



## REPLACEMENT OF ENROLLMENTS

- SCOs will be asked to remove and replace enrollments of impacted students within the VA-ONCE application
- **Do NOT terminate or replace enrollments until further instruction by VA.**



## PAYMENTS TO BENEFICIARIES

- Impacted students will receive a notification of their account being reviewed
- If a student was overpaid because of these changes, VA will automatically review their claim for waiver of the debt and provide additional information on this process to them.



# Open Forum

Please go to [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com)  
Code: XX XX XX



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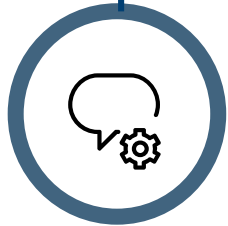
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# Next Steps

Stay tuned over the coming months as VA keeps steady communication with stakeholder groups.



**Short Term:** VA will use your feedback to inform process decisions and communications, including an ongoing FAQ document to distribute amongst stakeholders.



**Ongoing:** VA will continue to communicate on upcoming changes through regular webinars, email, blog posts, etc.

*Please send any questions or recommendations to  
[FOREVERGIBILL.VBAVACO@va.gov](mailto:FOREVERGIBILL.VBAVACO@va.gov).*