



**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR PURSUANT TO PUBLIC ACT 14-131
Executive Director Timothy D. Larson
August 26, 2019**

The Office of Higher education hereby submits its annual report in accordance with **Public Act 14-131, AAC THE FUNDINGS OF THE MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TASK FORCE:**

The Office of Higher Education has been designated by the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs as the State Approving Agency (hereinafter, "SAA") in Connecticut since 1993.

The SAA is responsible for the approval and oversight for Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), Non-College Degree (NCD) schools, training facilities, hospitals, apprenticeship and on-the-job training, and license and certification organizations. Approved facilities may enroll qualified veterans and their dependents to use their GI Bill educational benefits at their school. The SAA's primary function is to approve institutions and their programs, conduct visits to approved schools regarding compliance with the law, provide outreach to veterans and their dependents, train School Certifying Officials, and work with the National Association of State Approving Agencies and VA Central Office to promote policies and procedures to safeguard the citizens of Connecticut.

An eligible VA beneficiary selects an institution and provides the School Certifying Official (SCO) with their VA issued Certificate of Eligibility and separation documents (DD-214.) The SCO certifies the beneficiary's enrollment to the VA to initiate benefit payment to the school or beneficiary, depending on which part of the Law they qualify and select. The amount of the award will vary based on the Chapter of the Law in which the VA beneficiary qualifies, the percentage of their eligibility, their delimiting date, other sources utilized beyond the GI Bill, and the type of school the beneficiary attends (public, private, degree granting, technical school, apprenticeship, high school, licensure, and/or examination training facility.)

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs Report Control System, 20-0260, an average of 3,400 VA beneficiaries received GI Bill funding to support their educational and training objectives, per month, during the Federal FY 2018 (October 1, 2017-September 30, 2018)

The VA's Regional Processing Office in Buffalo, NY, distributes funding to eligible VA beneficiaries based on the school or training facilities enrollment data certified through the VA's online certification system, VA Once (term dates, number of credit or clock hours pursued, amount of tuition and fees charges, and rate of pursuit.) The SAA's primary function is to approve programs and facilities for the GI Bill. SAA staff conducts compliance survey visits to approved facilities to ensure they remain in compliance with

Title 38 and 10 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, and conducts outreach and liaison events throughout the state to promote the use of the GI Bill and to train school officials.

The Office of Higher Education also conducts an Alternate Route to Certification (hereinafter, "ARC") program, enabling mid-career adults to enter the teaching field with special qualifications via an accelerated curriculum.

Public Act 14-131 requires that "licensing authorities," a category that specifically includes the Office of Higher Education, submit an annual report regarding applications for military training evaluations by service members. The Act requires information addressing the following:

1. The number of service members who applied for a military training evaluation, license, certificate, registration or educational credit;
2. The number of applications that were approved;
3. The number of applications that were denied, and data on the reason(s) for such denial;
4. The processing time for applications by service members, as well as the average processing time for all applications;
5. Efforts by the licensing authority to educate service members and make accessible programs that provide education and training necessary for licensure, certification, registration and/or educational credit;
6. Information on whether or not existing law effectively addresses challenges faced by service members returning or relocating to Connecticut; and
7. Recommendations on improving the licensing authority's abilities with regard to these items.

Each item is addressed in the order that it appears:

1. The SAA does not accept applications or registrations for licenses, certificates or educational credit. The SAA does not have access to specific enrollment data or denial of benefit determinations issued by the VA. Processing benefit certifications and claims is a function of the VA Regional Processing Offices. Additionally, the certificate granted upon successful completion of the ARC program does not fall within this Act.
2. No applications have been received
3. No applications have been received
4. Not applicable
5. Annually, the SAA attends many career fairs and outreach events (Heroes4Hire, job fairs, information sessions, Stand Down for Homeless Veterans, etc.) to promote the use of the GI Bill and to educate veterans about the benefits available to them. The SAA encourages licensure and certification organizations to apply for SAA approval so that veterans may receive reimbursement for the cost of licensing and certification tests and exams. Further the ARC program accepts Troops to Teachers tuition assistance, and as of May 2019, offers discounted tuition to military connected ARC students. The reduced tuition policy was marketed in a widely-read military publication through print and electronic ads, and by communications officials at the Navy Base in Groton via social media. The Office of Higher Education's website provides service members and the general public with a framework of post-secondary educational opportunities, including cost comparisons, program lists, and links to websites of specific institutions. Additionally, links are provided, pursuant to this Act, to the Department of

Veterans' Affairs informational site and the website maintained by the executive branch regarding programs and opportunities for veterans.

6. Current law regarding educational and vocational opportunities for service members can always be buttressed with further enhancements to ensure that service members are able to take full advantage of the myriad of programs available to them.
7. The Office of Higher Education remains committed to a progressive and beneficial infrastructure to assist and benefit all service members, and will take every opportunity to encourage service members to take advantage of the programs available in cooperation with other agencies and institutions of higher education.