

Approval of Veterans' Programs – Background Information

Background

The concept of the State Approving Agency (SAA) originated with the Veteran's Readjustment Act of 1944, or the GI Bill of Rights, that was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This legislation has been recognized as one of the most important acts of Congress.

Congress also recognized that it was the responsibility of the state to determine the education of its citizens. Each state established a "State Approving Agency" and the governor of each state designated a state bureau or department as the SAA. The SAA would be supported through contract funding from the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This evolved as a truly cooperative federal-state effort that maintains states' rights while monitoring and protecting a federally-sponsored program administered under the terms and conditions of federal laws.

Initially, the SAA's role was to provide information on state-approved programs to the VA. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the SAAs were operating under specifically mandated federal standards, the Code of Federal Regulations, and providing approval and oversight activities. The SAAs became the primary source of assuring institutional accountability with specialized authorization exercising the state's authority to approve, disapprove and monitor education and training programs for veterans and began to assist states and the VA with exposing fraudulent and criminal activity involving the payment of veterans' benefits.

In 1948, SAA representatives met to form an organization, the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA). With the formation of NASAA, the SAAs began to create professional standards for themselves. The organization established a forum for the exchange of ideas, the promotion of high professional standards, policies and ethical practices among its members and representation on mutual interests of issues coming before the membership. It also worked to protect both the schools and the veterans from fraud, waste, and abuse. The organization continues to work to develop and maintain uniform standards for all SAAs.

NASAA encourages, supports, and fosters the collaboration of all agencies concerned with the administration of education and training programs for those eligible to receive VA benefits. Representatives of NASAA frequently appear before Congress to testify on veterans' education issues. The organization works to ensure that the greatest number of quality programs is available to those eligible for education and training benefits. Through the efforts of the SAAs and NASAA, states are better able to serve those who are eligible to receive veterans' education and training assistance benefits.

The fundamental role of the SAA is the same today as it was when they were founded. The SAAs and NASAA work in collaboration with their partners to fulfill their mission to do the following:

- Promote and safeguard quality education and training programs for veterans.
- Ensure greater educational training opportunities to meet the changing needs of veterans; and
- Assist the VA in preventing fraud, waste and abuse in the administration of the GI Bill®.

The primary responsibility and focus of the SAAs continues to be to review, evaluate, approve and oversee schools and training facilities to ensure quality programs of education and training under State and Federal criteria.

The state of Washington is required by federal law to protect the public investment in the education and training of veterans and other individuals eligible for benefits through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Washington Student Achievement Council's SAA evaluates and approves selected programs at degree-granting colleges and universities, flight schools, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training (OJT) sites - for the use of veterans' education and training benefits.

The goal is to ensure these programs meet minimum quality standards and comply with all federal and state laws and regulations. Additional responsibilities include:

- Conducting on-site compliance visits to educational institutions and training organizations with approved programs of study.
- Providing technical assistance with applications for approval.
- Providing information about training and education opportunities to veterans, military base personnel, employers and labor groups.
- Serving as a liaison between Washington veterans and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The WSAC/SAA works in collaboration with their partners statewide and nationally to fulfill their mission to:

- Promote and safeguard quality education and training programs for veterans;
- Ensure greater educational training opportunities to meet the changing needs of veterans; and
- Assist the VA in preventing fraud, waste and abuse in the administration of the GI Bill®.

The WSAC/SAA is supported through funding under contract from the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA).

Approval of non-degree programs at private trade schools, community colleges and career colleges is the responsibility of the [Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board](#).