

Innovative Army Vocational Program Will Pay for Certifications and Licenses

Effective 1 March 2009, the Army will pay for certification and licensure exam fees for all active duty Soldiers, including National Guard and Reserve Soldiers on extended active duty and Wounded Warriors. The Army Vocational/Technical (AVOTEC) program enables Soldiers to enroll in non-college degree courses that teach skills tailored for jobs in today's most in-demand career fields and take certification and licensure exams related to those professions.

This program is open to all eligible Soldiers at any time during their active duty service. AVOTEC is especially beneficial for Soldiers transitioning into civilian life, but is not a program for veterans. Interested Soldiers must enroll in courses or take credentialing exams prior to separating from the Army. Officers will not incur an additional service obligation. Courses and credentials do not have to be related to the Soldier's military occupational specialty.

Congress approved \$19 million for this pilot program as part of the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act of 2009. In addition to certification and licensure exam fees, the AVOTEC program also covers fees associated with vocational training.

The GI Bill or other existing educational benefits may not be used for the AVOTEC program. Soldiers are restricted to the maximum of \$4,500 per fiscal year in Tuition Assistance (TA). The AVOTEC Program may be utilized in conjunction with traditional TA, but the total cost remains restricted to \$4,500. For example, if a Soldier has used \$1,000 for a traditional college program, the remaining \$3,500 may be used for the AVOTEC Program.

This program is available through 30 September 2009 or until the funds are exhausted, whichever comes first. Credentialing agencies are encouraged to register for payment under the program. The criteria for certification agency participation are identical to the criteria for school participation and are outlined on the Army's AVOTEC web site at https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/education/VOTEC_Program.html.