Veteran Affairs Benefits

Table of Contents

- Overview for NOLS and VA Benefits
- NOLS Expeditions
- NOLS Wilderness Medicine
    - NOLS Wilderness Medicine Course Overview
    - Directions
    - Contact Information
- FAQ

Overview for NOLS and VA Benefits

NOLS is excited to have nine courses based in Wyoming approved for Veterans Benefits according to Title 38, United States Code and the Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010. The following Expedition and Wilderness Medicine courses are eligible for direct certification by NOLS:

NOLS EXPEDITIONS (More information found on Page 2).

- Rocky Mountain Instructor Course
- Rocky Mountain Outdoor Educator
- Wind River Mountaineering Outdoor Educator
- Rocky Mountain Outdoor Educator with Wilderness First Responder
- Spring Rocky Mountain Outdoor Educator Semester
- Fall Rocky Mountain Outdoor Educator Semester
- Wilderness Medicine and Rescue Semester

NOLS WILDERNESS MEDICINE (More information found on Page 2).

- Wilderness EMT (Wyoming Courses Only)
- Wilderness First Responder (Wyoming Courses Only)
- Wilderness First Aid (Wyoming Courses Only)

NOLS VETERANS BENEFITS POLICIES

- **ELIGIBILITY**
    - Candidates for NOLS Outdoor Educator and Instructor Courses or the Wilderness EMT course must meet requirements for these courses as outlined by the NOLS Expedition or Wilderness Medicine Admissions Office.

- **PRIOR TRAINING CREDIT**
    - NOLS will inquire about each veteran or veterans benefits eligible person's previous education and training, and request transcripts from all prior institutions, including military training, traditional college coursework and vocational training. Previous transcripts will be evaluated and credit will be granted, as appropriate. Students will be made aware of the final decision.

- **EVALUATION**

- Students on all NOLS courses will receive feedback concerning their progress throughout their course. On Expedition courses, instructors will provide verbal evaluation to all students, and at course end, the student will receive a written evaluation that consists of both a letter grade and prose. A student must complete the course with an overall grade of C or better to ensure receipt of a NOLS diploma. The written evaluation will be kept with the student's records and can be requested in writing from the NOLS Expedition Admission Office. WEMT and WFR courses are offered through NOLS Wilderness Medicine. These courses lead to nationally recognized certification. Students must successfully complete written and practical examinations. Successful course completion on the Wilderness EMT course requires an average of 80%, and on the WFR an average of 70%. WFA certifications are awarded on a pass/fail basis.

- **SEPARATIONS**
  - In the event that a student were to become ill, injured, present a risk management hazard to the group or him/herself, or be separated for disciplinary reasons the student will be evacuated from the course by whatever means NOLS deems appropriate. Students who are separated for any reason will receive a "Student Separation Form" that documents their last day of attendance at NOLS. The refund policy for students attending a NOLS course on VA benefits corresponds to the "pro-rata plus 10%" refund policy mandated by law (reg. 21.4255-1.) Please refer to this webpage to learn more about separations from a course and how they affect your benefits and responsibility with the VA. Some things to consider: if you leave a NOLS course early, NOLS will be responsible for the unused tuition and will have to pay back the VA. NOLS will then seek to collect that unused tuition from the veteran, per our standard cancellation/separation policies for all students. NOLS pursuit of this tuition will be dependent on your situation. For example, if you separate for medical reasons and the VA does not request a refund from NOLS, NOLS will not pursue you for tuition. Whereas if you leave the course for motivational situations, NOLS will pursue tuition from you in order to refund the VA.

- **CANCELLATIONS**
  - VA refund policies apply.

NOLS Expeditions

NOLS Expedition courses take place in remote, backcountry settings. Because of this, the room and board portion of your course doesn't go toward renting an apartment and eating in a cafeteria, it goes toward rations, group equipment (tents, stoves, books), wilderness permits, and transportation to and from the remote places we operate in. When you see the "tuition" prices listed on our website, they include the cost of room and board.

Here's how it works for you:

- The VA will pay 80% of the total cost of your course if you are 100% eligible for your benefits.
- The other 20% of the total cost is room and board. As you know, the VA will not pay for room and board, and NOLS requires that you pay this portion on your NOLS Dashboard before your course begins.
- If you are eligible for the Basic Housing Allowance, you will receive a monthly disbursement from the VA based on the cost of living in Lander, WY (82520) where NOLS Rocky Mountain and NOLS Headquarters is based. To find out if you're eligible for the Basic Housing Allowance, you can give the VA a call at 1-888-442-4551.
- You are also required to pay the equipment deposit for your course prior to the start date and are responsible for all equipment costs.
- You have the option of purchasing the Tuition Insurance for your course. This is not a required fee.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Our NOLS Registrar is your School Certifying Official for your VA Benefits for Expeditions courses. They can be reached at registrar@nols.edu and they will follow up with you in typically 1-3 business days.

