

MILITARY SERVICE AND TOPS

Q-1. Can I receive a TOPS award if I join the National Guard?

- A. Yes. You are entitled to a tuition waiver from the school, and TOPS will provide \$300 per semester (\$600 per year maximum) for assistance with additional costs. In addition, students with the Performance Award will receive a stipend of \$400 per semester (\$800 per year maximum) and students with the Honors Award will receive a stipend of \$800 per semester (\$1,600 per year maximum). Payment of stipends is contingent upon appropriations by the Legislature.

Q-2. I just completed my 4 year enlistment in the Army. Can I receive a TOPS award?

- A. Yes, if you:

1. Joined the Armed Forces and were on active duty within one year of high school graduation. You must enroll in an eligible institution by the first semester, quarter, term following the one year anniversary of your separation from active duty. To be eligible, you must have received an honorable discharge or a general discharge under honorable conditions and must submit the FAFSA or the TOPS Online Application so that it is received by the federal processor no later than one year after separation from active duty. You must provide LOSFA with your DD-214 demonstrating the dates you were on active duty and the character of your discharge (if any) in order for LOSFA to determine whether you are eligible for a TOPS award.

OR

2. Are a 2003 or later graduate who first enrolls as a full-time student in an eligible Louisiana institution and then voluntarily enlists and enters on active duty as a member of the regular U.S. Armed Forces. You must request an exception no later than six months from the date of the letter notifying you of the cancelation of your TOPS award. You may also request an exception prior to entering on active duty, and provide to LOSFA the documentation required to receive an exception.

Q-3. After I completed my first 4 year enlistment in the Army, I reenlisted. Can I receive a TOPS award?

- A. Yes, if you reenlisted and maintained continuous active duty status and then enrolled as a full time student at an eligible college no later than the semester, quarter, term following the one year anniversary of your separation from active duty.

Q-4. I was just notified that I am being called to active duty during the current semester. What happens to my TOPS award?

- A. You must request an exception as soon as possible, but no later than six months following the date of discharge from active duty. If TOPS has already paid for the semester, quarter or term during which you are called to active duty, the semester, quarter or term will not be charged as a semester, quarter or term of TOPS used by you. A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the required documentation can be found on the LOSFA Web site at <https://mylosfa.la.gov/students-parents/scholarships-grants/tops/tops-forms/> or obtained directly from LOSFA.

If your TOPS award is suspended for failure to earn the required grade point average at the time you are called to active duty, the period of suspension will be extended by the length of time you are on active duty, including any periods of reenlistment.

See the following page for a quick reference guide to the TOPS provisions regarding military service, including residency, application deadlines, first-time full time enrollment, call to active duty while enrolled, and service in the Louisiana National Guard.

TOPS PROVISIONS RELATING TO MILITARY

Residency - Allows a student to meet TOPS Louisiana residency requirement if his/her military parent:

1. Is a Louisiana resident stationed outside Louisiana;
2. Is an out-of-state resident, but the student actually lives in Louisiana for the last two full years of high school and graduates from an eligible Louisiana high school; or
3. Is an out-of-state resident who moves to Louisiana based on permanent change of station orders and changes residency to Louisiana within 180 days after reporting.

Application - Students who graduate from high school and enter on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces within one year of graduation are:

1. Exempted from the requirement for receipt of an application for TOPS no later than July 1 following the one year anniversary of high school graduation.
2. Provided an extended deadline for receipt of an application for TOPS to one year from the date of separation from active duty.

FTFT Enrollment - Students who graduate from high school and enter on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces within one year of graduation are:

3. Exempted from the requirement to enroll for the first time as a full time student no later than the semester immediately following the one year anniversary of graduation.
4. Provided an extended deadline to enroll for the first time as a full time student to the semester immediately following the one year anniversary of their discharge from active duty. (This is retroactive to the beginning of TOPS, so if a 1998 graduate requested that he be allowed to use his TOPS today, he could do so, provided that he filed his FAFSA within one year of separation from active duty and that he enrolls full time in school no later than the semester immediately following the one year anniversary of discharge from active duty.)

Call to Active Duty While Enrolled - Students are granted:

1. On request, and with a copy of his DD-214, an exception to the TOPS requirements to:
 - a. Enroll full time,
 - b. Maintain continuous enrollment, and
 - c. Earn at least 24 hours each year.
2. A full semester of additional TOPS eligibility if called to active duty after a semester begins, even if the TOPS award was paid for the semester.

National Guard – Students who are in the National Guard and eligible for a TOPS Award:

1. Receive all the same benefits as other members of the military.
2. Receive their TOPS award as follows:
 - a. Tuition exemption provided in R.S. 29:36.1 applies in lieu of the TOPS basic award;
 - b. \$300 per semester (\$600 per year) to pay for books and other instructional materials; and
 - c. TOPS stipend of:
 - i. \$800 per year if eligible for the TOPS Performance Award.
 - ii. \$1,600 per year if eligible for the TOPS Honors Award.