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July 2020

MILITARY AND VETERAN SUPPORT

Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers Obtain Civilian Employment

Accessible Version

GAO-20-416

GAO Highlights

Highlights of GAO-20-416, a report to congressional committees

July 2020

MILITARY AND VETERAN SUPPORT

Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers Obtain Civilian Employment

Why GAO Did This Study

Roughly 250,000 servicemembers transition from military to civilian life every year, and 45 programs across the federal government facilitate their civilian employment, according to a previous GAO survey. These programs provide military families—servicemembers, veterans, spouses, and dependents—with a range of career assistance in the form of education, employment, and self-employment services. The conference report accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 included a provision for GAO to assess some of these benefits and programs.

This report examines (1) the extent to which programs provided similar services to similar populations and how agencies coordinate to manage any overlap and fragmentation, and (2) agency efforts to assess program effectiveness.

GAO analyzed responses to its 2018 survey of federal agency officials. The survey was administered during previous work to develop a program inventory. GAO also categorized programs by the populations served and services provided.

What GAO Recommends

GAO makes three recommendations for agencies to develop performance goals and assess program outcomes. The agencies generally agreed with GAO's recommendations, but DHS did not. GAO maintains that developing performance goals and outcome measures would help DHS make resource determinations and achieve program purposes.

View GAO-20-416. For more information, contact Cindy Brown Barnes at (202) 512-7215 or brownbarnesc@gao.gov

What GAO Found

The 45 federal programs that provided career assistance to military families were administered by 11 agencies and frequently provided similar services to similar populations, based on GAO's analysis of survey data; however, the programs reported coordinating in various ways to manage overlap and fragmentation. All 11 agencies administered programs for veterans and seven agencies also administered programs for servicemembers (see table below). These programs offered similar services, such as 25 programs that offered educational counseling and 22 programs that offered employment counseling. Coordination efforts included co-located services, participant referrals, and interagency agreements to share information.

Number of Career Assistance Programs for Military Families by Federal Agency Administering, Fiscal Year 2017

Population served	DOD	VA	SBA	DHS	Other	Total programs
Servicemembers	10	9	5	3	3	**30**
Veterans	4	12	5	4	9	**34**
Spouses	4	7	4	3	1	**19**
Dependents	2	7	3	2	2	**16**

Source: GAO analysis of survey data reported by administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

Note: Programs may serve more than one population type: servicemembers, veterans, spouses, and dependents. DOD = Department of Defense, VA = Department of Veterans Affairs, SBA = Small Business Administration, DHS = Department of Homeland Security: Coast Guard, Other = Departments of Agriculture, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Labor, and State, and Office of Personnel Management.

Agencies varied in the extent to which they assessed the effectiveness of their programs. Eight of 45 programs reported having no goals that define program achievements. Also, while the majority of programs reported having either tracked outcomes or conducted recent evaluations, nine of 45 programs reported taking neither step. According to agency officials, these programs had not assessed outcomes for various reasons, such as that the program was relatively small, not statutorily required to set performance goals, or lacked a data collection system to track outcomes. However, by establishing a system to define goals and assess outcomes—leading practices for monitoring program performance—agencies are better able to demonstrate whether programs are achieving their intended results and ensure resources are being appropriately targeted to provide career assistance to military families.

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Abbreviations

COOL	Credentialing Opportunities Online
DANTES	Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOD	Department of Defense
DOE	Department of Energy
DOL	Department of Labor
Education	Department of Education
MyCAA	My Career Advancement Account
REAP	Reserve Educational Assistance Program
SBA	Small Business Administration
SECO	Spouse Education and Career Opportunities
TAP	Transition Assistance Program
USMAP	United Services Military Apprenticeship Program
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VHA	Veterans Health Administration
VITAL	Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership
VR&E	Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment
WARTAC	Warrior Training Advancement Course

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July 9, 2020

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Over a million servicemembers will transition from military to civilian life over the next 4 years, according to projections from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The federal government's commitment to those serving in the military includes helping them succeed in the civilian workforce once they leave the military. This investment in servicemembers continues after they leave military service and also includes their spouses and dependents who are affected by the transition to civilian life. Multiple federal agencies administer the programs that provide education, employment, and self-employment assistance to servicemembers, veterans, and their spouses and dependents.[1]

The conference report accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 included a provision for GAO to assess the panoply of benefits and programs available government-wide to separating servicemembers intended to provide the skills and education necessary for them to achieve meaningful and fulfilling employment in their civilian lives.[2]

[1]For purposes of this report, we refer to education, employment, and self-employment services collectively as "career assistance" since the programs facilitate attaining a career in the civilian workforce. In addition, we use the term "military families" to collectively refer to servicemembers, veterans, spouses, and dependents.

[2]H.R. Rep. No. 115-404, at 842 (2017).

This report is the second to be issued in response to the conference report provision. We previously issued an inventory of the federal programs we identified as providing assistance to military families. The inventory included information from the administering agencies on eligibility for program services and benefits, the programs' objectives, and available services.[3] This report examines (1) the extent to which the programs provide similar services to similar populations, and how agencies coordinate to manage any duplication, overlap, and fragmentation; and (2) what federal agencies have done to assess the effectiveness of programs to help servicemembers achieve civilian employment.

To address our objectives, we analyzed responses to a GAO survey of federal agency officials. This survey was administered to officials at 11 federal agencies in 2018 as part of our previous work to develop the program inventory. The survey included questions about each program's fiscal year 2017 federal obligations and participation levels, outcomes and evaluations, and agency coordination efforts. We received completed survey responses from all 11 agencies. We reviewed survey responses and contacted the agencies to clarify any missing or ambiguous responses. In addition, we obtained fiscal year 2018 obligations from the agencies' publically available budget documents when possible and verified these amounts with the agencies.

To examine areas of overlap among federal programs, we categorized programs by the populations they served and compared those categories to the services each program provided, as reported in our survey. We did not independently verify the information provided by agency officials in response to the survey. We also describe current program information in limited circumstances where the agencies updated some of their responses to our previously administered surveys. Consequently, some information about services offered or eligibility may not be comparable to what was previously reported in our inventory of federal programs for programs that have since updated their eligibility rules or were discontinued. We also analyzed the agencies' survey responses for examples of activities taken to coordinate.

[3]See GAO, *Military and Veteran Support: Detailed Inventory of Federal Programs to Help Servicemembers Achieve Civilian Employment*, GAO-19-97R (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 17, 2019).

To examine agency efforts to assess program performance, we reviewed survey responses to questions about whether the programs had established performance measures and goals. To the extent the programs reported conducting program evaluations as well, we obtained copies of the evaluations mentioned in the surveys and reviewed those that were impact or effectiveness studies.[4]

We conducted this performance audit from February 2019 to July 2020 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Our 2019 report identified 45 federal programs government-wide and one tax expenditure that facilitate obtaining and transitioning to civilian employment by providing career assistance (see app. I for a complete list).[5]

These programs varied in funding and participation levels and some served all categories of beneficiaries—servicemembers, veterans, and their family members while others served a single group of beneficiaries. In fiscal year 2017, agencies reported that these programs obligated about $14.3 billion dollars to fund services for their beneficiaries. The Post-9/11 GI Bill's obligations—the largest of all the programs—accounted for more than two-thirds of the fiscal year 2017 obligations and reported serving 622,528 beneficiaries during the same period (see fig. 1).[6] Agencies reported that the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program and the Dependents Educational Assistance Program (or

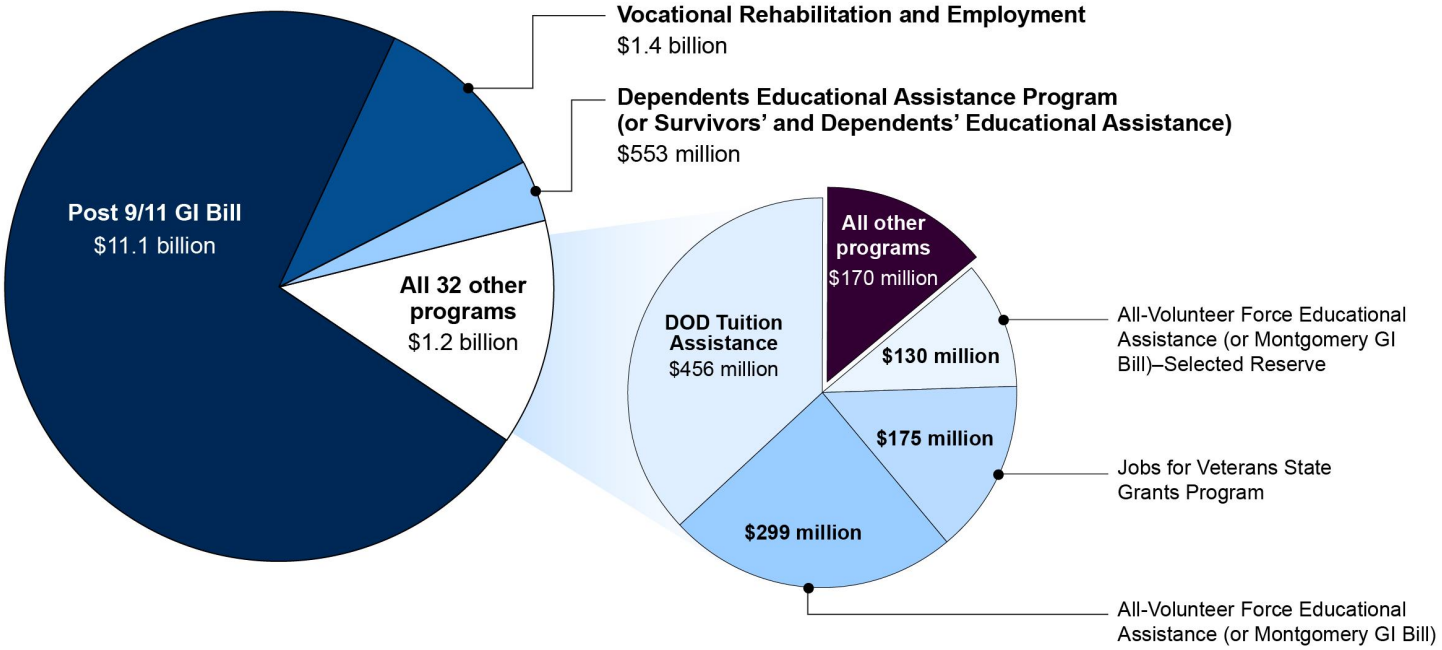
[4]We also conducted a literature review to identify other federally funded impact or effectiveness studies of the programs in our survey and did not find additional studies.

