

AVSC Certification Frequently Asked Questions & Recommendations

What is a Veteran Supportive Campus?

The veteran supportive campus is intended to address the unique needs of military affiliated students on campus, including veterans, service members and their families.

The purpose behind certification is to ensure institutions understand the needs of their military affiliated students and are continually responsive to those needs. Institutions are strongly encouraged to connect with their military affiliated students and the community resources that can assist in serving them, know what questions to ask and when, respond and interact effectively, and stay engaged with their military affiliated students to improve their institution and the community's capacity to care for and support veterans, service members and their families.

What are the prerequisites?

In order to be eligible for certification as a Veteran Supportive Campus your institution must be certified as eligible to receive GI Bill educational benefits.

Also, the institution is encouraged to have a student veterans club or association. The club or association will be an invaluable asset to assist the institution in meeting the various requirements of attaining the Veteran Supportive Campus Certification as prescribed by Arizona statute.

What are the requirements?

The following are required areas of focus for the Veteran Supportive Campus model. Included are suggestions for different ways to fulfill the requirements.

Campus Survey and Metrics

The institution shall conduct a survey of military affiliated students to identify their needs, issues and suggestions. The objective of this survey is to establish a baseline of the performance of the institution in serving their military affiliated students, and identify areas that need to be addressed by the institution or improved upon.

The survey should include but not be limited to the topics identified for Certification as a Veteran Supportive Campus, such as:

- What are the needs and concerns for military affiliated students? For example: supportive resources and services, connecting to benefits, transferring credits to and from the institution, career counseling and/or placement services, etc
- What are the challenges experienced by military affiliated students? For example: faculty awareness of military culture and physical or mental disabilities that may impact the learning environment, including effects of hyper-vigilance, post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury (TBI), substance use, suicide, etc
- Does the military affiliated student feel the institution is addressing their stated needs?
- How well has the institution been able to assist in applying and securing educational benefits?
- Is the military affiliated student aware of or have access to mentors, counselors and/or peers to assist in their education? For example: a student veteran club or association may be able to assist with this requirement

Metrics shall be recorded and maintained by the institutions to track the performance of their respective veterans' program. The metrics must be submitted at the time of application for

certification and updated at the completion of each semester or semi-annually by June 30 and December 31. Metrics should include but not be limited to the following:

- Total Student Enrollment & Total Veteran Enrollment
- Total Student Graduation & Total Veteran Graduation
- Total Student Dropout/Withdraw & Total Veteran Dropout/Withdraw

A reporting template and/or an online submission process will be provided to the institution by the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services.

Campus Steering Committee

The institution shall establish a campus steering committee consisting of student veterans, faculty and staff. The purpose of the steering committee is to share information and provide guidance to institution leadership in developing programs to establish or strengthen the Veteran Supportive Campus based on best practices that also integrates the campus culture and identifies the real needs of the student veteran.

Sensitivity and Awareness Training

The institution shall offer faculty and staff training on military and veteran culture, including the strengths military affiliated students bring to the classroom, as well as awareness of related issues such as traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress, physical and mental disabilities, suicide and hyper-vigilance.

The institution is invited to connect with community resources that freely provide military cultural awareness training, including the Arizona Coalition for Military Families.

Orientation Programs

The campus shall have available an orientation program to assist the military affiliated student to enter the higher education environment. The orientation may reflect the character, general practice and resources of the institution so long as military affiliated students are the participants.

The orientation may include:

- Available degree programs and graduation requirements
- Enrollment process
- Campus map and tour
- Campus culture
- Veteran Center and/or Connecting to military/veteran educational, health and disability benefits and resources
- Career and/or higher education counseling services available for military affiliated students

As a best practice, the orientation may be facilitated by or incorporate participation from the institution's student veteran club, association or aforementioned steering committee.

The veteran only course prescribed by statute may be either an online or facilitated course and does not require credit towards graduation be earned. The purpose of this course would be to assist the military affiliated student in his/her transition to civilian life. It may address the differences between the military and civilian culture; potential issues such as mental health including traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress, suicide awareness, and hyper-vigilance, dealing with physical and mental disabilities, time management, financial planning and budgeting, career counseling, etc.

