

# COMPLYING WITH SECTION 702 OF THE CHOICE ACT

#Altraining



## COMPLYING WITH SECTION 702 OF THE CHOICE ACT

Andrew Griffin | Northern Arizona University | [andrew.griffin@nau.edu](mailto:andrew.griffin@nau.edu)  
Scott Heflin | Northern Arizona University | [scott.heflin@nau.edu](mailto:scott.heflin@nau.edu)



## LEARNING OUTCOME

### After participating...


...you will be able to make a good-faith effort to comply with Section 702 of the Choice Act by July 1, 2015.



2


**AGENDA**

- Breaking Down Section 702
- Formalizing Procedures for Compliance
- Next Steps

 3

*#Altraining*

**BREAKING DOWN SECTION 702**

 4

## THE VETERANS ACCESS, CHOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2014

- **Effective date:** July 1, 2015
- **Title VII:** Other Veteran Matters
- **Section 701:** Expansion of Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship
- **Section 702:** Approval of Courses of Education provided by Public Institutions of Higher Learning for Purposes of All-volunteer Force Education Assistance Program and Post 9/11 Educational Assistance Conditional on In-state Tuition Rate for Veterans



## SECTION 702: OVERVIEW

- Section 702 requires the VA to disapprove, for purposes of the All-Volunteer Force and the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance programs, courses of education provided by a public educational institution of higher education (IHE) that charges veterans living in the state higher tuition and fees than it charges in-state residents, regardless of the veteran's state of residence
- This provision is also applicable to family members eligible for such assistance due to their relationship to such veterans
- And to academic terms that begin after July 1, 2015
- If a school does not comply, VA is required to disapprove programs of education for everyone training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the MGIB-AD programs (not just covered individuals)



■ SECTION 702:  
COVERED INDIVIDUAL

A “covered individual” is defined in the  
Choice Act as: (1)

A **Veteran** who lives in the state in which the IHL is located (regardless of formal state of residence) and enrolls in the school within three years of discharge from a period of active duty service of 90 days or more

■ SECTION 702:  
COVERED INDIVIDUAL

A “covered individual” is defined in the  
Choice Act as: (2)

A spouse or child using transferred benefits who lives in the state in which the IHL is located (regardless of his/her formal state of residence) and enrolls in the school within three years of the transferor’s discharge from a period of active duty service of 90 days or more

\*\*including same sex spouses and children (biological, adopted, pre-adoptive, and stepchildren of same sex spouses)

## SECTION 702: COVERED INDIVIDUAL

### A “covered individual” is defined in the Choice Act as: (3)

A spouse or child using benefits under the Fry Scholarship who lives in the state in which the IHL is located (regardless of his/her formal state of residence) and enrolls in the school within three years of the Service member’s death in the line of duty following a period of active duty service of 90 days or more

\*\*including same sex spouses and children (biological, adopted, pre-adoptive, and stepchildren of same sex



## SECTION 702: COVERED INDIVIDUALS

### Conditions placed on covered individuals:

Students maintain covered individual status as long as they are using Post-9/11 GI Bill or MGIB-AD benefits and remain continually enrolled at the same public IHL:

- Continuity of enrollment is not broken by regularly scheduled breaks between courses, semesters or terms
- Individuals do not have to enroll in summer sessions or terms to maintain continuous enrollment
- If a student exhausts entitlement or chooses not to receive GI Bill benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill or Montgomery GI Bill - Active Duty, the provisions of section 702 no longer apply, even if the student remains continuously enrolled



## SECTION 702: COVERED INDIVIDUALS

### Conditions placed on covered individuals:

- A school can impose other requirements in order for a student to be charged in-state tuition and fees as long as they do not require physical presence for any period of time
- For example, the law does allow the state/school to require a student to show intent to become a resident
- Or, a state can require the veteran to be Honorably Discharged



## SECTION 702: COVERED INDIVIDUALS

### The Yellow Ribbon Program:

- The Yellow Ribbon Program will still be available for eligible students who do not meet the definition of covered individual
- Students beyond three years of discharge and those that attend private schools may find it useful
- Yellow Ribbon Program will not apply to covered individuals at public schools because they will only be charged in-state tuition



## SECTION 702: COVERED INDIVIDUALS

### How does the VA define “residency” or “living in the state?”

- “Living in the state” simply means that the student must live in the state where the public institution of higher learning is located to be considered a covered individual for purposes of section 702
- This is something short of being a “resident” but is similar and consistent with other legal concepts such as “domicile” and “place of abode” that denote a meaningful physical presence that does not rise to the level of residency