[5]GAO-19-97R.

[6]In addition to the federal obligations for these programs, we identified one tax expenditure related to career assistance for military families. Specifically, the Department of Treasury estimated that the tax exemption for GI Bill Benefits was $1.69 billion in fiscal year 2017 and $1.79 billion in fiscal year 2018.

Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance) were the next largest programs by amount of obligations, and served a combined total of over 200,000 beneficiaries.[7] See appendix II for reported obligations and appendix III for reported participation levels for all programs.

Figure 1: Three Programs Accounted for Majority of Federal Career Assistance Obligations to Facilitate Civilian Employment, Fiscal Year 2017



Source: GAO Analysis of obligation data provided by federal agencies operating these programs. | GAO-20-416

Duplication, Overlap, and Fragmentation

Though this report focuses exclusively on career assistance for military families, we have previously reported on overlap and duplication in federal employment and training programs for the workforce in general.[8]

[7]It is difficult to assess the total number of individual participants served across all 45 programs because it is not known how many beneficiaries of each program also received services from another program. In addition, we assessed participation levels separately for each population served—servicemembers, veterans, spouses, and dependents—to the extent agencies differentiated them when responding to our survey.

[8]See GAO, *Multiple Employment and Training Programs: Providing Information on Colocating Services and Consolidating Administrative Structures Could Promote Efficiencies*, GAO 11-92 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 13, 2011), and GAO, *Employment and Training Programs: Department of Labor Should Assess Efforts to Coordinate Services Across Programs*, GAO-19-200 (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 28, 2019).

In those reports, we noted the advantages and disadvantages associated with overlapping services within a programmatic or policy area. For example, in 2019 we noted that the involvement of multiple agencies may be appropriate or beneficial due to the magnitude or complexity of a policy area. However, we also noted that overlaps in program services may hinder people from seeking assistance and frustrate employers and program administrators. We also noted that offering the same services does not necessarily indicate an inefficient use of resources, but offering similar services can indicate a greater need for coordination to leverage existing resources.[9]

Our previous work established definitions for fragmentation, overlap, and duplication as follows:[10]

- Fragmentation is when more than one federal agency is involved in the same broad area of national need and opportunities exist to improve service delivery.
- Overlap occurs when multiple agencies or programs have similar goals, engage in similar activities or strategies to achieve their goals, or target similar beneficiaries.
- Duplication occurs when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities or provide the same services to the same beneficiaries.

We used these same definitions in this report.

Importance of Program Performance Assessment

Evaluative information helps the executive branch and congressional committees make decisions about the programs they oversee; that is, evaluative information tells them whether and why a program is working well or not. We have previously reported that a program performance assessment system is important for obtaining such evaluative

[9]See GAO-19-200, and also GAO, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: More Complete and Accurate Information Needed on Employment and Training Programs*, GAO-19-56 (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 20, 2018).

[10]GAO, *Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication: An Evaluation and Management Guide*, GAO-15-49SP (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 14, 2015) and also *2019 Annual Report: Additional Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Billions in Financial Benefits,* GAO-19-285SP (Washington, D.C.: May 21, 2019).

information.[11] A program performance assessment system is a component of effective program management and contains three key elements:

1. Program goals communicate what the agency proposes to accomplish and allow agencies to assess or demonstrate the degree to which those desired results were achieved.
2. Performance measures are concrete, objective, observable conditions that permit the assessment of progress made toward the agency's goals. Performance measures may address the direct products and services delivered by a program (outputs), or the results of those products and services (outcomes). Leading practices in performance planning previously identified by GAO emphasize that agencies should make every attempt to identify and use outcome goals whenever possible to reflect the results of their activities.[12]
3. Program evaluations are individual systematic studies using performance measures and other information to answer specific questions about how well a program is meeting its objectives. These evaluations typically examine a broader range of information on program performance and its context than is feasible to monitor on an ongoing basis.

[11]GAO, *Program Evaluation: Strategies to Facilitate Agencies' Use of Evaluation in Program Management and Policy Making*, GAO-13-570 *(Washington, D.C.: June 26, 2013*); *Performance Measurement and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationships*, GAO-11-646SP (Washington, D.C.: May 2011); and *Managing for Results: Enhancing Agency Use of Performance Information for Management Decision Making*, GAO-05-927 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 9, 2005).

[12]GAO, *The Results Act: An Evaluators Guide to Assessing Agency Annual Performance Plans*. GAO/GGD-10.1.20 (Washington, D.C.: April 1998).

Career Assistance Programs for Military Families Frequently Overlapped and Agencies Reported Coordination for Most Programs

Programs Frequently Provided Overlapping Services

The 45 programs that provided career assistance to military families were administered by 11 federal agencies and frequently overlapped by providing similar services to similar populations, according to our survey analysis. For example, programs reported providing educational counseling (in 25 of 35 programs that offered education assistance), résumé assistance (in 22 of 32 programs that offered employment assistance), and mentoring (in 12 of 19 programs that offered self-employment assistance), as shown in table 1. In addition, our analysis of survey responses found these services were provided to similar populations. For example, of the 25 programs that offered educational counseling, 15 provided similar types of services to a similar target population—servicemembers (for specific services by target population, see app. IV).

Table 1: Most Common Services Provided in Career Assistance Programs for Military Families, Fiscal Year 2017

Specific service offered	Servicemembers	Veterans	Spouses	Dependents	Total
Programs providing education assistance (35 Programs)					
Educational counseling	15	19	11	8	25
Referrals to additional services	15	20	11	9	22
Educational needs assessment	12	17	11	8	21
Programs providing employment assistance (32 Programs)					
Referrals to additional services	17	18	12	9	23
Employment counseling	14	16	9	6	22
Résumé assistance	13	16	9	6	22
Programs providing self-employment assistance (19 Programs)					
Referrals to additional resources	14	14	11	8	17
Mentoring	10	9	7	4	12
Training in developing a business plan	11	11	7	6	11

Source: GAO analysis of survey data reported by administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

Note: Some programs were reported to offer more than one type of assistance (education, employment, or self-employment) and served more than one population. The program information in this table was provided by agency officials; we did not independently verify it.

In addition, the programs were fragmented across multiple agencies, and program participation levels varied widely. For example, seven agencies administered the 30 career assistance programs serving servicemembers, 11 administered the 34 programs serving veterans, six administered the 19 programs serving spouses, and five administered the 16 programs serving dependents (see table 2). Further, participation levels ranged widely among programs targeted toward specific populations. For example, the Post-9/11 GI Bill administered by VA reported serving 622,528 servicemembers and veterans, the most of any program. In contrast, Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership reported serving the fewest servicemembers (37) while Warriors to Workforce reported serving the fewest veterans (31), both also administered by VA.[13] See appendix III for each program's fiscal year 2017 participation levels.

[13]We analyzed participation levels separately for each population served—servicemembers, veerans, spouses, and dependents—to the extent agencies differentiated them when responding to our survey.

Table 2: Number of Career Assistance Programs for Military Families by Population Served and Federal Agency Administering, Fiscal Year 2017

Population served	DOD	VA	SBA	DHS: Coast Guard	Education	DOL	Other[a]	Total programs
Servicemembers	10	9	5	3	—	1	2	30
Veterans	4	12	5	4	2	2	5	34
Spouses	4	7	4	3	—	1	—	19
Dependents	2	7	3	2	1	1	—	16

Legend: Programs may serve more than one population type: servicemembers, veterans, spouses, and dependents. DOD = Department of Defense, VA = Department of Veterans Affairs, SBA = Small Business Administration, DHS = Department of Homeland Security, Education = Department of Education, and DOL = Department of Labor

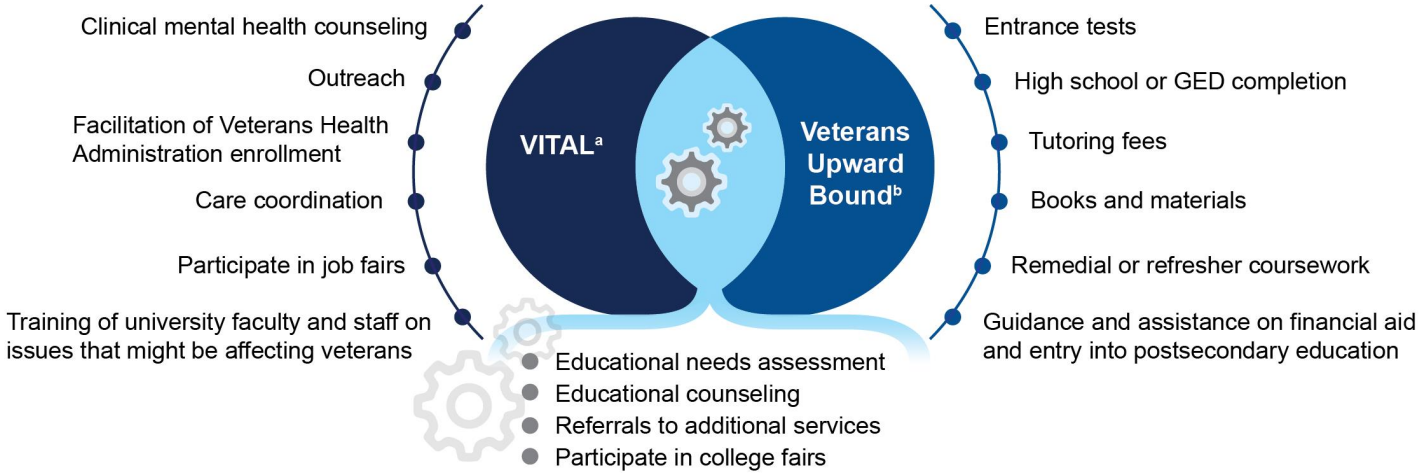
Source: GAO analysis of survey data reported by administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

[a]The Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Health and Human Services, and State and the Office of Personnel Management each administered one program serving veterans. The Department of State's program also served transitioning servicemembers and Agriculture's program also served spouses.

