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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Secretary Shinseki Announces Ability to Sign Up for Emergency Education Benefit Payments on VA Web-Site

Shinseki today announced further outreach to Veteran-students eligible for a special emergency payment of their education benefits. Veterans can now apply online beginning Oct. 2. Veteran-students can also request courtesy transportation to VA regional benefits offices.

"Our Veterans went the extra mile for their country," Shinseki said. "One of our top priorities in transforming VA is to be, first and foremost, the advocate for Veterans."

Shinseki announced that on Friday, Oct. 2, VA's 57 regional benefits offices will begin providing on-the-spot emergency payments up to \$3,000 to students who have applied for their education benefits but who have not yet received a government payment.

Citing the distance many Veterans would have to travel to apply in person at a VA benefits office, Shinseki announced Veterans can also apply online at www.va.gov <<http://www.va.gov>> starting Oct. 2. The online application will guide Veterans through the process to supply needed information. Shinseki noted that online applicants will receive their emergency payments through the mail after processing.

"VA is adapting to meet the financial needs of our Veteran-students who are on camps," Shinseki said. "They should be focusing on their studies, not worrying about financial difficulties."

Students without their own transportation can also request free van service, provided by volunteers, to carry them to the nearest benefits office. To obtain this service, Veterans would have to call their nearest VA medical center and ask for the "Volunteer Transportation Coordinator." Transportation will be on a first-come, first-served, space-available basis. Veterans can find a map and list of medical centers at http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/division_flash.asp?dnum=1.

Whether traveling by personal vehicle or volunteer van, VA officials suggest students check their mail boxes and banking accounts before leaving home, since some Veterans will find their checks have already arrived. VA would like to recognize the volunteers and Veterans Service Organizations for partnering with the Department to ensure that Veterans' needs are met.

The emergency checks are an advance on each student's education benefits, and the amount will be deducted from future benefits payments. Checks will be written at the regional offices for Veterans who bring a photo ID and evidence of their enrollment. VA officials emphasize that \$3,000 is the maximum payment, with many Veterans receiving smaller payments based upon their likely monthly education benefits.

A map and list of the participating VA regional benefits offices is available on the Internet at http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/division_flash.asp?dnum=3. The most updated information regarding VA issuing emergency checks is available at VA's web site www.va.gov <<http://www.va.gov>>. Applications from approximately 25,000 Veterans are currently being processed for Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefit payments to students or schools.

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