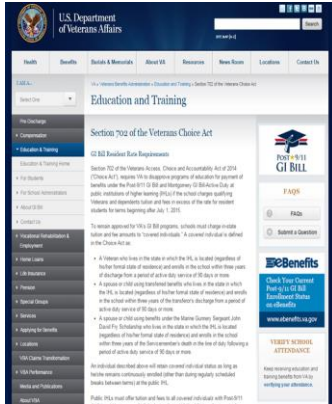


## SECTION 702: VA WAIVERS

- The Secretary has the authority to waive the requirements of the law as deemed appropriate
- The VA understands the time constraints on implementation and are working to determine a course of action regarding waivers
- Information will be distributed as it becomes available



## SECTION 702: VA WEBSITE



- Section 702 Information is featured on the GI Bill Website ([benefits.va.gov/gibill/702.asp](http://benefits.va.gov/gibill/702.asp))
- Website will be updated to show states complying with the Resident Rate Requirements

## SECTION 702: VA WEBSITE

- To help with students' educational planning and ensure transparency, VA will keep a listing of each state, territory, or school's status on this page
- VA will also link to any documentation concerning waivers and status (approval or disapproval)
- VA will keep the page updated so the public can follow any progress and know what is going on in a particular state/territory
- The website ([www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/702.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/702.asp)) is the only resource VA provides that shows compliance status





## QUESTIONS

*#Altraining*

## FORMALIZING PROCEDURES FOR COMPLIANCE

## UNIVERSITY POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- **Choice Act** - Put in place guidelines on how to regulate and process section 702 eligible students
- **State Regulations** - Identify your state regulations and how it coincides with Section 702

## INTAKE AND PROCESSING

### **Initial enrollment verification:**

- Identification of the veteran or dependent population:
  - Admission application
  - Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
  - Certificate of Eligibility (VA)

\*\* Chances are they want to self-identify

## SCHOOL VETERAN AFFAIRS CERTIFYING OFFICIAL

- Structure of organization and what role the VA Certifying Official will play
- VA student population
- Quality assurance
- Communication with students
- Compliance

## INTAKE AND PROCESSING

### VA Certifying Official:

- Primary point of contact for compliance and eligibility verification
- Will work with other departments for establishing procedures:
  - Admissions
  - Bursar
  - Registrar

## VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY (1)

### DD-214 - Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty

Date of Separation “b.”:

12. RECORD OF SERVICE	YEAR(S)	MONTH(S)	DAY(S)
a. DATE ENTERED AD THIS PERIOD	2009	02	18
b. SEPARATION DATE THIS PERIOD	2014	02	17
c. NET ACTIVE SERVICE THIS PERIOD	05	00	00
d. TOTAL PRIOR ACTIVE SERVICE	00	00	00
e. TOTAL PRIOR INACTIVE SERVICE	00	00	00
f. FOREIGN SERVICE	00	00	00
g. SEA SERVICE	00	00	1.5
h. INITIAL ENTRY TRAINING	00	03	1.5
i. EFFECTIVE DATE OF PAY GRADE	2013	12	16

Discharge Status “Not Required”:

*(For use by authorized agencies only)*

24. CHARACTER OF SERVICE (Include upgrades)
HONORABLE

## VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY (2)

### VA Certificate of Eligibility

#### Certificate of Eligibility

This certifies that you are entitled to benefits for an approved program of education or training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

You must take this letter to your school. Your school must certify your enrollment before you can get paid.

You have 25 months and 0 days of full-time benefits remaining. Your Department of Defense record indicates you allocated 9 months of entitlement to your dependents.

## ■ VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY (3)

### Other pertained documentation (states):

- Proof of domicile within the state
- Drivers license
- Voter registration
- Others?