While these fragmented programs may have overlapped, they may also have offered different types of services in pursuit of similar program goals. For example, Education's Veterans Upward Bound and VA's Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) both help veterans complete postsecondary education. As such, both programs included services such as educational needs assessment, educational counseling, and participating in college fairs. However, each program also provided different services in pursuit of that goal (see fig. 2). In particular, VITAL provided mental health support and healthcare to veterans to support their successful integration into college and university campuses.[14] In comparison, Veterans Upward Bound helped veterans develop academic and other skills necessary for acceptance into and academic success in postsecondary education, such as with remedial or refresher coursework.

[14]According to VA, servicemembers, spouses, and dependents are eligible for the services provided by VITAL and their level of service is based on the individual's Veterans Health Administration (VHA) eligibility and an assessment of his or her needs. For example, the program provides spouses and dependent children information, outreach, care coordination and referrals to outside providers, such as campus or community providers, for clinical services. Similarly, the program provides servicemembers or veterans with information, outreach, care coordination, and referrals to Vet Centers or outside providers for clinical services.

Figure 2: Comparison of Services Provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) Program and the Department of Education's Veterans Upward Bound Program



Source: GAO analysis of survey data reported by administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

[a] VITAL provides mental health support and healthcare to veterans to support their successful integration into college and university campuses.

[b] Veterans Upward Bound prepares, motivates, and assists military veterans in developing academic and other skills necessary for acceptance into and success in a program of postsecondary education.

Our prior work has examined how interagency coordination can address fragmentation and overlap among federal career assistance programs for military families. For example, our review of the Post-9/11 GI Bill in 2011 found that applying some of Education's practices for administering federal student aid could improve VA's administration of the Post-9/11 GI Bill program such as streamlining how funds are returned and reconciling payment differences.[15] In response to our recommendation, VA and Education met to discuss and share information about the processes used by each agency to deliver and recoup funds used for educational purposes.[16] In another example, our review of the DOD Transition

[15]GAO, *Veterans' Education Benefits: Enhanced Guidance and Collaboration Could Improve Administration of the Post-9/11 GI Bill Program*, GAO-11-356R (Washington, D.C.: May 5, 2011).

[16]We recommended that VA collaborate with Education, among others, to leverage their experience in delivering aid. The recommendation and these findings were also included as part of our 2013 annual report examining duplication, overlap, and fragmentation (DOF) in the federal government. We identified the Post-9/11 GI Bill as part of the Higher Education DOF issue area that also included other education benefits administered by VA such as the Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty, the Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserve, and the Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance Program. GAO, *2013 Annual Report: Actions Needed to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits*, GAO-13-279SP, (Washington D.C.: April 9, 2013).

Assistance Program in 2014 found that while DOD, DOL, and VA had established certain measures to assess program performance, their evaluation approach was incomplete and focused on basic evaluations over higher impact program evaluations.[17] In response to our recommendation, DOD worked in concert with its interagency partners to issue a plan which described how the partners assess effectiveness based on outcome measures and indicators.[18]

Agencies Reported Coordinating on All but One, Discontinued, Program

The agencies we surveyed reported taking at least one action to coordinate with other federal agencies across almost all of the programs (44 of 45), which included co-locating services and developing interagency agreements (see table 3). For example:

- VA reported that it partnered with DOD to provide Warrior Training Advancement Course (WARTAC) classes on some military installations. In addition, VA officials said the WARTAC program worked closely with DOD's SkillBridge program. DOD officials confirmed that the two programs coordinate via agreements established at each installation.
- VA also reported that it entered into a memorandum of agreement with Department of Labor (DOL) to share labor market information with participants in Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment to help them make informed decisions regarding career options to pursue.[19] VA officials also told us that this labor market information helps guide

[17]GAO, *Transitioning Veterans: Improved Oversight Needed to Enhance Implementation of the Transition Assistance Program*, GAO-14-144, (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 5, 2014).

[18]We recommended that DOD work with partner agencies to develop a written strategy for determining which Transition Assistance Program components to evaluate and the most appropriate evaluation methods. In response, DOD worked in concert with its interagency partners to issue a Transition Assistance Interagency Evaluation Plan for Fiscal Year 2017-2018.

[19]In addition to the memorandum of agreement and in response to a GAO recommendation, in 2015, VA and DOL revised the interagency handbook they had compiled to guide the roles of their respective staff in coordinating services to disabled veterans. The revision outlined how agency staff should coordinate efforts to provide veterans with labor market information when developing employment and training objectives and assist them in selecting training and credentialing opportunities as a part of their rehabilitation plans. See GAO, *Veterans' Employment and Training: Better Targeting, Coordinating, and Reporting Needed to Enhance Program Effectiveness*, GAO-13-29 (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 13, 2012).

the career counseling it provides under other programs, such as VetSuccess on Campus and Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36).

- The interagency governance structure for the Transition Assistance Program was established through a memorandum of understanding among DHS (Coast Guard), DOD, DOL Education, Office of Personnel Management, Small Business Administration, and VA. This coordinating body helps ensure DOD and its interagency partners provide services without unnecessary overlap and duplication, among other things.

Table 3: Number of Federal Career Assistance Programs Reporting Actions to Coordinate Programs that Help Military Families, Fiscal Year 2017

Category of actions	Number of programs reporting the action
Coordination of participant services (e.g., co-enrollment and co-location of services, participant referrals)	29
Interagency collaboration, workgroups, and agreements	23
Provision of guidance and technical assistance	15
Grants management	1

Source: GAO analysis of survey data reported by administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

Note: Program officials representing each of the 44 coordinating programs GAO reviewed were asked to identify up to three actions they had taken to coordinate with other federal agencies that provide similar services to military families. A program could have reported taking more than one type of coordination action.

While agencies reported taking action to coordinate across most programs, Education reported that Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success did not coordinate with other federal agencies. According to Education officials, the intent of the program was to assist veteran college students with enrollment, housing, and financial aid, among other things, and did not include coordination with other agencies. However, according to Education officials, the program did not receive appropriations for fiscal year 2018 and thus has ended.[20]

[20]According to Education officials, the Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success program was funded in fiscal year 2015 and ended in fiscal year 2018 when no new appropriation was provided.

Agencies Varied in the Extent to Which They Assessed Program Performance

Agencies administering career assistance programs for military families varied in the extent to which they assessed how effectively the programs were performing. Our previous work has identified three key elements of a performance assessment system, including performance goals, related performance measures, and program evaluations.[21] However, 8 of 45 programs reported they had not established performance goals. Further, although each program reported assessing performance through a measure or other means, 9 of 45 had not assessed the extent to which they had achieved intended results. Those nine programs reported they had not established outcomes measures or recently conducted program evaluations.

Performance Goals

Performance goals with specific targets define the level of performance or results an agency expects its programs to achieve in the near term. They allow an agency to compare the program's actual performance against expected results.[22] In answering our survey, agencies reported that 37 of 45 programs had clearly defined goals. For example, DOL reported that it set performance goals for the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program of placing 69 percent of participants in jobs and an overall average hourly wage at placement of $12.50, and the program met both those goals in fiscal year 2016. However, eight programs did not establish performance goals (see table 4). Federal standards for internal control call for management to define objectives clearly to enable the identification of risks and define risk tolerances.[23]

[21]GAO, *Veterans Justice Outreach Program: VA Could Improve Management by Establishing Performance Measures and Fully Assessing Risks*. GAO-16-393. (Washington, D.C.: Apr 28, 2016); *Program Evaluation: Strategies to Facilitate Agencies' Use of Evaluation in Program Management and Policy Making*, GAO-13-570 (Washington, D.C.: June 26, 2013); *Performance Measurement and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationships,* GAO-11-646SP (Washington, D.C.: May 2011); and *Managing for Results: Enhancing Agency Use of Performance Information for Management Decision Making*, GAO-05-927 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 9, 2005).

[22]GAO-16-393.

[23]GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO-14-704G. (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 2014).

Table 4: Programs Reporting No Performance Goals for Career Assistance for Military Families

Agency	Program	Agency's explanation for why the program does not have performance goals
Department of Defense (DOD)	DOD Discretionary Certification & Licensure (the Military Services' Credentialing Opportunities Online [COOL] programs)	DOD is waiting to finalize its instructions for this program before designing and implementing performance goals and measures.[a]
Department of Education (Education)	Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant	There are a relatively small number of participants served by the program (57 in fiscal year 2017, according to our survey) and, as such, Education determined it would be an inefficient use of resources to develop program goals and track outcomes.
Department of Homeland Security (DHS): Coast Guard	Coast Guard Spouse Employment Assistance Program	The Coast Guard is not statutorily required to have this program and faces personnel and budgetary limitations. Therefore, it does not track associated data or outcomes with services provided.
DHS: Coast Guard	Coast Guard Transition Assistance Program	DHS is currently developing performance goals per a prior GAO recommendation.[b]
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36)	Officials face difficulties tracking outcomes because this is a one-time service and recipients are not tracked or case managed after completion of the service.
VA	VetSuccess on Campus	Officials face difficulties tracking outcomes because this is a one-time service and recipients are not tracked or case managed after completion of the service.
VA	Post-9/11 GI Bill	VA is developing performance goals for retention and graduation rates for Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries, but the process depends on further development of its IT systems in order to collect the underlying data.[c]
Multiple agencies: DOD, VA	Tuition Assistance Top Up	Because the program is an additional benefit tied to DOD Tuition Assistance and VA GI Bill benefits, performance for Tuition Assistance Top Up is already captured by the other two programs.

Source: GAO survey and interviews with agency officials. | GAO-20-416

[a]We previously identified challenges that DOD faced in implementing its credentialing program, including a lack of performance measures and goals. In that report, we recommended that DOD develop and implement measures early in the program's development rather than waiting until the agency developed final program instructions. As of November 2019, DOD does not plan to implement performance measures and said it already captures credential attainment and associated costs which provide basic information to gauge the program's performance. However, we maintained that capturing data to assess a program does not constitute measuring an agency's progress against a goal. See GAO, *Military Personnel: Performance Measures Needed to Determine How Well DOD's Credentialing Program Helps Servicemembers*, GAO-17-133 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 17, 2016).

[b]GAO, *Transitioning Veterans: Coast Guard Needs to Improve Data Quality and Monitoring of Its Transition Assistance Program.* GAO-18-135. (Washington. D.C.: Apr 19, 2018).

