SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

CH 35 Dependent's Assistance

Change in Enrollment Information *(updated August 2026)*

The monthly stipend amount that the VA pays under CH 35 Dependents Assistance program is based on your enrollment. Students enrolled in at least 12 credits are enrolled 'full time'. Southwestern University publishes deadlines for adding courses and dropping courses. The schedule is published in the catalog and on the university website. The VA requires SU to report changes in your enrollment – when you add courses or drop courses. Changes in your enrollment, especially when you drop courses below full time status (below 12 credits), can impact the amount of the stipend the VA will provide to you.

Please Note:
If you want to drop any classes, or completely withdraw from SU (which is considered as dropping all courses), please meet with your Success Coach and/or Academic Advisor (Advisor) to discuss your courses, the difficulties you may be experiencing, and to consider whether dropping courses is the best option for you. After you have met with your Advisor, please contact the School Certifying Official, to discuss any possible financial consequences you might incur.

When you drop courses, the VA makes the determination of whether you must repay any portion of the stipend they have paid to you. They will also adjust future payments based on your adjusted enrollment. If the VA determines you have to repay, you may have the right to appeal and provide additional information to them. The VA will also use their own calculation to determine how much you have to repay.

Dropping Courses:

- If you add or drop courses during the "add/drop without record" period, and remain full time (minimum of 12 credits), the VA will not penalize you for enrollment changes.
- If you drop courses during the "drop with record" period, this means you are 'withdrawing' from a course and will receive a grade of 'W'. If you drop below 12 credits, your enrollment change will be reported to the VA and the VA will determine whether any portion of your paid stipend must be returned as an overpayment.
- If you completely withdraw from the university, dropping all courses, then the US Dept of Education, the VA, the State of Texas, and institutional policies governing withdrawals, will be in effect. These policies are detailed in the SU university catalog. Students considering complete withdrawal from the university should contact the Center for Academic Success for additional guidance.

What can you do to avoid this situation?
Before you drop any courses, please contact your Advisor to fully consider your academic options. Upon meeting with your Advisor, please contact the School Certifying Official so we can consider the VA's rules for changes in enrollment. One thing we will talk about is the REASON you want to drop the course(s). If your reason is considered a 'mitigating circumstance' by the VA, then you may not have to repay some or all of the dropped course. The VA only allows you one drop 'for no reason' of up to 6 credits at one time. After that, if you drop just because you don't like the course or you aren't getting the high enough grade you want, then that is not a 'mitigating circumstance' and you could have to repay the VA.

Mitigating Circumstances for Dropping Courses:
As defined by the VA, mitigating circumstances are circumstances beyond the student's control that prevent the student from continuing in school or that cause the student to reduce credits. Documentation supporting the student's mitigating circumstance will be provided to the School Certifying Official, for review by the VA as applicable.

Examples are:
An illness or death in the student's immediate family.
An illness or injury afflicting the student during the enrollment period.
An unavoidable change in the student's conditions of employment.
An unavoidable geographical transfer resulting from the student's employment.
Immediate family or financial obligations beyond the control of the claimant that require him or her to suspend pursuit of the program of education to obtain employment.

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Discontinuance of the course by the school.
Unanticipated active military service, including active duty for training.
Unanticipated difficulties with childcare arrangements the student made for the period during which he or she is attending classes.

Not dropping the course(s) and a grade of F:
If you are struggling in a course, and decide you don't want to risk having to repay the VA, but choose to stop going to class or doing any assignments, this may still be considered a withdrawal.

Courses with grades of F:
If you are struggling in a course and you remain enrolled and receive an F, the university is required by US Dept of Education regulations to determine whether you 'Earned the F' or if you "Received an F due to non-attendance". We are required to capture your 'last date of attendance' in the course. If you fail every course you are enrolled in, the university will confirm with each instructor about the last day you attended class and actively participated in the class, and will determine that the last day you attended is the date of 'involuntary withdrawal'. That date will be reported to both the US Dept of Ed (for determining repayment of grants and loans in accordance with USDOE regs) and to the VA (for determining whether your VA funds will need to be repaid). Please reach out for support and advising to try and avoid this scenario.

If you stay in the class through the end of the term and you fail it: you can retake the class, you will not have to repay it, and the VA will pay for the course again if it is needed for a degree requirement. Southwestern's repeated course policy is detained in the University Catalog - and may allow for grade replacement in certain situations.

Verification of Enrollment-
The VA requires CH 35 Dependents Assistance students to confirm their enrollment each month, to receive the monthly stipend payment. You can confirm by TEXT or by PHONE. You can opt in to receive texts, asking you if you're still enrolled for the same credits, or if you have changed your enrollment. If you answer YES, then your stipend payment is released as usual. If you answer NO, then your stipend payment will be held up until the VA confirms with SU that any change in enrollment has been submitted. Once your change in enrollment is processed, the VA will release your (possibly adjusted) stipend payment. If you do not answer at all, for 2 consecutive months, the VA will hold your housing payments. You'll be required to call the VA to provide your verification of enrollment. In lieu of texting, you can call the VA each month to confirm your enrollment. F

'Rounding Out' In Last Semester of Enrollment-
The VA allows CH 35 students to 'round out' in the last semester prior to graduation. You may take courses that are not required for your program in order to reach full-time status. When preparing to register for your last semester prior to graduation, if using VA benefits that semester, please consult with your Advisor and the School Certifying Official to ensure your courses may be certified.

Please Note:
The rules regarding registration and enrollment in coursework are different for each VA education program. It is advised that you seek out information from the School Certifying Official and your Advisor, with questions pertaining to dropping courses.

School Certifying Official Contact Information:
Nadia Mahannah – Associate Registrar and VA School Certifying Official
Office of the Registrar, Prothro Room 100
mahannan@southwestern.edu
(512) 863-1952

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