## ■ INTAKE AND PROCESSING

### Follow-up enrollment verification:

- **Each academic term:** Re-verify eligibility
  - Re-certification of VA eligibility
  - Highly recommended a student management system be in place to flag these individuals for 702

## INFORMATION SYSTEMS

### Student Information Management System (data fields):

- Chapter of VA Educational Benefit
- Veteran or Dependent
- DD-214 and Discharge Date
- Remaining Months of Entitlement
- Section 702 Eligible

\*\*Not just for the Certifying Officials

## FINANCIAL AID AND TUITION


- Bursar and Certifying Official:
  - In-state tuition rates
  - Potential re-adjustments
- Financial Aid:
  - FAFSA
  - Scholarships and grant
  - Possible future re-adjustments

 **QUESTIONS**

 29

*#Altraining*

**NEXT STEPS**

 30

**INVOLVING THE  
APPROPRIATE ON-CAMPUS  
PARTIES: THE WHO**

- Veteran Services Office
- Veteran educational benefits certifying official
- Financial Aid
- Undergraduate Admissions
- Registrar
- Bursar
- Enrollment Management and Student Affairs
- Student Veterans of America chapter
- Government and legislative liaison
- Marketing and advertising
- Office of Public Affairs



**CHAT**

**Who else might you include  
in your stakeholder group?**



■ INVOLVING THE  
APPROPRIATE ON-CAMPUS  
PARTIES: **THE WHY? (YOUR  
DAY-TO-DAY MANAGERS)**

- **Veteran Services Office:** The central veteran advocacy, information, and advisement office
- **VA Educational Benefits Certifying Official:** Will track compliance, eligibility, and entitlements
- **Financial Aid:** Manages total student aid packaging
- **Registrar:** Manages student residency
- **Bursar:** Manages student accounting and billing



■ INVOLVING THE  
APPROPRIATE ON-CAMPUS  
PARTIES: **THE WHY?  
(STRATEGIC LEADERS)**

- **Enrollment Management and Student Affairs:** Senior leadership required to insure comprehensive school compliance and on time
- **Government and legislative liaison:** Responsible for state government coordination and collaboration
- **Marketing and advertising:** Responsible for accurate information
- **Office of Public Affairs:** Insure accurate information is being published and disseminated as required



## ■ INVOLVING THE APPROPRIATE ON- CAMPUS PARTIES: THE HOW (PHASE I)

### Initial strategic implementation planning session:

- Enrollment Management and Student Affairs
- Veteran Services Office
- Veteran educational benefits certifying official
- Admissions
- Financial Aid
- Registrar
- Bursar

## ■ INVOLVING THE APPROPRIATE ON- CAMPUS PARTIES: THE HOW (PHASE II)

### Day-to-day managers' planning session(s):

- Veteran Services Office
- Veteran educational benefits certifying official
- Admissions
- Financial Aid
- Registrar
- Bursar

## ■ INVOLVING THE APPROPRIATE ON- CAMPUS PARTIES: THE HOW (PHASE III)

### Campus-wide information session(s):

- Veteran Services Office
- Veteran educational benefits certifying official
- Admissions
- Student Veterans of America chapter
- Government and legislative liaison
- Marketing and advertising
- Office of Public Affairs



## ■ SETTING A TIMEFRAME/ SCHEDULE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

### Considerations:

- Size of your school
- Leadership that must be involved
- Policies and procedures that must be put into place
- Updating catalogs, websites, and other general information
- Outreach and communications
- Student management system
- Staff training and education





## TAKEAWAYS

### Steps to Take Today:

- Determine who are the appropriate people and offices to include in the initial meeting(s)
- Draft a reverse time-line implementation plan beginning with July 1<sup>st</sup> and dating back
- Schedule the required meetings



## TAKEAWAYS

### Steps to Take in the Next 2-3 Weeks:

- Conduct the initial strategic implementation planning session
- Verify state legal status as it relates to The Choice Act
- Conduct the day to day managers' coordination meeting(s)
- Draft the new detailed policies processing procedures
- Ask the VA to review before going final



## TAKEAWAYS

### Steps to Take Next Month:

- Comprehensive strategic leadership review
- Publish and codify updated policies and procedures
- Conduct campus-wide general information session
- Then... **First week in July:** Conduct follow-ups!



## QUESTIONS

### **Andrew Griffin, LTC (ret), Ed.D**

Director of Office of Military and Veterans Affairs  
Northern Arizona University  
[andrew.griffin@nau.edu](mailto:andrew.griffin@nau.edu)

### **Scott Heflin**

Senior Program Coordinator, Office of Scholarships and  
Financial Aid  
Northern Arizona University  
[scott.heflin@nau.edu](mailto:scott.heflin@nau.edu)





## EVALUATION

### Thank you!

Please remember to complete the event evaluation.  
Your comments will help us continually improve the  
quality of our programs.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CF263MC>

© Copyright 2015 Academic Impressions

Follow us:



43