



Veterans Benefits Administration  
Washington DC 20420

On December 16, 2016, President Barack Obama signed into law the Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016 (Public Law 114-315) which amends the Marine Gunnery John David Fry Scholarship (Fry Scholarship) for surviving spouses. This new provision of the Fry Scholarship provides a delimiting date extension for beneficiaries utilizing the benefit of Service Members who died in the line of duty between September 11, 2001 and December 31, 2005.

### **Background:**

The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 expanded the Fry Scholarship to surviving spouses; however, because the Choice Act provisions did not go in effect until January 1, 2015, some surviving spouses may have reached their delimiting date (last day of eligibility), as early as 2016. The recent law remedied this situation by providing an extended time period during which surviving spouses may use their benefits.

This is especially important for surviving spouses who made the decision to not apply for the Fry Scholarship; and those spouses that made the choice to utilize Dependents' and Survivors' Educational Assistance (DEA) benefits based on the limited amount of time provided to utilize the Fry scholarship benefits.

The new provision offers eligible spouses the following options to help complete their educational goals:

1. Up to an additional four years of eligibility under the Fry Scholarship.
2. The option to transfer from DEA into the Fry Scholarship.

We recommend using the VA GI Bill © Comparison Chart for Surviving Spouses (below), which can assist you in making an informed decision as to which benefit better suits your educational goals. For more detailed information on Survivors and Dependents Assistance available to you, access our website at:  
[http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/survivor\\_dependent\\_assistance.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/survivor_dependent_assistance.asp)

### **Next Steps:**

1. **If you are currently utilizing the Fry Scholarship or if your Fry Scholarship benefits recently expired:**
  - a. VA is in the process of updating the period of eligibility for all surviving spouses impacted by this recent change and currently utilizing benefits.

- b. You do not have to do anything in order to receive these extended benefits. VA will automatically process your claim.
- c. You should receive an updated Certificate of Eligibility (COE) or Award Letter, no later than March 1, 2017, with your new delimiting date. (**Note:** If you do not receive a new COE or Award Letter, VA may have found that you are no longer eligible for benefits. A few reasons that you may no longer be eligible for benefits include (this list is not inclusive):
  - you are a surviving spouse that has remarried;
  - you have already used the maximum amount of benefits to which you were entitled.
- d. If you do not receive a new COE or Award Letter by March 1, 2017, and you believe that this was in error, you may contact VA by calling 1-888-442-4551 and speaking with one of our education specialists.

**2. If you are currently using Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA):**

- a. If you would like to continue receiving DEA benefits, you do not have to do anything else.
- b. If you would like to Apply for the Fry Scholarship, you should complete VA Form 22-5490, *Dependents' Application for VA Education Benefits*. (available to complete online at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vonapp>)

**3. If you have never applied for the Fry Scholarship and would like to:**

- a. You should complete VA Form 22-5490, *Dependents' Application for VA Education Benefits*. (available to complete online at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vonapp>)

**For more information:**

VA has updated the GI Bill website at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>. Watch the website and check our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/gibillEducation> for any additional updates.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Worley II  
Director, Education Service

**Comparison Chart for Surviving Spouses with both DEA and Fry Scholarship Eligibility**

	<b>DEA</b>	<b>Fry Scholarship</b>
<b>Benefit Payments</b>	<p>Monthly amount paid directly to the student. The current monthly payment for full-time training is \$1,024.00</p>	<p><b>Tuition &amp; Fee Payment (Paid to School)</b> - Full in-state tuition costs covered for training pursued at public institutions. Up to \$21,970.46 per year at private institutions</p> <p><b>Books and Supplies Stipend (Paid to Student)</b> - Up to \$1,000 a year for books and supplies. Paid to the student proportionately for each term.</p> <p><b>Monthly Housing Allowance (Paid to Student)</b> - Stipend based on local BAH for E-5 with dependents and paid monthly. Online students receive half of the BAH national average</p>
<b>Duration of Benefits</b>	<p>Surviving Spouses of those who died in the line of duty may use benefits for up to <b>20 years from the Service Member's date of death.</b></p>	<p>15 years from the Service Member's date of death (or, in accordance with Section 401 of Public Law 114-315, if the death of death is prior to January 1, 2006, then benefits are extended until January 1, 2021)</p>
<b>Maximum Months of Benefits</b>	45 months	36 months
<b>Concurrent Receipt of DIC and Education Benefit for Spouse</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Programs Covered</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College, Business, Technical, or Vocational Programs</li> <li>• Certification Tests</li> <li>• Apprenticeship/On-the-Job Training</li> <li>• Tutorial Assistance</li> <li>• Work-study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College, Business, Technical, or Vocational Programs</li> <li>• Certification Tests</li> <li>• Apprenticeship/On-the-Job Training</li> <li>• Vocational flight training</li> <li>• Tutorial Assistance</li> <li>• Work-study</li> </ul>