

IDENTIFYING EDUCATION FRAUD

RESEARCHING THE BEST FOR YOUR FUTURE

Education scams are when a fraudulent company, school, or individual is misleading or deceiving students with information about loan applications, loan payments, debt relief, or course related items. You should be aware of these schemes in case you see, experience, or someone asks you to participate in fraudulent activity. Indicators of potential fraud include the following:

- Charging for assistance in filing claims for government benefits or programs.
- Misreporting educational hours.
- Charging more than market value for books and supplies.
- Advertising a lower tuition rate than they are billing VA for Veteran student enrollments.
- Advertising that one instructor will be teaching a class and then assigning a different instructor.
- Offering payment to students who register but are not asked to attend classes.
- Overpromising education or guaranteeing job opportunities.
- Telling students that they only need to sign-in but not attend classes.
- Offering debt relief for a fee through deceptive advertisements.
- Lying (individual or other official) on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form or other federal student loan form in order to qualify for more financial aid.
- Lying (individual or other official) on any student loan application or form (Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) Application, Master Promissory Note (MPN), Loan Consolidation, etc.).
- Lacking written policies and procedures or the school is unable to produce records (sometimes claimed as lost or destroyed).



DO'S

As you consider education programs and financing, take these steps to protect your family and yourself from education scams:

- **Apply directly to VA for GI Bill and related education benefits.** Veterans may submit applications for VA education benefits securely online at <https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply/>, by mail, or in person at any regional office. Veterans may file claims directly with VA and VA will help gather the necessary evidence. There are no costs or hidden fees to apply.
- **Research colleges and employers** approved for the GI Bill by using the GI Bill Comparison Tool <https://www.va.gov/education/gi-bill-comparison-tool> to confirm that the school is approved. Use extra caution and ask multiple sources including <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/> when considering a for-profit school.
- **Be vigilant if anyone requests payment for services.** Loan applications, forgiveness, and other programs can be accessed for free through the U.S. Department of Education. If you are required to pay to access education related services, it is probably a scam.



DON'TS

Scammers will try to take advantage of your efforts to navigate the education and loan systems. Consider the following items to protect you and your family:

- **Do not pay anyone to help you apply for loan forgiveness, cancellation, or debt relief.** Make sure you work only with the U.S. Department of Education, the Office of Federal Student Aid, or their loan servicers.
- **Do not share your personal information.** This includes, VA account information, Social Security number, FSA ID login information, or any other government benefits. If scammers get your information, they can cut off contact between you and your servicer or even steal your identity.
- **Do not sign a blank form for someone else to complete later.** Always review the completed form before signing and keep a copy of the completed form for recordkeeping purposes.
- **Do not refinance your federal student loans** without knowing the risks. If you refinance federal student loans that are eligible for debt relief into a private loan, you will lose out on important benefits like debt relief, forgiveness, and flexible repayment plans for federal loans.

For suspected fraud or scams:

- Call the VSAFE Fraud Hotline: 1-833-38V-SAFE
- Visit VSAFE online: www.VSAFE.gov



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs