

# A PEATC

Do You Know....



## Factsheet for Virginia's Parents

## Paying for College for Students with Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities

### Going to College

For many young people, going to college is a rite of passage. Many students with intellectual disabilities (ID) have historically been left out of this post-high school experience because they do not qualify for admission. But that is changing. There are colleges in Virginia and throughout the country that offer non-degree inclusive post-secondary programs for students with ID. These programs can be costly, but there may be financial help available.

### Paying for College

A typical student going to college or university would likely be eligible for some form of financial aid. This may include federal programs, like a PELL grant, federal loans, grants, and scholarships (national state, or school-based). Work-study is also considered a form of federal financial aid. There are also tax benefits, education vouchers for current and former foster care youth, and, in some states, state tuition assistance.

For **students with ID**, the situation can be different. To be eligible for many types of financial aid, the student must have a high school diploma or equivalency diploma. In Virginia, this would be the **Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma** or a **GED**.

Students in Virginia who receive the **Applied Studies Diploma** who wish to attend a post-secondary program are typically **not eligible to be in a degree-seeking program** since a diploma is a pre-requisite, and they are **typically not eligible for federal financial aid**, although there may be special grants or scholarships available to them privately or through their state.

However, there are some specific types of federally authorized programs, called **Comprehensive Transition Post-Secondary Programs (CTPs)** that do provide access to federal financial aid for its students. This includes Pell grants, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and Work Study. It does not include federal student loan programs.

### References/Resources

- [College Search | Think College](#)
- [Financing College for Military Dependents - Military Education - Military Families](#)
- [GI Bill And Other Education Benefit Eligibility | Veterans Affairs \(va.gov\)](#)
- [Insight a Think College Brief on Policy, Research, & Practice](#)
- [Types of Financial Aid | Federal Student Aid](#)



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There are currently over 125 approved CTP Programs in the U.S. Virginia has two: [ACE-IT in College](#) at Virginia Commonwealth University and the [Mason LIFE Program](#) at George Mason University. Both non-degree programs accept students with ID and students with autism. They do not admit out-of-state students, but some CTPs do. See [College Search on Think College's website](#).

## Other Financial Resources for College

- ✓ **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** can aid young people with ID. If a student meets the eligibility criteria for vocational rehabilitation services and their employment goal requires college or in this case, the CTP program. VCU-ACE, for example, does work with the [Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services](#).
- ✓ **Scholarships.** Think College publishes a list of [Scholarships for Students with Intellectual Disabilities](#) every year. Some of these may be available to students in non-degree-seeking programs.
- ✓ **Private loans.** Some private student lenders have options available to non-degree-seeking students. You can find out more here: [Non-Degree Seeking Student Loans | LendEDU](#)
- ✓ **Medicaid waivers.** While Virginia's waivers, like the Developmental Disabilities (DD) waiver, don't pay for college, you can use waiver funds for supports in college, like transportation, personal care, peer support, etc.
- ✓ **Social Security.** Students receiving SSI can use benefits to pay for school-related expenses. Financial aid does not impact SSI. The student can set up a [Plan to Achieve Self-Support \(PASS\)](#) which allows income to be set aside, including for college.
- ✓ **ABLE Accounts.** Like college savings 529 accounts, [ABLE Savings Accounts](#) for eligible individuals with disabilities can be used to save and pay for college without impacting benefits.
- ✓ **High School in College.** If your child (age 18-22) still has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in Virginia, they may be able to complete their IEP in a college setting if they are still receiving special education services. Check with your school division to see if that is an option for your child. Not all school divisions have relationships with local colleges.

## What about Military Dependents?

The GI bill is a service member benefit that can be transferred to the member's dependent children to pay for educational expenses. If the benefit has been transferred, it can be used at colleges with a [Yellow Ribbon](#) program to pay for tuition, books, and sometimes living expenses.

Use of the GI benefit also requires that the student have a high school diploma, a GED, or 12 hours of college credit, in addition to other requirements. An Applied Studies diploma is not considered a high school diploma.

The GI Bill does not mention CTP programs. But you can talk to the school and see whether these benefits can be used for that program if you meet the other requirements for use of GI benefits.

**PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools, and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life. For more information about us, please contact:**

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