[c]We previously recommended enhancements to VA's data collection and performance measures for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. As of December 2019, VA told us that it was still developing the IT systems to enable the agency to address our recommendation, and that it anticipated completing this IT development by the end of 2020. See GAO, *VA Benefits: Increasing Outreach and Measuring Outcomes Would Improve the Post-9/11 GI Bill On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship Programs*, GAO-16-51 (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 12, 2015).

Agency officials explained that the programs lacked performance goals because, for example, the program was relatively small, not statutorily

required to set performance goals, or lacked the necessary reporting system to track underlying outcome data. Our prior work has highlighted these challenges, such as by noting that small entities have unique advantages and specific challenges in implementing effective management, but that internal control principles apply to both large and small entities.[24] Further, given that 45 programs across 11 agencies operate programs in this area, it is important that agencies demonstrate results across their programs' variety of statutory requirements and data collection systems. With defined performance goals, the four agencies administering these programs—DOD, Education, Coast Guard, and VA—would have a more systematic way to obtain ongoing information to identify possible underperforming areas for improvement. Moreover, decisionmakers such as agency heads and Congress need to know which programs are achieving their goals and objectives to make informed decisions about where to allocate resources.

Performance Measures and Program Evaluations

Programs can assess progress towards goals using various means, such as performance measures and program evaluations. Performance measures are important because they permit assessment of overall progress toward goals. Performance measures can assess various aspects of performance, including outputs and outcomes. Output measures define the direct products and services delivered by the program while outcome measures describe the results of those products and services. For their part, program evaluations are individual systematic studies using performance measures and other information to answer specific questions about how effectively a program is meeting its objectives.[25] Taken together, outcome measures and program evaluations provide the type of evaluative information that helps agencies and congressional committees make decisions about the programs they oversee; that is, evaluative information tells them whether and why a program is working well or not.

All 45 programs reported measuring outputs, and 36 of them also measured outcomes. With regard to outputs, for example, the Department of Agriculture reported that the Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Competitive Grants Program measures the number of

[24]GAO-14-704G.

[25]GAO-11-646SP.

veterans trained while the number of jobs created is among outcomes it tracks for the program.

In addition, 14 programs reported conducting program evaluations in the last 5 years, using a variety of methods. For example:

- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment is using a 20-year longitudinal study to assess outcomes for program participants. This study's 2017 report found that veterans who found jobs after completing the program reported a median income of $18,000 more than working veterans who left the program without reaching a rehabilitation goal.[26]
- DOL sponsored an evaluation of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program in 2016, which reviewed administrative data and program sites to suggest possible methods for future research.[27] Subsequently, DOL has contracted a study designed to use some experimental methods to rigorously evaluate participants' outcomes. DOL anticipates completing this evaluation in September 2022.
- An interagency group has devised a long-term evaluation plan for the Transition Assistance Program. This evaluation plan outlines 25 long-term outcomes and identifies each partner agency's responsibilities for tracking data and sharing them across multiple agencies. The plan does not include timeframes for implementing evaluations to examine these long-term outcomes, though DOL has recently completed an evaluation of enhancements to the Transition Assistance Program, which will inform this interagency evaluation effort. According to DOL, this evaluation was completed in December 2019 and had not been published as of February 2020.

While outcome measures and program evaluations provide the means to assess how well programs are performing, 9 of 45 programs reported they had neither, contrary to leading practices for managing programs (see table 5).

[26]Economic Systems Inc., Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Longitudinal Study (PL 110-389 Sec. 334): Annual Report 2018 for FY 2017. (Falls Church, VA: 2018).

[27]John Trutko et al. Formative Evaluation of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HRVP): findings from literature review, site visits, analyses of program administrative data, and options for future evaluation. (Rockville, MD: Avar Consulting, September 2016).

Table 5: Programs Reporting No Assessment of Outcomes for Career Assistance for Military Families

Agency	Program	Agency's explanation for why the program does not assess outcomes
Department of Defense (DOD)	Military OneSource Spouse Career Center	Outcome data are self-reported by recipients and difficult to track. DOD tracks user satisfaction.[a]
DOD	Spouse Education and Career Opportunities	Outcome data are self-reported by recipients and difficult to track. DOD tracks user satisfaction.[a]
Department of Education (Education)	Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant	The program serves a relatively small number of participants (57 in fiscal year 2017, according to our survey) and, as such, Education determined it an inefficient use of resources to develop program goals and track outcomes.
Department of Health and Human Services	Veterans' Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing Program	This program has been discontinued, and elements of the program have been incorporated into the Veteran Nurses in Primary Care program.
Department of Homeland Security: Coast Guard	Coast Guard Spouse Employment Assistance Program	Officials told us Coast Guard is not statutorily required to track outcomes and faces personnel and budgetary limitations.
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36)	Officials face difficulties tracking outcomes because this is a one-time service and recipients are not tracked or case managed upon completion of the service.
VA	The Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL)	The sites that implement the program all do so differently and have different performance goals, which VA does not track.
VA	VetSuccess on Campus	Officials face difficulties tracking outcomes because this is a one-time service and recipients are not tracked or case managed upon completion of the service.
Multiple agencies: DOD, VA	Tuition Assistance Top Up	This program is an additional benefit tied to DOD Tuition Assistance and VA GI Bill benefits. Therefore, according VA the performance for Tuition Assistance Top Up is captured by those other two programs.

Source: GAO survey and interviews with agency officials. | GAO-20-416

[a]We previously recommended that DOD expand its performance measures for spouse employment programs, which resulted in a 2016 RAND study that suggested specific performance measures for the agency's internal monitoring system. DOD has since implemented our recommendation. See GAO, *Military Spouse Employment Programs: DOD Can Improve Guidance and Performance Monitoring*, GAO-13-60 (Washington, D.C. December 2012).

Agency officials explained that the programs lacked an assessment of outcomes because, for example, the program was relatively small, not statutorily required to track outcomes, or lacked access to the underlying data. This variety of program sizes, statutory requirements, and data systems demonstrates the importance of each program in this area demonstrating its contributions toward government-wide efforts to secure civilian employment for military families. By establishing a system to assess outcomes, agencies are better able to demonstrate whether the program is achieving its intended results and assure that resources are being targeted appropriately.

For more information on programs' performance measures, goals, and evaluations, see appendix V.

Conclusions

A substantial number of servicemembers are making the transition to civilian life after leaving the military. Having served the nation, they, along with their spouses and dependents, join growing ranks of veterans seeking the skills and education needed to achieve meaningful civilian employment. It is crucial for the federal programs that provide career assistance to military families to monitor whether they are achieving their intended level of performance. Without effective performance monitoring—including establishing goals and measures and conducting performance evaluations—agencies may find it difficult to identify areas for program improvement and inform policy makers about program outcomes in providing services to military families.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making a total of three recommendations – one each to VA, Education, and DHS (Coast Guard). Specifically:

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs should incorporate key elements of a performance assessment system, such as establishing performance goals and taking steps to assess outcomes, for the Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36), Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership, and VetSuccess on Campus programs. (Recommendation 1)

The Secretary of Education should develop performance goals for the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant program. (Recommendation 2)

The Commandant of the Coast Guard should develop formal performance goals and measures for its Spouse Employment Assistance Program. (Recommendation 3)

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Labor, State, and Veterans Affairs as well as the Office of

Personnel Management and the Small Business Administration, for review and comment. We received written comments from the Departments of Education, Homeland Security, Labor, and Veterans Affairs, that are reproduced in appendixes VI though IX and summarized below, respectively. Additionally, the Departments of Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Labor, and Veterans Affairs as well as the Office of Personnel Management and the Small Business Administration provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate. The Departments of Agriculture, Energy, and State did not have any comments.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) concurred with our recommendation to incorporate key elements of a performance assessment system for the Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36), Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership, and VetSuccess on Campus programs. VA provided written responses for each program, as follows:

- To develop performance and outcome goals for Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36), VA said that it is moving the program to its Office of Transition and Economic Development, expected to be completed by October 2020. This office would draft potential performance measures which would also require a new information technology solution to track the measures, which could take up to 3 years.
- VA will develop a protocol of having each of its local sites set appropriate metrics annually for the Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership program. The protocol will include a plan for VA to review the local metrics and is planned for completion by December 2021.
- To assess outcomes for the VetSucess on Campus program, VA said that program counselors would have to assume the role of traditional case managers, which would likely result in the need for additional funding and staffing. VA also said it would need to leverage its case management system being developed for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment counselors, which is estimated to take up to 3 years. As noted in our report, other programs of various sizes and service delivery models have developed outcome measures for similar populations, which may facilitate VA’s implementation of our recommendation.

In its written comments, while the Department of Education (Education) did not explicitly agree or disagree with our recommendation to establish

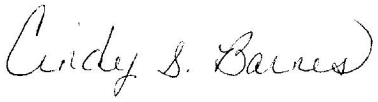
performance goals for the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant Program, it stated that it will establish such a goal. Specifically, Education said that it will begin tracking how quickly it notifies applicants for federal student aid of their eligibility for the program. Using fiscal year 2020 as a baseline, Education expects to implement this agency approved metric by the end of summer 2020 and use it to determine whether any process changes are needed to ensure that benefits are received in a timely manner.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) disagreed with our recommendation to establish performance goals and measures for the Coast Guard's Spouse Employment Assistance Program. In its written comments, DHS stated that the program is not statutorily mandated, and that the Coast Guard cannot justify creating performance goals or metrics for a program that is not required, especially given limited personnel and budget resources available for meeting primary mission needs. However, DHS said that the Coast Guard will continue providing employment assistance services to eligible spouses to the maximum extent possible within its current resource limitations. Further, regardless of whether the program is statutorily mandated, setting program goals is part of effective program management and DHS' assertion of scarce resources available for Coast Guard's program makes it all the more imperative for the agency to develop goals and measures. Information about how well this program is performing would help Coast Guard objectively determine if the current strategy and related resources are the most efficient and effective approach for achieving its intended purposes.

While we did not make a recommendation to the Department of Labor (DOL), in its written comments DOL expressed concern that our report minimized awareness of the interagency coordinating body of the Transition Assistance Program. DOL referred to a memorandum of understanding that formalized the interagency coordination. We have incorporated this information into the report.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees. We are also sending a copy to the Secretaries of Agriculture, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Labor, State, and Veterans Affairs, as well as the Director of the Office of Personnel Management and Administrator of the Small Business Administration and other interested parties. In addition, this report is available at no charge on GAO's website at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7215 or brownbarnesc@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff that made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix X.



