Tuition assistance transactions shift to 100 percent WebTA

By Susan Lawson,
Center for Personal and Professional Development Public Affairs

All Navy Tuition Assistance (TA) transactions have shifted to an entirely online process accessible through the Navy College Program (NCP) Web site WebTA portal.

Sailors applying for tuition assistance will now be required to use WebTA to process all tuition assistance applications.

"WebTA allows Sailors to complete all steps in the tuition assistance and education planning process online," said Mary Redd-Clary, the Navy's Voluntary Education (VOLED) program director.

"In the past, Sailors could start the TA application process, but were then required to circulate a printed copy for review and approval through the chain of command. Now, Sailors and Marines can complete the entire process virtually, and the final step is the paper-based submission, in person or via fax, to one of the Navy's 52 Navy College Offices (NCO) for delivery to the school," said Redd-Clary.

The WebTA application must be approved by the commanding officer or authorized command delegate.

"We recommend developing an internal command review process, as that process will ensure all management controls for Sailors TA requirements are met. These requirements, such as completion of warfare qualifications, should all be reviewed prior to the commanding officer's final approval," said Redd-Clary.

In addition to TA application processing through WebTA, the NCP site includes tools required for Sailors to develop an interactive education plan with direct support from NCO counselors. The site also provides Sailors and counselors access to Sailor/Marine Ace Registry Transcript (SMART) records.

Sailors can also search degree plans based on their ratings. These degree plans are offered through partner schools from the Navy College Program Distance Learning Partnership (NCPDLP).

"WebTA also offers commands an opportunity to provide more timely and interactive support of their Sailors as they work to identify their professional and academic pursuits," said Redd-Clary.

For more information about the Navy College Program, visit the Web site https://www.navycollege.navy.mil/.

Sailors assigned to CFAY and USNH Yokosuka, fill out the required forms for tuition assistance at the Navy College Office. All Navy Tuition Assistance transactions have shifted to an entirely online process accessible through the Navy College Program (NCP) Web site WebTA portal.

U.S. Navy file photo by PH1 Crystal Brooks

Sailors provided tools to maintain personnel records online

By Navy Personnel Command
Public Affairs

The Navy is planning to phase out enlisted field service records, and Sailors, who are ultimately responsible for maintaining their service records, need to access their records online.

Tools currently available, such as the self-service Electronic Service Record (ESR) and Web-Enabled Record Review (WERR), help Sailors review their records to determine if anything is missing or out-of-date.

ESR and WERR are two separate tools with differing functions. Some of the differences are illustrated below in order to clarify confusion between the two.

ESR is an online version of the service record and replaces the paper service record used in the past. Sailors review and update their personal emergency contact information and other service record items through their ESR self-service account. Service members with a Common Access Card access their accounts through the Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System (NSIPS) Web site at https://nsips.nmci.navy.mil. Sailors afloat access their ESR self-service account through the ship's NSIPS server.

ESR was implemented in 2006 via NAVADMIN 292/06. The more recent NAVADMIN 043/09 directs all Navy commands to use NSIPS/ESR as the single data entry point at the field level for all Sailors. "This means that clerks and supervisors working in the personnel office, as well as individual Sailors accessing their ESR, have this one place to enter personnel transactions, including those personnel transactions that affect pay," said Art Tate, NSIPS/ESR/CIMS implementation manager. "Sailors should review their ESR data and pages and then work with their personnel support office to ensure their data accurately reflects their personal and professional achievements."

It's helpful to remember that ESR is used to track a service member's status while serving. But once retired or separated from service that Sailor's ESR is turned off. ESR is simply an electronic version of the service record, not a permanent account like the Official Military Personnel File (OMPF), which Sailors view when using WERR.

Sailors use WERR online to review documents in their OMPF, commonly known as the "microfiche." WERR, available through the BUPERS Online Web site https://www.bol.navy.mil, displays individual scanned service record pages. Service members use WERR to view, download and print Page 13s, performance evaluations and other service record items.

Sailors should review their WERR to determine if any items are missing from their records. This is especially important, because the information in WERR is what selection boards review when considering candidates for advancement and special programs.

"Sailors should do a periodic validation of their records. Missing 'evals,' training documentation, et cetera, can cause a lot of problems – such as missing a promotion," said Chief Personnel Specialist (AW) Catherine Diaz, customer support leading chief petty officer at Navy Operational Support Center Fort Worth. "This doesn't have to happen."

When the paper records close out, scanned copies will be submitted for documentation in the OMPF and the original paper record will be given to the Sailor for historical retention. The Sailor should then ensure the self-service ESR account established, with the ESR data verified.

If service members find any discrepancies in either system, Diaz advises members to seek assistance with their servicing personnel office for correction.

To learn more about the differences between ESR and WERR and other tools used to validate personnel records information, see the Sailor Career Toolbox posted on the Navy Personnel Command Web site at http://www.npc.navy.mil/CareerInfo/StayNavyTools/CareerTools/.

New policy authorizes social media access, with caveats

By Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service

Attention all Facebookers, Twitter tweeters and YouTubers: a new Defense Department policy authorizes you to access these and other Web 2.0 platforms from nonclassified government computers, as long as it doesn't compromise operational security or involve prohibited activities or Web sites.

Defense Department officials issued the long-awaited policy, establishing consistent rules for all military members and employers.

Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Lynn III, who signed the policy, said it strikes a critical balance between the benefits and potential vulnerabilities of these applications. "This directive recognizes the importance of balancing appropriate security measures while maximizing the capabilities afforded by 21st century Internet tools," he said.

While authorizing access to these tools, the new policy also recognizes the importance of protecting military networks and operations.

For example, the new policy allows commanders to temporarily limit access as required to maintain operations security or address bandwidth constraints. It also prohibits malicious activity on military information networks and denies access to sites promoting prohibited activity such as gambling, pornography and hate crimes.

Until now, most servicemembers have been able to access social media platforms from their government computers, but policies have not been consistent across the department. The Marine Corps instituted a policy in early 2007 blocking Marines from accessing these sites through the Marine networks. Marines have, however, been permitted to access the sites from personal computers.