

What is the State Approving Agency?

There are a few who do not know what the State Approving Agency is or what its responsibilities are. Each State has one and a few have two or three. Some states have one agency to approve all school programs, another agency to approve all on-the-job training programs, and then possibly a third agency to approve the flight schools. New Mexico has one State Approving Agency that approves school and on-the-job training programs. The Department of Veteran Affairs approves all flight schools.

Congress, in its wisdom, determined that each State should create an agency to approve the programs within their borders and to determine which programs were appropriate for veterans to enroll in, to utilize their VA educational benefits. The first State Approving Agencies (SAA) were formed for veterans after World War II.

In many ways the fundamental role of state approving agencies is the same today as it was when they were founded. As state entities acting on behalf of the Federal Government, the SAA's have been an outstanding example of the workability of the State-Federal partnership, allowing Federal interests to be pursued at the local level while preserving the identity, interests and sovereignty of States' Rights in education.

The primary responsibility and focus of the SAA's continues to be the review, evaluation and approval of quality programs of education and training under State and Federal criteria. SAA's conduct on-site compliance visits at approved institutions and schools seeking approval. They continue to provide technical assistance to all interested parties and are engaged in outreach activities to foster the usage of the GI Bill. Further, they continue to act as state liaison in assisting military installations to provide base personnel with quality educational offerings.

Yet, while the fundamental role of the SAA has remained the same, the SAA's have grown with the changes in our society over the past fifty years. They have become advocates for quality education and training for Veterans and other eligible persons. They have become educational partners with the institutions themselves, facilitating even greater and more diverse educational opportunities for Veterans. They have become strong advocates for the usage of the GI Bill and have developed a working partnership with the Federal government, which other Federal agencies have tried to emulate.

The programs which can be approved are found in institutions of higher learning (colleges and universities), non-degree institutions (vocational and technical schools), apprenticeship programs, other on-the-job training programs, and flight training schools. Each state reviews the appropriateness of each program as to its own standards and laws in addition to VA rules and regulations along with any other applicable laws and/or regulations. Then it is either approved or disapproved; continuous supervision is required of approved programs.

State Approving Agency Core Functions

- **Approval of programs**
- **Compliance of schools and training establishments**
- **Technical Assistance**
- **Liaison**
- **Contract Compliance**
- **Outreach**