Cindy S. Brown Barnes, Director
Education, Workforce, and Income Security

Appendix I: Federal Programs and Tax Expenditures

Figure 3: Federal Programs and Tax Expenditures with the Primary Purpose of Providing Education, Employment, or Self-Employment Assistance to Servicemembers, Veterans, or Their Families, Fiscal Year 2017

Programs that provide funding and benefits

Department of Agriculture (USDA)

1. Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Competitive Grants Program

Department of Defense (DOD)

2. DOD Discretionary Certification & Licensure (or the Military Services' COOL programs)
3. DOD Operation Warfighter Program
4. DOD Tuition Assistance
5. Education and Employment Initiative
6. Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
7. Job Training, Employment Skills Training, Apprenticeships, and Internships (or SkillBridge)
8. Military OneSource Spouse Career Center
9. Spouse Education and Career Opportunities
10. Transition Assistance Advisors
11. Troops to Teachers Grant Program
12. United Services Military Apprenticeship Program

Department of Education (Education)

13. Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success
14. Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant
15. Veterans Upward Bound

Department of Energy (DOE)

16. DOE Scholars Program for Veterans, the Federal Energy Management Program

Department of Health and Human Services

17. Veterans' Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing Program

Department of Homeland Security (DHS): Coast Guard

18. Coast Guard Retiree Services Program
19. Coast Guard Spouse Employment Assistance Program
20. Coast Guard Tuition Assistance/Voluntary Education

Department of Labor (DOL)

21. Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program
22. Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program

Department of State

23. Veterans Innovation Partnership

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

24. All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill)
25. Compensated Work Therapy
26. Dependents Educational Assistance Program (or Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance)
27. Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36)
28. Post-9/11 GI Bill
29. Reserve Educational Assistance Program
30. Tuition Assistance Top Up
31. VA Work-study Program
32. Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership
33. VetSuccess on Campus
34. Warrior Training Advancement Course
35. Warriors to Workforce

Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

36. Vets to Feds Career Development Program

Small Business Administration (SBA)

37. Boots to Business Reboot
38. Service-Disabled Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program
39. Veteran Federal Procurement Entrepreneurship Training Program
40. Veterans Business Outreach Center
41. Women Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program

Jointly Administered

42. All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill) – Selected Reserve[a]
43. Coast Guard Transition Assistance Program (Coast Guard TAP)[b,c]
44. DOD Transition Assistance Program (DOD TAP)[c,d]
45. Tuition Assistance Top Up[e]

Tax Expenditure

Department of the Treasury (Treasury)

1. Tax exclusion for GI Bill Benefits

Source: GAO analysis of survey data. | GAO-20-416

Notes: The program information in this figure was provided by agency officials; we did not independently verify it. For more detailed information on program descriptions, beneficiaries, and eligibility requirements, see GAO, *Military and Veteran Support: Detailed Inventory of Federal*

Programs to Help Servicemembers Achieve Civilian Employment, GAO-19-97R, (Washington, D.C.: Jan 17, 2019).

[a]The All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance—Selected Reserve program is jointly administered by VA, DOD, and DHS.

[b]Coast Guard TAP is jointly administered by the U.S. Coast Guard representing DHS, DOD, VA, DOL, Education, and SBA.

[c]DOL officials said that TAP is an interagency program administered by several agencies, including DOD, VA, DOL, SBA, OPM, Education, and DHS-Coast Guard and that the portion of TAP administered by DOD is not generally considered a separate program than the portion administered by DHS-Coast Guard. GAO has previously reported that both DOD and DHS-Coast Guard participate in the TAP interagency governance structure responsible for the TAP curriculum. However, for the purposes of this report we list DOD TAP and Coast Guard TAP as separate programs because DOD provides TAP oversight and governance for the military services (Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines), while DHS-Coast Guard administers TAP for the Coast Guard. Moreover, we previously reported that the agencies do not use the same regulations in administering the programs. GAO has previously reported separately on DOD TAP and Coast Guard TAP. See GAO, *Transitioning Veterans: DOD Needs to Improve Performance Reporting and Monitoring for the Transition Assistance Program,* GAO-18-23 (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 8, 2017); and *Transitioning Veterans: Coast Guard Needs to Improve Data Quality and Monitoring of Its Transition Assistance Program*, GAO-18-135 (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 19, 2018).

[d]DOD TAP is jointly administered by DOD, VA, DOL, Education, OPM, SBA, and the U.S. Coast Guard representing DHS.

[e]VA administers Tuition Assistance Top Up in conjunction with DOD. Tuition Assistance benefits are administered by each branch of service (each branch determines their own award amounts, eligibility, restrictions, and application process) and are typically earned based on service.

Appendix II: Reported Federal Obligations for Career Assistance to Military Families, by Program, Fiscal Year 2017

This appendix contains information on reported federal obligations for programs that provide career assistance to military families.

Table 6: Reported Federal Obligations for Career Assistance to Military Families, by Program, Fiscal Year 2017

Amount in dollars

Agency	Program	Reported fiscal year 2017 obligations
Department of Agriculture	Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Competitive Grants Program	4,796,400
Department of Defense (DOD)	DOD Discretionary Certification & Licensure (the Military Services' Credentialing Opportunities Online [COOL] programs)	12,590,691
DOD	DOD Education and Employment Initiative	—[a]
DOD	DOD Operation Warfighter Program	—[a]
DOD	DOD Tuition Assistance	455,656,053[b]
DOD	Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve	1,075,000[a]
DOD	Job Training, Employment Skills Training, Apprenticeships, and Internships (or SkillBridge)	—[a]
DOD	Military OneSource Spouse Career Center	—[a]
DOD	Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO)	—[a]
DOD	Transition Assistance Advisors	6,921,000[a]
DOD	Troops to Teachers Grant Program	5,000,000
DOD	United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP)	536,000[a]
Department of Education (Education)	Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success	4,961,846[b]
Education	Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant	337,440[a]
Education	Veterans Upward Bound	18,186,172

Department of Energy (DOE)	DOE Scholars Program for Veterans, the Federal Energy Management Program	150,000
Department of Health and Human Services	Veterans' Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing Program	9,517,638
Department of Homeland Security (DHS): Coast Guard	Coast Guard Retiree Services Program	40,000
DHS: Coast Guard	Coast Guard Spouse Employment Assistance Program	—[a]
DHS: Coast Guard	Coast Guard Tuition Assistance (Voluntary Education)	9,534,433
Department of Labor (DOL)	Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program	44,929,908
DOL	Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	174,895,912
Department of State	Veterans Innovation Partnership	178,391
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill)	298,818,000[b]
VA	Compensated Work Therapy	61,069,433[c]
VA	Dependents Educational Assistance Program (or Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance)	553,128,000[b]
VA	Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36)	3,056,753[c]
VA	Post-9/11 GI Bill	11,056,959,000[b]
VA	Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)	7,213,000[b]
VA	VA Work-study Program	48,295,632
VA	The Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL)	—[a]
VA	VetSuccess on Campus	—[d]
VA	Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)	231,472,000
VA	Warrior Training Advancement Course	934,042[a]
VA	Warriors to Workforce Program	—[a]
Office of Personnel Management	Vets to Feds Career Development Program	38,570[b]
Small Business Administration (SBA)	Boots to Business Reboot	7,950
SBA	Service-Disabled Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program	300,000
SBA	Veteran Federal Procurement Entrepreneurship Training Program	500,000
SBA	Veterans Business Outreach Center	5,717,000
SBA	Women Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program	300,000
Multiple agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, VA	All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill) — Selected Reserve	130,311,000[b]
Multiple agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, DOL, SBA, VA, other partnering agencies through a Memorandum of Understanding	Coast Guard Transition Assistance Program	—[a]

Multiple Agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, DOL, Education, OPM, SBA, VA	DOD Transition Assistance Program (TAP)	3,744,000[e]
Multiple agencies: DOD, VA	Tuition Assistance Top Up	4,401,000

Source: GAO survey of administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

Note: The obligation information in this table was provided by agency officials; we did not independently verify it.

[a]Agency officials reported that funding for this program came from multiple sources, or funding is pooled with other programs' funding, or funding included carryover funds from previous years, or no appropriation was made for this program, or obligations were made at another level, such as center level, and obligations are not tracked at the national level.

[b]Agency officials reported that they based obligations for the program on program expenditures or these are obligations from a year other than fiscal year 2017.

[c]Agency officials said these amounts are not the finalized obligations for fiscal year 2017. In some cases, these obligations represent partial year data or additional payments may be obligated which would increase the final obligation amount.

[d]Agency officials reported that these are obligations for staffing costs only.

[e]According to DOD, this amount excludes obligations for civilian personnel, non-DoD partner agencies' costs, and military departments.

Table 7: Federal Obligations for Largest Career Assistance Programs for Military Families, Fiscal Year 2018

Amount in dollars

Agency	Program	Fiscal year 2018 obligations
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	Post-9/11 GI Bill	10,673,744,000
VA	Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)	1,431,564,000
Department of Defense (DOD)	DOD Tuition Assistance	561,889,000
VA	All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill)	261,347,000
Department of Labor	Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	180,000,000
Multiple agencies: DOD, Department of Homeland Security: Coast Guard, VA	All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill) — Selected Reserve	115,363,000

Source: GAO analysis of federal agencies' fiscal year 2019 budget documentation and confirmation from agency officials| GAO-20-416

Note: We determined these to be the largest programs because each had obligations of over $100 million in fiscal year 2017 according to our survey of agency officials.

Appendix III: Program Participation Levels, by Population Served, Fiscal Year 2017

This appendix contains information on reported participation levels for programs that provide career assistance to military families.

