VA launches new employment training program

The Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) prepares veterans unemployed due to COVID-19

As the nation works to recover from the job losses suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic, the VA is offering a new program to help those veterans whose earned education benefits are no longer available.

The Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) was enacted on March 11, 2021, and was effective immediately. VRRAP was part of the American Rescue Plan, a $1.9 trillion economic stimulus package, with aid targeted to assist individuals and businesses recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The majority of veterans who would need this have hit their delimiting date for other education benefits,” said National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. “Ten years after their release of active duty those benefits are no longer available, so it’s important for veterans to know this program is out there as we all work to recover from this national crisis.”

Because VRRAP is modeled after the older Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) from several years ago, VA was able to quickly ramp-up the program. As with VRAP, the VA coordinated with the Department of Labor on VRRAP to identify 200 high-demand training programs in eighteen different career fields—everything from high-tech computer-related fields like
cybersecurity, to healthcare, media, education, architecture, engineering, transportation and many more. The schools participating in the program and the courses they offer have been approved under the GI Bill and VET TEC high-demand job training criteria.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Veterans are required to meet all requirements to apply. Applicants must:

- Be at least 22 years old, but not older than 66;
- Be unemployed because of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Not be eligible for GI Bill or VR&E benefits (or, if eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, have transferred all benefits to family members);
- Not be rated as totally disabled;
- Not be enrolled in a federal or state jobs programs; and
- Not be receiving unemployment benefits (including CARES Act benefits)

“Interested veterans are encouraged to apply immediately as there is a limit to the number of participants the program can allow,” said National Employment Director Jeff Hall. “Additionally, VRRAP is only active for 21 months or until funding runs out.”

Each training program lasts up to 12 months with the goal of empowering veterans with new skills or putting them on the path to completing a certification program in one of the high demand fields. VRRAP ends on December 11, 2022, and is limited to funding ceiling of $386 million or participant limit of 17,250—whichever one of the three comes first. Veterans in the training program will have their tuition and fees paid by the VA directly to the school, and veterans will receive a monthly housing allowance that is calculated based on the same rate as it is for the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Training can be pursued on either a part-time or full-time basis. On-the-job training,
apprenticeships, internships and degree programs are not authorized under the VRRAP.