

New online option ease certification process for student recipients of Survivor Benefit Plan

By Andrew Corso, Defense.gov October 30, 2019

WASHINGTON -- A commitment to continuing education is an important investment in the future. This is especially true for a student covered as a child annuitant under the Survivor Benefit Plan, or SBP.

The plan's child-annuity payments typically end when recipients turn 18. But if you are a recipient attending full-time school -- in high school or at an accredited trade school, technical or vocational institute, college or university -- you are eligible to continue receiving payments until the end of the school year during which you turn 22, as long as you remain unmarried.

The majority of child SBP annuitants do continue to receive this annuity while full-time students beyond age 18. And while proof of full-time status is a requirement each term/semester for continuation of SBP benefits, recent improvements are making the process easier and more convenient.

QUICK SBP OVERVIEW

The Defense Department sponsors and subsidizes the SBP, which provides an ongoing monthly annuity - up to 55% of the service member's retired pay -- to military spouses and/or children when a military member dies while on active duty, on inactive duty or after retirement.

Coverage is automatic and no cost for members on active duty, and for reserve-component members while performing inactive duty training. Active-duty members can purchase coverage upon retirement. Reserve component members can elect full-time coverage, whether on duty or not, when they reach 20 years of qualifying service for reserve retired pay.

EASING THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

To continue annuity payments after turning 18, student annuitants must submit a school certification form, DD 2788 - Child Annuitant's School Certification, each term/semester. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service, or DFAS, must receive the form no later than the last day of the school term to continue payments without interruption.

Remembering to file and get a school official's certification each semester can be challenging, especially for college students immersed in studies. But it is necessary to validate that an annuitant still remains a student to be eligible to receive this important benefit. DOD is taking steps to streamline the process to make it easier to validate each student's eligibility every semester. DFAS has created a convenient new online option for uploading and submitting school certification forms.

DFAS also can now accept forms signed more than 45 days after the start date of the semester, lifting the previous requirement that forms be signed no more than 30 days prior to the end of the semester.

A helpful new checklist is also available. It provides tips and step-by-step instructions to assist students and school officials with completing the certification form. Download and print the checklist, or use it on a computer or tablet while filling out the form.

HOW TO SUBMIT CERTIFICATIONS FORMS

Here are three no-cost ways you can submit your school certification form each term/semester. Keep a copy for your records each time:

ONLINE:

DFAS created a submission module, <https://go.usa.gov/xymaH>, where you can upload a school certification form through AskDFAS on the DFAS.mil website. This is accessible on mobile browsers. Simply fill in the required information in the online screen and upload a PDF of your completed and signed DD Form 2788.

BY MAIL:

Defense Finance and Accounting Service
U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
8899 E. 56th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46249-1300

BY FAX:

800-982-8459

If you would like to receive email reminders when it is time to submit your school certifications, follow the simple directions to create a profile in myPay.

QUESTIONS?

Look for additional information about military benefits on the DFAS website. You can also speak with a customer service representative at 216-522-5955 or 800-321-1080, or write to the address above.