

Supporting Statement for VA Form 21-8960 and 21-8960-1,
Certification of School Attendance or Termination

OMB #2900-0458

A. JUSTIFICATION:

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection of information.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), through its Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), administers an integrated program of benefits and services established by law for veterans, service personnel, and their dependents and/or beneficiaries. 38 U.S.C. 101 (4) and 38 CFR 3.667 provide the authority to pay benefits to or for a child who attends an approved course of instruction or training between the ages of 18 and 23.

The burden estimate for VA Forms 21-8960 and 21-8960-1 has decreased as the number of respondent total has reduced over the past year.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purposes the information is to be used; indicate actual use the agency has made of the information received from current collection.

VA Forms 21-8960 and 21-8960-1 are used to gather the necessary information to determine continued benefit entitlement to or for a child between the ages of 18 and 23 who is attending school.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

VA Form 21-8960 is not available on the One-VA website as it's a computer-generated form which is dispatched as a monthly batch print through VA's central computer system. VA Form 21-8960-1 is available on the One-VA website. It is used by VA regional offices if VA Form 21-8960 is not correctly dispatched.

Respondents may provide the information requested by VA Form 21-8960-1 via telephone or e-mail. Before VA Form 21-8960 are mailed to beneficiaries, they are partially completed by VA with information that is specific to the beneficiary and the schoolchild for whom verification of school attendance is being requested. Additionally, beneficiaries are required to provide the information requested by these forms within 60 days from the date the form is generated, or benefits may be reduced or terminated. The date VA mails the form to the beneficiary is necessary in order to correctly determine due process and appeal periods. No data regarding the percentage of responses received via e-mail is available. Currently, there has been no consideration of using other information technology. The Department will reconsider using other information technology when the resources become available.

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- 4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.**

Program reviews were conducted to identify potential areas of duplication; however, none were found to exist. There is no known Department or Agency which maintains the necessary information, nor is it available from other sources within our Department.

- 5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.**

The collection of information does not involve small businesses or entities.

- 6. Describe the consequences to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.**

VA compensation and pension programs require current information to determine eligibility for benefits. VA Forms 21-8960 and 21-8960-1 solicit information that is needed to determine continued benefit eligibility for schoolchildren between the ages of 18 and 23. If the collection were not conducted or were conducted less frequently, VA would be unable to verify continued entitlement in a timely manner, and increased overpayments would result.

- 7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted more often than quarterly or require respondents to prepare written responses to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it; submit more than an original and two copies of any document; retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years; in connection with a statistical survey that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study and require the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB.**

There is no special circumstance requiring collection in a manner inconsistent with 5 CFR 1320.6 guidelines.

- 8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publications in the Federal Register of the sponsor's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the sponsor in responses to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.**

The Department notice was published in the Federal Register on February 24, 2021, Volume 86, No. 35, pages 11386 and 11386. No comments were received in response to this notice.

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9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

No payments or gifts to respondents have been made under this collection of information.

10. Describe any assurance of privacy to the extent permitted by law provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

The records are maintained in the appropriate Privacy Act System of Records identified as "Compensation, Pension, Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Records-VA (58VA21/22/28)," published at 74 FR 29275 on June 19, 2009, and last amended at 84 FR 4138 (February 14, 2019).

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature (Information that, with a reasonable degree of medical certainty, is likely to have a serious adverse effect on an individual's mental or physical health if revealed to him or her), such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private; include specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

There are no questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Estimate of the hour burden of the collection of information:

a. Number of Respondents is estimated at 9,259 per year.

This estimate is derived by the total number of receivables through our mail automation system plus the total batch prints sent through VA's centralized computer system over the past year.

b. Frequency of Response is one time.

c. Annual burden hours are 1,543 hours.

d. The estimated completion time for each form is 10 minutes.

e. The respondent population for VA Forms 21-8960 and 21-8960-1 is composed of individuals seeking continued benefit entitlement to or for a child between the ages of 18 and 23 who is attending school. VA cannot make further assumptions about the population of respondents because of the variability of factors such as the educational background and wage potential of respondents. Therefore, VBA used general wage data to estimate the respondents' costs associated with completing the information collection.

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The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) gathers information on full-time wage and salary workers. According to the latest available BLS data, the mean hourly wage is \$27.07 based on the BLS wage code – “00-0000 All Occupations.” This information was taken from the following website: https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm.

Legally, respondents may not pay a person or business for assistance in completing the information collection. Therefore, there are no expected overhead costs for completing the information collection. VBA estimates the total cost to all respondents to be \$41,769.01 (1,543 burden hours x \$27.07 per hour).

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 and 14).

This submission does not involve any recordkeeping costs.

14. Provide estimates of annual cost to the Federal Government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operation expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information. Agencies also may aggregate cost estimates from Items 12, 13, and 14 in a single table.

Estimated Costs to the Federal Government:

Grade	Step	Burden Time	Fraction of Hour	Hourly Rate	Cost Per Response	Total Responses	Total
7	3	15	0.25	\$19.26	4.815	9,259	\$ 44,582.09
Overhead at 100% Salary							\$ 44,582.09
9	3	15	0.25	\$23.55	5.888	9,259	\$ 54,512.36
Overhead at 100% Salary							\$ 54,512.36
11	3	5	0.08	\$28.50	2.375	9,259	\$ 21,990.13
Overhead at 100% Salary							\$ 21,990.13
Processing / Analyzing Costs							\$ 242,169.15
Printing and Production Cost							\$ 2,690.77
Total Cost to Government							\$ 244,859.91
Total Cost to Government							\$ 609,962.89

Overhead costs are 100% of salary and are the same as the wage listed above and the amounts are included in the total.

Printing and production costs approximates the cost of printing this information collection per year. (Processing/Analyzing Cost total divided by \$90).

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Note: The hourly wage information above is based on the hourly 2021 General Schedule (Base) Pay (https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/pdf/2021/GS_h.pdf). This rate does not include any locality adjustment as applicable.

The processing time estimates above are based on the actual amount of time employees of each grade level spend to process to completion a claim received on this form. The within-grade step (3) of each employee represents the average experience of employees within each grade.

15. Explain the reason for any burden hour changes since the last submission.

The burden estimate for VA Forms 21-8960 and 21-8960-1 has decreased as the number of respondent total has reduced over the past year.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

The information collection is not for publication or tabulation use.

17. If seeking approval to omit the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

We are not seeking approval to omit the expiration date for OMB approval.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions," of OMB 83-I.

This submission does not contain any exceptions to the certification statement.

B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods

No statistical methods are used in this data collection.