

Dependents of Disabled Veterans can get College Tuition Assistance

Many students will be starting or returning to college this fall, and, thanks to the College Tuition Fee Waiver program (CTFW), disabled veterans in Solano County can get some assistance in covering the cost of sending their children to college.

The CTFW program waives mandatory system-wide tuition and fees at any California institution of higher learning, including the University of California, California State and community college systems. Tuition assistance applies to most graduate and undergraduate programs, with some exceptions.

There are several ways to take advantage of CTFW, most commonly the program known as Plan B. This program entitles the children – natural, adopted and step – of disabled veterans, for a waiver that covers about 90 percent of tuition fees, excluding books, housing and parking.

Plan B also includes dependent children of a disabled veteran who died of a service-related cause. There is no requirement of war time service for the deceased and no age limit on the child.

In order to qualify for tuition assistance, the child must provide proof of their relationship to the disabled veteran. This is usually done with a birth certificate or adoption papers. In the case of step children, applicants must show proof of relationship through birth and marriage certificates.

The plan contains some income restrictions, including the child's annual income that may not exceed the "annual income limit" as determined by the national poverty level. This year the limit is firmly set at \$12,486.00. Applicants will be asked to provide tax forms proving they earned less than the income ceiling necessary to qualify for assistance. There is zero wiggle room in this threshold.

Taking advantage of Plan B is quick and easy, and now online. Veterans need to provide proof of their service-related disability by obtaining a Veterans Administration award letter. This application form, known as DVS-40, can be found online at <https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/College-Fee-Waiver.aspx>

Bring your completed application materials to the Solano County Veteran Service Office where they are reviewed, processed and sent to the selected college. The fees are waived shortly thereafter.

There are three additional tuition fee waiver programs that qualify veterans under CTFW, including Plans A, C and D.

- Plan A includes the children and spouse, unmarried widow and/or registered domestic partner of a 100 percent disabled veteran to receive the tuition fee waiver under certain circumstances.
- Plan C covers dependents and the spouse of any California National Guard member who was killed during active duty.
- Plan D grants benefits to the children of Medal of Honor recipients and is intended for undergraduate studies only. Students must meet the age and income restrictions.

Applying for benefits can sometimes be confusing, and veterans are encouraged to seek assistance if they have questions. The best place to get help is the County Veterans Service Office in Solano County. We complete more than 1,000 of these application forms a year with a turnaround time between two and three days. We're here to help you get connected to the benefits and services you deserve for your service to our country. We look forward to serving you, and, as always, thank you for your service.

Ted Puntillo is Director of Veteran's Services for Solano County. Reach him at (707) 784-6590 or TEPuntillo@SolanoCounty.com. The Solano County Veteran's Services Office, 675 Texas St. in Fairfield, is open from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.