



VETERANS EDUCATION SUCCESS

May 11, 2020

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Benefits Administration
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420
Via electronic submission

Re: Availability of Education, Licensing, and Certification Records, OMB Control No. 2900-0696

Dear Sir/Madam:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) collection of records in regards to educational benefits. We believe that the thorough collection of this critical information about programs and beneficiaries is vital for the proper functioning of the VBA. An effective record collection system is essential so the VBA can administer the educational benefits that serve as the foundation of success for military-connected students. We are happy to offer our thoughts on the following topics:

Whether the proposed collection is necessary for the proper performance of VBA's functions

We believe that the proposed collection of information is needed for the VBA to be able to effectively administer educational benefits. The VBA needs this information from institutions in order to evaluate whether these schools are following the statutory requirements, whether beneficiaries are being properly paid, whether certification and licensure programs are actually providing the needed training for students, and more. A multitude of problems can result from insufficient record collection resulting in real world harms to military-connected students. It is essential to ensure VBA has the necessary information for proper administration and oversight.

We support the collection of information from institutions of higher education authorized under 10 USC 16136, 38 USC 3034, 3241, 3323, 3689, and 3690. These statutes enable multiple GI Bill programs and other educational benefits to function. Specifically, we want to address the following collection of information in greater detail:

38 USC 3690 - Overcharges by educational institutions; discontinuance of allowance; examination of records; false or misleading statements

Under 38 USC 3690 (c), the records and accounts of eligible persons attending educational institutions shall be made available to the Secretary to determine institutional compliance.

1250 H STREET NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005
VETSEDSUCCESS.COM
HELP@VETSEDSUCCESS.ORG



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Additionally, under section (b), the Secretary may discontinue the educational assistance if the program fails to meet the statutory requirements. Clear reporting on whether beneficiaries are being properly paid is vital to ensuring the programs are meeting statutory requirements. In January of this year, Caldwell University [settled](#) with the Department of Justice for almost \$5 million regarding allegations that it was substantially overcharging veterans using VA educational benefits for what amounted to correspondence courses. This illustrates the need for clear and accurate records so the VBA can guarantee that unscrupulous programs are not able to defraud beneficiaries and taxpayers.

38 USC 3689 - Approval requirements for licensing and certification testing

Educational benefits may be used to pay for a licensing or certification test under 38 USC 3689 (a). Each organization offering a licensing or certification test must meet the general requirements of this statute and maintain appropriate records of all candidates taking the test for no less than three years under section (e). Additionally, under section (c)(1)(H), the organization will furnish to the Secretary information related to the requirements and description of the license and test, the fees for the test and any prerequisite education needed, and the period for which the license or certificate is valid.

We agree that the continued collection of this information is necessary for VBA to be able to support beneficiaries working for important certifications and licenses. Many professions require these certifications, and there is great utility in the VBA understanding exactly what these educational programs are paying for and if they are working.

We think the continued collection of these important records is essential to ensure that beneficiaries are able to succeed at these institutions. The VBA provides transformational benefit programs that allow military-connected students to better their lives through education; proper record collection is an important aspect of administering these programs.

Sincerely,

James Haynes
Federal Policy Manager
Veterans Education Success

1250 H STREET NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005
VETSEDSUCCESS.COM
HELP@VETSEDSUCCESS.ORG