NOLS Wilderness Medicine

WILDERNESS MEDICINE COURSE OVERVIEW

We are delighted that you are interested in one of our NOLS courses. Veteran Education Benefits are approved for NOLS Wilderness Medicine courses held in Wyoming and so students using VA benefits must take a course within the state of Wyoming.

We are approved for all courses based in Wyoming: Wilderness First Responder (WFR), Wilderness First Aid (WFA), and Wilderness EMT (WEMT) at two specific locations, Wyss Campus in Lander, Wyoming and Teton Sciences School in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

We require VA students to start the enrollment process and paperwork at least 30 days or more before the start of the course.

DIRECTIONS

1. **PAYMENT INFORMATION**

    - **FOR WEMT COURSES:** After you register and enroll for the WEMT course in Wyoming with **$1,000** deposit paid, we will be sending you the deposit confirmation email. Also, please let us know when you have done this by emailing wilderness_medicine_financialaid@nols.edu
    - If you are using **Chapter 30, Montgomery GI Bill**, you will need to pay the course cost in full. The VA reimburses you for your eligible amount directly. Let us know about your Chapter 30 so we can notify VA in order for them to reimburse you.
    - If you are using **Chapter 33, Post 9/11 Benefits**, NOLS has been approved to receive tuition payment directly from the VA. You are responsible for the meals/lodging cost and any portion of tuition the VA will not pay based on your eligibility.
        i. Under Chapter 33, you may be eligible for the direct VA Monthly Housing Allotment. You should speak with your VA advisor to find out if you are eligible for the MHA, how much and when you would expect to receive it. For WEMT courses, the entire $1000 deposit is applied to meals and lodging portion of the tuition; your course location will require a small additional payment for meals and lodging. Since the VA Monthly Housing Allotment reimburses you, NOLS is required to collect the meals and lodging portion up front.
    - If you have paid out-of-pocket in excess of tuition or meals/lodging, refunds will be addressed promptly up to 30 business days.
    - As an estimate for further out-of-pocket expenses for the course, VA does not pay for the pre-requisites. VA also does not cover room and board because you will receive a Monthly Housing Allotment in the form of a stipend.

2. **VA PAPERWORK**
   After you are enrolled on the course, your next steps will be to scan and email the following documents to wilderness_medicine_financialaid@nols.edu:

   - DD 214.
   - Certificate of Eligibility (COE).
   - Military and education transcripts.
   - VA NOLS Personalized Shopping List (we'll provide this list to you).
   - Previous Education and Training (we'll provide this form to you).
   - If you have used benefits before at another educational institution, you will need to fill out and submit the 1995 Change of School form and send us a copy before submitting that directly to the VA.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Our NOLS Wilderness Medicine Financial Aid Coordinator is your School Certifying Official for your VA Benefits. They can be reached at wilderness_medicine_financialaid@nols.edu and they will follow up with you in typically 1-3 business days.

FAQ

DOES NOLS PARTICIPATE IN THE YELLOW RIBBON PROGRAM?
No.

DOES VA PAY FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN TUITION?
No. As an estimate for further out-of-pocket expenses for the course, VA does not pay for the pre-requisites. VA also does not cover room and board because you will receive a Monthly Housing Allotment in the form of a stipend.

I ALSO HAVE AMERICORPS AWARD OR 529 PLAN. CAN I USE IT IN ADDITION TO MY VA BENEFITS?
Yes. NOLS has an agreement with Western State Colorado University, which allows students to use 529 Education Savings Plan funds or AmeriCorps Segal Education Award funds to pay for course costs. Please see our Americorps and 529 Plan Overview for further information and let your NOLS VA School Certifying Official know if you want to use your award or plan.

IF THE COURSE STARTS WITHIN 30 DAYS, CAN I STILL ENROLL AND SUBMIT PAPERWORK?
No. We need at least 30 days or more to process your VA paperwork and certify you before the start of the course. We cannot make exceptions as it takes us time to process both enrollment and paperwork as well as working with VA to have them send the funds for your tuition approximately one week and half before the start of the course.

WHY CAN'T I USE MY VA BENEFITS FOR COURSES THAT AREN'T IN WYOMING?
We are only approved for VA benefit use in the state of Wyoming.

I DON'T HAVE MY DD214 YET. WHAT CAN I DO?

Please supply us with your Social Security number over the phone. We can then use that to get you certified with our school for VA benefits.