Table 8: Reported Number of Servicemembers Who Participated in Programs toward Obtaining Civilian Employment, Fiscal Year 2017

Agency	Program	Number of servicemembers served
Department of Agriculture	Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Competitive Grants Program	Not available[a]
Department of Defense (DOD)	DOD Discretionary Certification & Licensure (the Military Services' Credentialing Opportunities Online [COOL] programs)	14,193[b]
DOD	DOD Education and Employment Initiative	1,335
DOD	DOD Tuition Assistance	234,456
DOD	Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve	209,927
DOD	Job Training, Employment Skills Training, Apprenticeships, and Internships (or SkillBridge)	5,953[c]
DOD	Operation Warfighter	575
DOD	Transition Assistance Advisors	174,019
DOD	Troops to Teachers Grant Program	Not available[d]
DOD	United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP)	95,687[e]
Department of Homeland Security (DHS): Coast Guard	Coast Guard Retiree Services Program	57,000[f]
DHS: Coast Guard	Coast Guard Spouse Employment Assistance Program	Not available[g]
DHS: Coast Guard	Coast Guard Tuition Assistance (Voluntary Education)	11,396[h]
Department of Labor (DOL)	Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	10,658[i]
Department of State	Veterans Innovation Partnership	Not available[j]
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill)	34,582[k]
VA	Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36)	5,144[k]
VA	Post-9/11 GI Bill	622,528[l]

VA	Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)	1,586[k]
VA	The Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL)	37
VA	Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)	Not available[m]
VA	VetSuccess on Campus	43,128[n]
VA	Warrior Training Advancement Course (WARTAC)	373
Small Business Administration (SBA)	Boots to Business Reboot	149[o]
SBA	Service-Disabled Veterans Entrepreneurship Program	401[l]
SBA	Veterans Business Outreach Center	20,475[p]
SBA	Veteran Federal Procurement Entrepreneurship Training Program	187[l]
SBA	Women Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program	Not available[q]
Multiple agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, DOL, SBA, VA, other partnering agencies through a Memorandum of Understanding	Coast Guard Transition Assistance Program	Not available[r]
Multiple Agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, DOL, Department of Education, Office of Personnel Management, SBA, VA	DOD Transition Assistance Program (TAP)	198,034[s]
Multiple Agencies: DOD, VA	Tuition Assistance Top Up	2,002

Source: GAO survey of administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

Notes: The program information in this table was provided by agency officials in response to our survey; we did not independently verify it.

[a]At the time of our survey, agency officials reported that they would issue awards for this program in 2018 and would have participation data a year after awards were made.

[b]DOD reported the number of credentials obtained through the program. The agency stated that individuals may have received multiple credentials, and therefore this number is higher than the total number of participants.

[c]Participation data are reported by the individual services which each manages its own Skillbridge program.

[d]At the time our survey, agency officials said they did not have participation data to report, but they were in the process of collecting and analyzing the data.

[e]At the time of our survey, only Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard had registered apprenticeship programs. The Army began its participation in the program in 2018.

[f]The program serves Coast Guard military members transitioning to retirement and retirees and their annuitants and survivors.

[g]The Coast Guard Spouse Employment Assistance Program is an additional duty of the Transition Assistance Program's Regional Transition Managers who provide services to servicemembers and their spouses.

[h]Agency officials reported that 4596 participants and programs officials processed 6620 Service Transcripts and administered 180 Defense Activities for the Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) examinations. DANTES manages a portfolio of education programs and services that help military members achieve their education and career goals, including successfully transitioning into the civilian workforce at the conclusion of their military service.

[i]Agency officials said this program is primarily a veteran focused program and that transitioning service members are eligible for services once they have been separated from the military at least 180 days. The program tracks participation of transitioning servicemembers once they have crossed the 180-day separation threshold.

[j]We previously reported that this program served servicemembers. However, in response to our survey for this report, program officials provided additional information which shows this program does not serve servicemembers. See GAO, *Military and Veteran Support: Detailed Inventory of Federal Programs to Help Servicemembers Achieve Civilian Employment*, GAO-19-97R (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 17, 2019).

[k]This count includes servicemembers and veterans. Agency officials said they cannot provide counts for specific participant groups, such as servicemembers.

[l]This count includes all participants. Agency officials said they are unable to distinguish between specific participant groups, such as servicemembers, in their database.

[m]Agency officials said they were unable to provide the number of servicemembers that participate in the program.

[n]This count includes servicemembers, veterans, and dependents.

[o]Agency officials said this count likely underrepresents the actual number of participants because information on an individual's status, for example, active duty or spouse, is considered optional for individuals registering for a course.

[p]Agency officials said participants include transitioning service members, veterans, National Guard and Reserve members, and military spouses.

[q]Agency officials said they collect data on veteran and spouse status, not on active duty status.

[r]Agency officials said they are revamping the program's policies and plan to begin using the Department of Defense tracking system.

[s]Agency officials said that demographic data is submitted by participants on an anonymous voluntary basis, so data is not available for all participants.

Table 9: Reported Number of Veterans Who Participated in Programs toward Obtaining Civilian Employment, Fiscal Year 2017

Agency	Program	Number of veterans served
Department of Agriculture	Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Competitive Grants Program	Not available[a]
Department of Defense (DOD)	Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve	Not available[b]
DOD	Transition Assistance Advisors	17,337
DOD	Troops to Teachers	Not available[c]
Department of Education (Education)	Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success	Not available[d]
Education	Veterans Upward Bound	8,407
Department of Energy (DOE)	DOE Scholars Program for Veterans, the Federal Energy Management Program	34
Department of Health and Human Services	Veterans' Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing Program	953[e]
Department of Homeland Security (DHS): Coast Guard	Coast Guard Retiree Services Program	57,000[f]
DHS: Coast Guard	Coast Guard Tuition Assistance (Voluntary Education)	1,245
DHS: Coast Guard	Spouse Employment Assistance Program	Not available[g]
Department of Labor (DOL)	Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program	16,230[h]
DOL	Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	113,211
Department of State	Veterans Innovation Partnership	5
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill)	34,582[i]
VA	Compensated Work Therapy	64,419[j]

VA	Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36)	5,144[k]
VA	Post-9/11 GI Bill	622,528[l]
VA	Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)	1,586[m]
VA	VA Work-Study Program	6,548[n]
VA	Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL)	2,723
VA	VetSuccess on Campus	43,128[m]
VA	Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)	132,218[o]
VA	Warriors to Workforce Program	31
Office of Personnel Management	Vets to Feds Career Development Program	77[p]
Small Business Administration (SBA)	Boots to Business Reboot	96[q]
SBA	Service-Disabled Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program	401[m,p]
SBA	Veteran Federal Procurement Entrepreneurship Training Program	187[m]
SBA	Veterans Business Outreach Center	13,465
SBA	Women Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program	4,982[m]
Multiple agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, VA	All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill) – Selected Reserve	54,909
Multiple agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, DOL, SBA, VA, other partnering agencies through a Memorandum of Understanding	Coast Guard Transition Assistance Program	Not available[r]
Multiple agencies: VA in conjunction with DOD	Tuition Assistance Top Up	Not available[b]

Source: GAO survey of administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

Note: The program information in this table was provided by agency officials in response to our survey; we did not independently verify it.

[a]At the time of our survey, agency officials reported that they would issue awards for this program in 2018 and would have participation data a year after awards were made.

[b]This program was included in our previous report on transition services, but agency officials subsequently provided additional information stating that the program does not serve veterans. See GAO, *Military and Veteran Support: Detailed Inventory of Federal Programs to Help Servicemembers Achieve Civilian Employment*, GAO-19-97R (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 17, 2019).

[c]Program officials were collecting program participation data for Fiscal Year 2017 at the time of our survey and did not have results to report. They also told us that prior to the issuance of non-competitive grants in 2017, there was no formal reporting requirement for grant recipients.

[d]At the time of our survey, agency officials said participation data were not available for this program.

[e]This count represents participation in academic year 2016-2017.

[f]This count includes all participants.

[g]Agency officials stated they did not have participation data because it is not required.

[h]Agency officials reported that some participants may be included in this count more than once if they have enrolled in the program multiple times.

[i]This count includes servicemembers, veterans, and the National Call to Service Program.

[j]This count may underrepresent participation because it was collected at the end of the fiscal year. According to agency officials, more recent counts may differ from this count because they include cases until the end of the calendar year.

[k]This count includes servicemembers and veterans who completed counseling under the Chapter 36 program. Agency officials said they unable to distinguish between specific participant groups in their database.

[l]This count includes servicemembers, veterans, spouses, and dependents. Agency officials said they are unable to distinguish between specific participant groups in their database.

[m]This count includes all participants. Agency officials said they are unable to distinguish between specific participant groups in their database.

[n]Agency officials said this number is approximately the number of approved applications in fiscal year 2017. They also said they are unable to provide a count for specific groups of participants.

[o]Agency officials said this count does not include veterans who attended training less than half the time and servicemembers who are not eligible for subsistence allowance until they have completed their separation from the military and are considered veterans.

[p]This count is for 2016 participation.

[q]This count may underrepresent the number of veterans who participated in the program. Agency officials reported that these data are based on information provided voluntarily by participants.

[r]Program officials said the program is geared toward active duty and reserve servicemembers, so they do not track veterans who receive help. For example, Regional Transition Managers are available to assist veterans with job searching, resume writing, and other services. Veterans may also take the online version of Transition Assistance Program seminars.

Table 10: Reported Number of Spouses Who Participated in Programs toward Obtaining Civilian Employment, Fiscal Year 2017

Agency	Program	Number of spouses served
Department of Defense (DOD)	Military OneSource Spouse Career Centers	165,000[a]
DOD	Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO)	180,000[b]
DOD	Transition Assistance Advisors	6,842[c]
Department of Homeland Security (DHS): Coast Guard	Coast Guard Retiree Services Program	Not available[d]
DHS: Coast Guard	Coast Guard Spouse Employment Assistance Program	406
DHS: Coast Guard	Coast Guard Tuition Assistance (Voluntary Education)	37
Department of Labor (DOL)	Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	Not available[e]
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill)	Not available[f]
VA	Dependents Educational Assistance Program (or Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance)	100,275[g]
VA	Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36)	Not available[h]
VA	Post-9/11 GI Bill	32,902
VA	The Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL)	Not available[i]
VA	VA Work-Study Program	6,548[j]
VA	VetSuccess on Campus	Not available[k]
Small Business Administration (SBA)	Boots to Business Reboot	1[l]
SBA	Service-Disabled Veterans Entrepreneurship Program	401[h]

SBA	Veterans Business Outreach Center	145
SBA	Women Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program	356
Multiple Agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, DOL, Department of Education, Office of Personnel Management, SBA, VA	Coast Guard Transition Assistance Program (TAP)	Not available[d]
Multiple Agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, DOL, Department of Education, Office of Personnel Management, SBA, VA	DOD Transition Assistance Program (TAP)	1,184[m]

Source: GAO survey of administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

Note: The program information in this table was provided by agency officials in response to our survey; we did not independently verify it.

