

Solano Veterans Scene – June 2012

College Tuition Fee Waiver for Disabled Veterans' Dependents

Solano County disabled veterans can get a little assistance in covering the cost of sending their children to a California college thanks to the help of the College Tuition Fee Waiver program.

This program waives mandatory system-wide tuition and fees at any State of California institution of higher learning. These institutions include any college in the University of California, California State Universities and community college system.

There are several plans under the College Tuition Fee Waiver program, but the most commonly used is Plan B. This plan entitles the children – natural, adopted and step children – of disabled veterans at any percentage for a waiver of most of the fees (also referred to as tuition) at the aforementioned institutions of higher learning. Not the entire fee package is waived, but this program usually waives about 90 percent of the fees. This program does not cover the expense of books, housing or parking.

Plan B includes the dependent children of a veteran who has a service-connected disability or had a service-connected disability at the time of death, or died of service-connected causes. There is no requirement of war time service for the veteran and no age limit for the child of the veteran.

There are income restrictions. The child's annual income, which includes the child's adjusted gross income and the value of support provided by the parent, may not exceed the "annual income limit." This limit is announced every year as the national poverty level. This year it is \$12,907.

The basic requirement for this benefit is that the veteran must provide proof of the service-connected disability. This is usually done with the Veterans Administration award letter. The applicant must fill out the DVS-40 form that can be obtained online at <http://www.cacvso.org/uploads/dvs40.pdf>.

The dependent child must provide proof of their relationship to the disabled veteran with either a birth certificate or adoption papers. In the case of a step child, the applicant must show proof of relationship to the veteran through marriage to the student's parent. This must be done with a birth certificate and marriage certificate.

The final document needed is the student's tax form for the last tax year showing that they made less than the income limit for this year. If the student did not work they must produce a letter from the IRS or the Franchise Tax Board stating that they did not file taxes in the last tax year.

All of this information must be taken to the Solano County Veteran Service Office where it is reviewed for accuracy and processed. This office sends a letter to the college applied for and a copy is sent to the student. The fees are then waived by the college.

There is no age limit or limit on the times a student may use this benefit. The only limitation is the amount of income reported by the student. The income and the parental support cannot exceed the income threshold. If the threshold is exceeded the student is denied the benefit. There is no wiggle room, and the benefit will be denied even if the student is one dollar over the income limit.

This benefit also applies to graduate schools in most cases. Certain classes that are not funded by the educational general fund can be excluded from this waiver. Extension and some summer sessions can sometimes be funded by other than general fund sources and the school may not accept the fee waiver for these classes.

There are three other plans that benefit veterans under the College Fee Waiver Program. In Plan A the children and spouse, unmarried widow or registered domestic partner of a 100-percent disabled veteran may receive the tuition fee waiver under certain circumstances.

Plan C covers dependents and the spouse of any California National Guard member who was killed on active duty.

Plan D gives these benefits to the children of Medal of Honor recipients. It is for undergraduate studies only and the student must meet both the income and age restrictions.

The best place to apply for these benefits is the County Veterans Service Office in Solano County. This office does approximately 1,000 of these a year and the turnaround time is usually two to three days.

Ted Puntillo is director of Veteran Services for Solano County. Reach him at 784-6590 or TEPuntillo@SolanoCounty.com. The Solano County Veteran Services Office, 675 Texas St. in Fairfield, is open from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.