PLEASE READ CAREFULLY TO DETERMINE IF YOU QUALIFY TO RECEIVE BENEFITS ***BEFORE*** RETURNING YOUR ENROLLMENT PAPERWORK!

VA OJT/APPRENTICESHIP BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY & POLICIES

There are many substantial differences between "regular school" benefits and OJT/Apprenticeship benefits. The policies and benefit description detailed below apply *only* to the**, Post-9/11 GI Bill.** Please read below:

1. You must have an active Apprentice Agreement within the last 12 months*.

2. If your Apprentice Agreement started more than one year ago, VA will deny your claim. VA will only go back 12 months within the first year of your apprenticeship ***unless**** you paid for a benefits "kicker". If you do not remember if you did this when you enlisted and you are already into your second year of apprenticeship, you will need to contact VA directly at (888) 442-4551 for information and/or approval of benefits.

3. You will be using your Montgomery, Post-9/11, Select Reserve, or Chapter 35 GI Bill benefits in this program and cannot use your education benefits for another school/program while drawing benefits for OJT/Apprenticeship.

4. OJT/Apprenticeship benefits or BAH rates are based on the Cal-JAC's zip code (95833, E-5 w/ dependents, even if you do not have dependents - **does not apply to Chapters 30, 35, and 1606 which have their own set rates and steps**). This is set by VA, as the Cal-JAC is the sole certifying agency for your apprenticeship training hours.

5. Your BAH is based on VA's fiscal year (October 1 - September 30) you started the occupation you are collecting benefits for.

6. VA requires you work 120 "regular" hours per month to qualify for the full-time OJT benefit. They do not count overtime and if you are under 120 regular hours for the month (due to vacation, injury, or military, not exceeding 30 days) you will receive a part-time benefit until the next month when you are back to your regular schedule. You must also train using the Cal-JAC format (you should be training at least 12 hours per month). If you have zero hours of training in a month you will not qualify for any OJT benefit.

7. Your benefit decreases 20% every 6 months (There are three steps of decrease for the Montgomery, Chapter 30, and five steps of decrease for the Post 9/11, Chapter 33).

8. OJT/Apprenticeship benefits are withdrawn from your benefits balance at 75% (Example: when you submit four weeks of OJT, VA will pay you for 4 weeks but only withdraw three weeks from your benefits bank).

9. VA does **not** extend OJT/Apprenticeship benefits for the length of your Apprentice Agreement. VA will withdraw your benefits as described above (#7) and exhaust your balance no matter where you are in your training.

10. You will receive a books and supplies stipend, in advance of the coming "school" year, prorated from whenever your start date falls within VA's fiscal year (Example: If VA calculates that you are entitled to 10 months of stipend because your start date is 2 months into their fiscal year and you leave the program after 6 months, you will be in debt to VA for the other 4 months of the stipend).

11. If you leave the OJT for **any reason**, including injury or deployment lasting 30 days or more. If you promote to another occupation within your department or leave to work for another department. If you want to leave OJT and use your benefits at a later time or another program, **you must notify me, in writing, immediately**. I cannot take you out of OJT unless you notify me, in writing, that you wish to leave the program. To return after injury/deployment/promotion you can:

    a. Re-enter the program once you and your department have notified me and Cal-JAC of your return to full-duty from injury (you cannot collect OJT benefits while on light-duty) or deployment. The Cal-JAC will reinstate your Apprentice Agreement so you don't lose your place in your payment step schedule

    b. Apply under your new occupation, which will start the whole process over at the current year's BAH rate (except Firefighter EMTs promoting to Firefighter Paramedics. That will be a lateral pay/step move because the occupations share the "firefighter" training in both occupations);

    c. Leave program at any time before you promote and re-apply when you promote in the future (NOTE: If your DOS is 1/1/2013 or later, you have the "Forever GI Bill" which means you have no time limits on using your benefits and can use them throughout your fire service career as long as you have benefits remaining);

    d. Leave program and use your benefits at another facility/school.

If you have any questions regarding any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me at:

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