[a]This count represents individual coaching sessions.

[b]This number includes career counseling sessions participants complete through SECO Counseling Center and the My Career Advancement Account (MyCAA), a program that provides financial assistance to military spouses to help them obtain licenses, certifications, or associate degrees to purse an occupation or career field.

[c]This count includes family members, including spouses.

[d]Agency officials reported that they do not collect data on spouses' participation.

[e]At the time of our survey, agency officials said they planned to begin collecting data on military spouses in 2018, and would not have data until later that year.

[f]Agency officials said dependents receiving transfer of benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill, Chapter 30 are not identifiable. They also told us they cannot readily identify dependents served under the Dependents Educational Assistance Program.

[g]This count includes spouses and dependents. Agency officials said that they are unable to provide counts for specific groups of participants, such as spouses

[h]Agency officials said they could not provide data for specific groups of participants, such as spouses, due to limitations of their data system.

[i]Agency officials said they could not provide information about service to spouses because there is no mechanism for tracking spouse participation.

[j]Agency officials said this count is an estimate based on the number of approved applications in fiscal year 2017. They also reported that they are unable to provide separate counts for specific populations, such as spouses.

[k]This count includes servicemembers, veterans, and dependents. Agency officials said they cannot easily extract data from their systems for specific groups of participants, such as dependents.

[l]Program officials said this count may underrepresent the total population of spouses served because eligible participants are not required to provide data on their military status (i.e. active duty, veteran, or National Guard, etc.).

[m]Program officials said this count is based on responses to an assessment participants voluntarily complete at the conclusion of their TAP course. They also told us that TAP does not otherwise track spouses.

Table 11: Reported Number of Dependents Who Participated in Programs toward Obtaining Civilian Employment, Fiscal Year 2017

Agency	Program	Number of dependents served
Department of Defense (DOD)	Transition Assistance Advisors Program	Not available[a]
Department of Education (Education)	Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant	57[b]
Department of Homeland Security (DHS): Coast Guard	Coast Guard Retiree Services Program	Not available[a]
DHS: Coast Guard	Spouse Employment Assistance Program	Not available[c]
Department of Labor (DOL)	Jobs for Veterans State Grants	Not available[a]
Department Veterans Affairs (VA)	Dependents Educational Assistance Program (or Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance)	100,275[d]
VA	Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36)	Not available[e]
VA	Post 9/11 GI Bill	95,564[f]
VA	Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership	Not available[g]
VA	VetSuccess on Campus	Not available[h]
VA	VA Work-Study	6,548[i]
Small Business Administration (SBA)	Boots to Business Reboot	16[j]
SBA	Service-Disabled Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program	401[i]
SBA	Veterans Business Outreach Center	Not available[k]
Multiple agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, VA	All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill)	Not available[l]
Multiple Agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, DOL, Education, Office of Personnel Management, SBA	Transition Assistance Program	Not available[a]

Source: GAO survey of administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

Note: The program information in this table was provided by agency officials in response to our survey; we did not independently verify it.

[a]This program was included in our previous report on transition services, but agency officials subsequently provided additional information stating that the program does not serve dependents. See GAO, *Military and Veteran Support: Detailed Inventory of Federal Programs to Help Servicemembers Achieve Civilian Employment*, GAO-19-97R (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 17, 2019).

[b]This count represents the number of participants served as of June 30, 2018.

[c]Agency officials said that they do not track the participation of dependents because they are not required to do so.

[d]This count includes spouses and dependents. Agency officials said they were unable to provide separate counts for specific groups, such as dependents.

[e]Agency officials said they were unable to provide a count for dependents served under Chapter 36.

[f]This count includes spouses and dependents. Program officials said they were unable to provide separate counts for specific groups, such as dependents.

[g]Agency officials said that program staff may provide information and referrals to the spouse or dependents in the course of providing service to a veteran, but there is no national mechanism for tracking such assistance to those individuals.

[h]This count includes servicemembers, veterans, and dependents. Agency officials said they were not able to provide participation counts for specific groups of participants.

[i]This count includes all participants. Programs officials said they were not able to provide a separate counts for group of participants served, such as dependents.

[j]Agency officials said this count likely underrepresents dependents' participation because information on participant military status, such as veteran or spouse, is provided on a voluntary basis by participants.

[k]Agency officials said the program does not track dependent participation.

[l]Agency officials said dependents who receive transfer of entitlement benefits under the Montgomery Bill, Chapter 30, are not identifiable in their database.

Appendix IV: Number of Programs Offering Career Assistance Services for Military Families

This appendix contains information on reported services offered by programs that provide career assistance to military families.

Table 12: Number of Programs Offering Education Services for Military Families, Fiscal Year 2017 Target Population Served

Specific service offered	Servicemembers	Veterans	Spouses	Dependents	Total programs offering each service
Educational counseling	15	19	11	8	25
Referrals to additional services	15	20	11	9	22
Educational needs assessment	12	17	11	8	21
Case management	9	10	5	3	15
Tuition for postsecondary courses as part of a degree or certificate program	9	9	4	4	14
Tuition for vocational or technical education courses	9	9	3	3	14
Remedial or refresher coursework	7	11	4	5	13
Apprenticeship instruction	9	9	4	4	12
Certification and licensure attainment fees	7	7	4	4	12
Certification and licensure preparation	6	7	2	2	11
Tests for academic credit	7	10	5	4	11

Entrance tests	6	9	4	3	10
Tutoring fees	5	9	3	3	10
Certification and licensure maintenance and renewal costs	6	6	4	3	9
Holding college fairs	6	7	5	4	8
Books and material allowance	3	5	1	2	7
Living stipend or housing allowance	3	6	1	2	7
Supportive technologies for individuals with disabilities to support education	2	4	1	2	7
High School or GED Completion	1	3	1	1	4
Other educational testing	1	3	0	0	3

Source: GAO analysis of survey data reported by administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

Note: Programs may offer more than one type of assistance (education, employment, or self-employment) and may serve more than one target population. The program information in this table was provided by agency officials; we did not independently verify it.

Table 13: Number of Programs Offering Employment Services for Military Families, Fiscal Year 2017 Target Population Served

Specific service offered	Servicemembers	Veterans	Spouses	Dependents	Total programs offering each service
Referrals to additional services	17	18	12	9	**23**
Employment counseling	14	16	9	6	**22**
Résumé assistance	13	16	9	6	**22**
Interview skills development	11	14	9	6	**20**
Job referrals	13	15	8	6	**20**
Job-search or job placement activities	12	15	8	5	**20**
Employment assessment	8	12	8	5	**15**
Job readiness training	10	11	3	3	**15**
On-the-job training	10	11	3	3	**15**
Job development	8	11	4	3	**14**

Specific service offered	Servicemembers	Veterans	Spouses	Dependents	Total programs offering each service
Holding job fairs	6	7	7	4	**11**
Occupational or vocational training	9	10	4	4	**13**
Apprenticeship training	8	8	3	3	**11**
Supportive technologies for individuals with disabilities to support employment	4	6	0	0	**7**
Housing allowance	3	6	2	1	**6**
Non-paid work experience	4	3	0	0	**5**
Living stipend	2	4	0	0	**4**
Special employer incentives	2	3	1	1	**3**

Source: GAO analysis of survey data reported by administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

Note: Programs may offer more than one type of assistance (education, employment, or self-employment) and may serve more than one target population. The program information in this table was provided by agency officials; we did not independently verify it.

Table 14: Number of Programs Offering Self-Employment Services for Military Families, Fiscal Year 2017 Target Population Served

Specific service offered	Servicemembers	Veterans	Spouses	Dependents	Total programs offering each service
Referrals to additional resources	14	14	11	8	17
Mentoring	10	9	7	4	12
Training in developing a business plan	11	11	7	6	11
Training on federal contracting opportunities and certification programs	9	9	6	5	9
Training in business fundamentals	8	8	5	4	8
Training in evaluating business concepts	8	8	5	4	8
Training on accessing capital	8	8	5	4	8

Training on revenue readiness	8	8	5	4	8
Training on how to select a business structure	8	8	5	4	8
Training on how to conduct feasibility analysis and customer research	6	6	4	3	6
Training on commercial supply chain opportunities	6	6	4	3	6
Training on website development and social media	6	6	4	3	6

Source: GAO analysis of survey data reported by administering agencies. | GAO-20-416

Note: Programs may offer more than one type of assistance (education, employment, or self-employment) and may serve more than one target population. The program information in this table was provided by agency officials; we did not independently verify it.

Appendix V: Elements of a Performance Assessment System Used in Programs That Provide Career Assistance

Table 15: Elements of a Performance Assessment System Used in Programs That Provide Career Assistance to Military Families, Fiscal Year 2017

Agency	Program	Has the agency defined performance goals for this program?	Has the agency defined output measures for this program?	Has the agency defined outcome measures for this program?	Has an evaluation of this program been completed within the last 5 years?[a]
Department of Agriculture	Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Competitive Grants Program	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
Department of Defense (DOD)	DOD Discretionary Certification & Licensure (the Military Services' Credentialing Opportunities Online [COOL] programs)	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
DOD	DOD Education and Employment Initiative	has this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
DOD	DOD Operation Warfighter Program	has this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
DOD	DOD Tuition Assistance	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
DOD	Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve	has this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
DOD	Job Training, Employment Skills Training, Apprenticeships, and Internships (or SkillBridge)	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
DOD	Military OneSource Spouse Career Center	does not have this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
DOD	Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO)	does not have this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
DOD	Transition Assistance Advisors	has this element	has this element	has this element	has this element