Many nationally accredited organizations offer such courses online for transitioning service members, veterans and their family, and educational institutions could facilitate access to these online courses to their military affiliated students. These courses can be offered either on the institution's veteran program homepage as general transition assistance resources or require the students' login if secured access is required. More information on these organizations and courses can be provided.

Peer Mentoring and Support Programs

There are different options available to fulfill this requirement. At a minimum the institutions must have available referrals for students to access counseling resources, either on campus or through off-campus resources (e.g. National Veterans Crisis Line, military support programs, VA & Vet Center counseling, community-based resources).

Institutions may also want to explore peer mentoring models.

Student veteran groups and associations have gained importance in campus and student life. The camaraderie these groups offer has been shown to be effective in helping students academically and improves retention. This is especially beneficial in the first year of college. Having access to senior military affiliated students will help new military affiliated students transition quicker to campus/civilian life, and improve their performance and understanding in the classroom.

Outreach Strategies

The institution shall create and maintain outreach strategies to local military and National Guard installations to inform service members of their veterans program, discuss resources and programs provided to student veterans, highlight the institution's commitment to serving their military affiliated student and inform the service member what they can expect from campus life and culture. These outreach strategies can be easily facilitated through community resource networks, including the Military/Veteran Resource Network.

Resource Center

The institution shall offer a resource center on campus for military affiliated students. The primary objective of the veteran resource center is to provide a single location where military affiliated students can go to receive assistance in regard to their benefits, enrollment and connecting to supportive resources. The resource center should have a dedicated space or terminal; but does not necessarily require a dedicated room. A dedicated room is often not practical or useful for military affiliated students as they often fit the non-traditional student model. Institutions able to offer a dedicated room can offer additional assistance with class work and tutoring, meeting with their peers, entering the workforce, involvement in the civilian community, etc.

The dedicated space for the Veteran Resource Center should offer:

- Information on and connection to eligible educational and veterans benefits
- Centralized location for veterans' federal funding processing/enrollment certification
- Assistance with continuing education and enrollment
- Provide a comprehensive and centralized service center to connect with supportive services, including career and re-entry job placement and referral services

Community-based Collaborations

The educational institution may create and engage in outreach programs to allow the private sector to support veterans and the veteran resource centers through financial and in-kind gifts. These outreach programs may engage alumni, the private sector, community organizations,

local business, industry and veterans groups as a resource for accomplishing many of the functions identified in this guideline.

Who do we contact for more information?

Contact the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services at 602-255-3373

Certification Process

The process for an education institution to become an Arizona Veteran Supportive Campus is a three step process:

- Once an educational institution has met the requirements listed in A.R.S. 41-609, an application is submitted to the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services in accordance with statute. The application is found online at www.azdvs.gov.
- The Arizona Department of Veterans' Services reviews the initial application and determines if minimally acceptable criteria are met
- The Arizona Department of Veterans' Services may conduct an on-campus review to determine if the program is in compliance with required criteria

Once the review is completed, the educational institution is either certified as an Arizona Veteran Supportive Campus or provided feedback as to why they were not certified.

A Certified Arizona Veteran Supportive Campus will be listed on the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services website as a Certified institution and shall also be listed on the Arizona Military/Veteran Resource Network. Participation in the Arizona Military/Veteran Resource Network is voluntary but connects the institution with resources that support their military affiliated students, including community based supportive services, information, benefits, employment, etc. The Arizona Military/Veteran Resource Network also allows institutions access to military culture and sensitivity training for staff and faculty, and outreach opportunities to local military installations or National Guard facilities, as well as directly to service members, veterans and their families.

Maintaining Arizona Veteran Supportive Campus certification is contingent upon the educational institution providing the required semi-annual reports on their veteran population and graduation rates as required by A.R.S. 41-609, and shall be renewable every two years.

The Arizona Department of Veterans' Services may renew the certification based on the educational institution' semi-annual reports, or require the educational institution to submit a new application.

Please contact the following for any questions you may have about the Veteran Supportive Campus Certification and/or to schedule an orientation session:

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services	vetsupportivecampus@azdvs.gov
Arizona Coalition for Military Families	602.753.8802 info@arizonacoalition.org

www.azdvs.gov