

SAA Site Visit Checklist/Report

SAA Information

SAA Name: District of Columbia Higher Education Licensure Commission (DC HELC)

Address: 1050 First Street, NE, Washington DC 20002 (5th Floor)

SAA Director: Angela Lee

Site Visit Date: April 19, 2018

Site Visit Team members: Janice Fisher, Chief, Approvals, Compliance & Liaison Team; Shante' Kinzie-Calloway, Contracting Officer's Representative, Education Service, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs

SAA Organizational Structure

SAA Staff Members:

Ms. Angela Lee, Director; Jocelyn Harris, Education Compliance Specialist

How the SAA is situated in the organization:

Higher Education Licensure Commission (Angela Lee, Executive Director)

DC State Approving Agency (Angela Lee, Director)

Site visit team met with all SAA staff?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Training

SAA (professional) staff members:

In compliance with required VA Privacy training?

Yes ☒ No ☐

In compliance with required background investigations?

Yes ☒ No ☐

All staff attended the National Training Institute?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Attend NASAA Summer and Mid-Winter Conferences?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Attend other training?

Yes ☒ No ☐

(Southern SCO Conference, East Region Training, Compliance visits with MD SAA, VA webinars, etc.)

Provides training to School Certifying Officials or other entities (Stakeholders, training establishments, etc.)?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Facilitates conferences for School Certifying officials?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Comment: The SAA does not facilitate training; however, they are available to assist SCOs with any issues/questions they may have.

Communicates with Education Liaison Representative (ELR) frequently?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Meets with the ELR on at least a quarterly basis?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Analysis of Operations

General office hours? Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Do SAA staff members:

Telecommute?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Meet with Veterans in the office?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Have a proper/efficient method of tracking work in progress/completed?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Comment: The HELC internal database is used, in addition to tracking spreadsheets created and maintained by Ms. Harris.

Have secured office/working space?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Have proper systems of internal control?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Have access to VA systems?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Program Integrity

Incoming mail received, date-stamped, and tracked properly?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Ensure security of VA documents/records?

Yes ☒ No ☐

All laptops/computers secure?

Yes ☒ No ☐

File cabinets/storage areas secure?

Yes ☒ No ☐

VA record-keeping policies followed?

Yes ☒ No ☐

VA policies followed when using electronic means of sharing information/data?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Forms

All approval/compliance forms up-to-date, and with no discrepancies?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Tracking and Reporting

Information (compliance/approval data, outreach/liaison, etc.) properly documented?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Comment: Site Visit team was advised an internal tracking sheet is maintained to ensure timeliness.

Team recommends SAA provide this tracking sheet to the ELR, as well as documenting the original date

of receipt and approval package date of completion. ELR has to be able to determine that SAA has achieved the timeliness standards for successful performance.

Records organized? Yes ☒ No ☐

Activities (contacts, mail, purchases, etc.) tracked and recorded? Yes ☒ No ☐

Outreach reports completed and submitted to ELR when submitting claims for travel expense? Yes ☒ No ☐

SAA quarterly reports completed and submitted timely? Yes ☒ No ☐

Fiscal Management

Visit staff met with Ms.Sade Creighton-Wade (HELC Finance Specialist), and Ms. Jocelyn Harris to discuss fiscal management. Ms. Creighton-Wade did ensure the site visit team that administrative funds related to the SAA contract are kept in a separate account and are available for SAA purposes.

SAA has adequate funding to meet all contractual requirements? Yes ☐ No ☒

Comment: In an earlier discussion, Ms. Lee indicated that current funding is not adequate for the SAA; however, being under the current umbrella of the Higher Education Licensure Commission is beneficial for the SAA as the District is able to provide some funding to supplement the SAA contract.

Proper systems in place to capture contract related expenses? Yes ☒ No ☐

SAA invoices completed correctly including time records? Yes ☒ No ☐

Office supplies/equipment ordered, tracked, and purchased accordingly? Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Cars are: ____ Agency Owned or ____ State Fleet or X Personally Owned, and are reimbursed for accordingly? Yes ☒ No ☐

Fuel/maintenance tracked and paid for accordingly? Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A ☐

Clear division of VA funding in comparison with other State funding? Yes ☒ No ☐

Audits? Yes ☒ No ☐

Comments: The Office of Risk Management, in conjunction with the Office of Budget and Procurement conducts audits for the District of Columbia HELC. All agencies are audited by cycle, not every year; however, entities receiving federal funds are typically audited every five years. The SAA has not been audited, as the SAA has only been with the agency for two years. When an audit is performed, results are shared with agency leadership and they are typically given one year to review the findings and correct any deficiencies.

It was noted that VA, as the grantor, can perform an audit at any time.

Administrative Funding Account

Separate account or coding exists for administrative funds? Yes ☒ No ☐

SAA has full access to administrative funds? Yes ☒ No ☐

Administrative expense account is properly maintained and is not utilized for other state programs? Yes ☒ No ☐

SAA knows full amount of cumulative administrative funds available? Yes ☒ No ☐

Fees related to rent, equipment, and overhead charged appropriately? Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Contractual Requirements

SAA is currently meeting its contract obligations? Yes ☒ No ☐

Any current concerns regarding contract requirements the SAA would like to discuss? Yes ☒ No ☐

Comment: The SAA expressed concern related to the requirements to maintain access to VA systems (i.e., multiple passwords/ log-in requirements).

Outreach

SAA performing Outreach? Yes ☒ No ☐

Please list: Numerous calls/office visits to provide information related to VA Education Benefits and school/institution approval requirements.

Does SAA have a website? Yes ☒ No ☐

Comments: Site Visit team could not determine if the website documented the role of the SAA for schools and Veterans seeking information in regard to GI Bill.

Approvals

Approval requests handled according to contract requirements? Yes ☒ No ☐

Any approval files reviewed? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, please list:

General Assembly

TEACHNOW

VETS Group

If discrepancies please list: NA

Comment: Review of electronic files did not document timeliness, but SAA indicates an internal tracking system is in place and can be viewed at any time.

Compliance Surveys

At least one professional SAA staff member has access to VA systems to conduct compliance surveys?

Yes ☒ No ☐

SAA on track to complete required number of compliance surveys as outlined in the business plan?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Challenges

None reported.

Outbrief

This is the second year HELC has contracted with VA as the DC SAA. The SAA received a Satisfactory rating last year, and are on target to meet contractual requirements for FY18.

Best Practices

Since the HELC is also responsible for issuing educational licenses for institutions to operate in the District of Columbia, they have decided to review their approved list of entities that have received licenses; however, are not VA approved, to offer assistance in seeking VA approval.

Recommendations

Site Visit team recommendations: SAA ensure approval folders notate original date of receipt as well as tracking for timeliness.