**Are you thinking about college and how you are going to afford it?**

There are many options to help pay for school and it is important to think about those options as soon as possible.

**Veterans Affairs (VA) Education Benefits:**

There are the two main VA education benefits available to survivors

The Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship, often referred to as the Fry Scholarship, is for children and spouses of services members who died in the line of duty after September 10, 2001.

The Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance (DEA) program offers education and training to qualified dependents of Veterans who are permanently disabled and totally disabled because of a service-related condition or who died while on active duty or as a result of a service-related condition.

If your parent died in the line of duty before August 1, 2011, you may be eligible to use both the Fry Scholarship and DEA. You can get up to 81 months of full-time training, but you can use only one program at a time. If your parent died in the line of duty after August 1, 2011, you may be eligible to use either the Fry Scholarship and DEA. It is important to determine your eligibility for the Fry Scholarship and DEA as early as possible to make the best decision about which benefits to use. Things to consider are the types of need based financial aid you qualify for, other scholarship opportunities and federal financial aid, your age when attending college, if you are considering a 2 or 4 year degree or graduate education, and if the assistance can be applied to tuition, living expenses or books. Army Survivor Outreach Services Coordinators and Financial Counselors can help you review your options.

**Federal Financial Aid:**

Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA will help determine what type of need based assistance that you might be eligible to receive. It is important to complete your application early and review the specific deadlines for your school of choice. You might want to apply as the beginning of your junior year if you are a current high school student. <https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/fafsa-deadlines>. It is also important to note for students who lose their parent in Iraq or Afghanistan, the FAFSA application will also be used to verify eligibility for the Iraq & Afghanistan Service Grant <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/iraq-afghanistan-service>.

**Scholarships:**

It is never too early to start to research scholarships that are offered by many businesses, private organizations, academic institutions, and religious organizations. Each organization establishes their own timelines and application process so researching early is important to be able to take advantage of the opportunities. While you are likely to be able to use the Fry Scholarship or DEA, additional scholarships can cover any funding gaps and is especially valuable if you are considering more than a 4-year degree.

The bottom line is there are many options to assist you in paying for college and not getting into debt. If you are even considering college, reach out to your local SOS Coordinator for information. He or she can share local opportunities and also connect you to a SOS Financial Counselor if you would like additional support. You can also register for the Dial and Dine in October which is listed in the Survivor Link Newsletter.