DOD	Troops to Teachers Grant Program	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
DOD	United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP)	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
Department of Education (Education)	Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success	has this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
Education	Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant	does not have this element	has this element	Not Known	Not Known
Education	Veterans Upward Bound	has this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
Department of Energy (DOE)	DOE Scholars Program for Veterans, the Federal Energy Management Program	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	Not Known
Department of Health and Human Services	Veterans' Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing Program	has this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
Department of Homeland Security (DHS): Coast Guard	Coast Guard Retiree Services Program	has this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
DHS: Coast Guard	Coast Guard Spouse Employment Assistance Program	does not have this element	does not have this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
DHS: Coast Guard	Coast Guard Tuition Assistance (Voluntary Education)	has this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
Department of Labor (DOL)	Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program	has this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
DOL	Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	has this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
State Department	Veterans Innovation Partnership	has this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill)	does not have this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
VA	Compensated Work Therapy	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
VA	Dependents Educational Assistance Program (or Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance)	does not have this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
VA	Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36)	does not have this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
VA	Post-9/11 GI Bill	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
VA	Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
VA	VA Work-study Program	has this element	does not have this element	has this element	has this element
VA	The Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL)	does not have this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element

VA	VetSuccess on Campus	does not have this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
VA	Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)	has this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
VA	Warrior Training Advancement Course (WARTAC)	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
VA	Warriors to Workforce Program	has this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
Office of Personnel Management (OPM)	Vets to Feds Career Development Program	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
Small Business Administration (SBA)	Boots to Business Reboot	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
SBA	Service-Disabled Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program	has this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
SBA	Veteran Federal Procurement Entrepreneurship Training Program	has this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
SBA	Veterans Business Outreach Center	has this element	has this element	has this element	does not have this element
SBA	Women Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program	has this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
Multiple agencies: DDO, DHS: Coast Guard, VA	All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill) — Selected Reserve	does not have this element	has this element	does not have this element	does not have this element
Multiple agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, DOL, SBA, VA other partnering agencies through a Memorandum of Understanding	Coast Guard Transition Assistance Program	does not have this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
Multiple Agencies: DOD, DHS: Coast Guard, DOL, Education, OPM, SBA, VA	DOD Transition Assistance Program (TAP)	has this element	has this element	has this element	has this element
Multiple agencies: DOD, VA	Tuition Assistance Top Up	does not have this element	does not have this element	does not have this element	does not have this element

Source: GAO survey of administering agencies | GAO-20-416

Note: The program information in this table was provided by agency officials; we did not independently verify it.

[a]This covers evaluations conducted since 2013 because we fielded our survey in 2018.

[b]We determined that these programs have these elements of a performance assessment system after we contacted agency officials about their survey responses for clarifications.

[c]We determined that these programs did not have evaluations after we contacted agency officials to request copies of these evaluations.

Appendix VI: Comments from the Department of Education

June 24, 2020

Ms. Cindy S. Brown Barnes
Director
Education, Workforce
and Income Security Issues
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Barnes:

I am pleased to write on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education (Department) in response to the statements and recommendations made in the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report, *Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers Obtain Civilian Employment* (GAO-20-416).

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to this GAO draft report. The Department agrees with GAO on the importance of programs that provide military families—servicemembers, veterans, spouses, and dependents—with a range of career assistance in the form of education, employment, and self-employment opportunities. Our response to the one recommendation for the Department in the GAO draft report is set forth below.

Recommendation 2: The Secretary of Education should develop performance goals for the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant program.

Response: The Department will establish such a goal. Specifically, using fiscal year 2020 as a baseline, the Department will begin to track how quickly it notifies applicants for federal student aid of their eligibility for the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant or the Automatic Zero Expected Family Contribution. We expect to implement this approved agency metric by the end of summer 2020, and we will use this metric to determine whether any changes to FSA processes are needed to ensure that all those who seek to receive this benefit do so in a timely manner.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recommendation outlined in this GAO draft report.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Brown
Chief Operating Officer

Federal Student Aid
An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
830 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20202
StudentAid.gov

Text of Appendix VI: Comments from the Department of Education

Page 1

June 24, 2020
Ms. Cindy S. Brown Barnes Director
Education, Workforce and Income Security Issues Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Barnes:

I am pleased to write on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education (Department) in response to the statements and recommendations made in the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report, Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers Obtain Civilian Employment (GAO-20-416).

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to this GAO draft report. The Department agrees with GAO on the importance of programs that provide military families—servicemembers, veterans, spouses, and dependents—with a range of career assistance in the form of education, employment, and self- employment opportunities. Our response to the one recommendation for the Department in the GAO draft report is set forth below.

Recommendation 2: The Secretary of Education should develop performance goals for the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant program.

Response: The Department will establish such a goal. Specifically, using fiscal year 2020 as a baseline, the Department will begin to track how quickly it notifies applicants for federal student aid of their eligibility for the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant or the Automatic Zero Expected Family Contribution. We expect to implement this approved agency metric by the end of summer 2020, and we will use this metric to determine whether any changes to FSA processes are needed to ensure that all those who seek to receive this benefit do so in a timely manner.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recommendation outlined in this GAO draft report.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Brown
Chief Operating Officer

Appendix VII: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Homeland Security

May 11, 2020

Cindy S. Brown Barnes
Director, Education, Workforce, and Income Security
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Management Response to Draft Report GAO-20-416, "MILITARY AND VETERAN SUPPORT: Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers"

Dear Ms. Barnes:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

The Coast Guard recognizes the value of supporting servicemembers and their dependents that are transitioning to civilian employment. Toward this effort, the Coast Guard remains committed to providing employment assistance services to eligible spouses to the maximum extent possible within the Service's current resource limitations.

The draft report contained one recommendation for the Coast Guard with which the Department non-concurs. Attached find our detailed response to this recommendation. Technical comments were previously provided under a separate cover.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,

JIM H CRUMPACKER

Digitally signed by JIM H CRUMPACKER
Date: 2020.05.11 14:26:30 -04'00'

JIM H. CRUMPACKER, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Attachment

Attachment: Management Response to Recommendation Contained in GAO-20-416

GAO recommended that the Commandant of the Coast Guard:

Recommendation 3: Develop formal performance goals and measures for its Spouse Employment Assistance Program.

Response: Non-concur. As noted in GAO's draft report, the Coast Guard's Spouse Employment Assistance Program is not statutorily mandated. The Coast Guard cannot justify creating performance goals or metrics for a program that is not required, especially given increasingly scarce and limited personnel and budgetary resources available for meeting primary mission needs. The Coast Guard, however, will continue to provide employment assistance services to eligible spouses to the maximum extent possible within its current resource limitations. We request that GAO consider this recommendation closed.

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Text of Appendix VII: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

Page 1

May 11, 2020
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Cindy S. Brown Barnes
Director, Education, Workforce, and Income Security
U.S. Government Accountability Office 441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Management Response to Draft Report GAO-20-416, “MILITARY AND VETERAN SUPPORT: Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers”

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office’s (GAO) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

The Coast Guard recognizes the value of supporting servicemembers and their dependents that are transitioning to civilian employment. Toward this effort, the Coast Guard remains committed to providing employment assistance services to eligible spouses to the maximum extent possible within the Service’s current resource limitations.

The draft report contained one recommendation for the Coast Guard with which the Department non-concurs. Attached find our detailed response to this recommendation. Technical comments were previously provided under a separate cover.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,

Attachment

JIM H. CRUMPACKER, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Page 2

Attachment: Management Response to Recommendation Contained in GAO-20-416

GAO recommended that the Commandant of the Coast Guard:

Recommendation 3:

Develop formal performance goals and measures for its Spouse Employment Assistance Program.

Response:

Non-concur. As noted in GAO's draft report, the Coast Guard's Spouse Employment Assistance Program is not statutorily mandated. The Coast Guard cannot justify creating performance goals or metrics for a program that is not required, especially given increasingly scarce and limited personnel and budgetary resources available for meeting primary mission needs. The Coast Guard, however, will continue to provide employment assistance services to eligible spouses to the maximum extent possible within its current resource limitations. We request that GAO consider this recommendation closed.

Appendix VIII: Comments from the Department of Labor

U.S. Department of Labor

Assistant Secretary for
Veterans' Employment and Training
Washington, D.C. 20210

Ms. Cindy S. Brown Barnes
Director
Education, Workforce and Income Security Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G. Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Barnes:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) draft report titled, "Military and Veteran Support: Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers Obtain Civilian Employment" (GAO-20-416, Job Code 103389).

The transparency provided by GAO reports enable policy makers across the public and private sectors with the information necessary for the continuous improvement of government programs. To that end, I am concerned that this report minimizes awareness of the interagency coordinating body of the Transition Assistance Program while assessing programs that help service members obtain civilian employment. A report that examines the extent to which programs in this important space coordinate to manage any overlap and fragmentation could mislead the reader if it does not include an overview of the organization in charge of coordination.

Please consider the attached memorandum of understanding formalizing the interagency working group as well as Department of Defense (DOD) Instruction 1332.35 which further describes its governance structure. It is through this coordinating body that DOD, the Armed Services, and interagency partners ensure that each program interlocks and provides service members and veterans with as much of the full suite of services as possible, tailored to unique circumstances, without unnecessary overlap and duplication.

Additionally, Table 8 inaccurately states that 113,211 service members participated in the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program and should be edited to state that there were 10,658 service member participants. There may have been confusion between the categories of service members and veterans. Table 9 accurately states that 113,211 veterans participated in the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program.

Finally, I appreciate GAO's emphasis on the importance of performance goals to strengthen these programs. The Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) is prioritizing the data quality validation processes for all of its programs and looks forward to improving these processes to better assess and improve program outcomes. Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide a response to the draft report.

Sincerely,

JOHN LOWRY Digitally signed by JOHN LOWRY
Date: 2020.05.04 17:48:20 -04'00'

John Lowry
Assistant Secretary

Text of Appendix VIII: Comments from the Department of Labor

Page 1

U.S. Department of Labor
Assistant Secretary for
Veterans' Employment and Training
Washington, D.C. 20210

Ms. Cindy S. Brown Barnes Director
Education, Workforce and Income Security Issues

U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G. Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

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Page 2

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Sincerely,

John Lowry Assistant Secretary

Appendix IX: Comments from the Department of Veterans Affairs

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

May 18, 2020

Ms. Cindy S. Brown Barnes
Director
Education, Workforce, and Income
Security Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Barnes:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reviewed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report: ***MILITARY AND VETERAN SUPPORT: Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers Obtain Civilian Employment*** (GAO-20-416).

The enclosure contains the actions to be taken to address the draft report recommendation. VA appreciates the opportunity to comment on GAO's draft report.

Sincerely,

Brooks D. Tucker
Acting Chief of Staff

Enclosure

Enclosure

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Response to the
Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report
MILITARY AND VETERAN SUPPORT: Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers Obtain Civilian Employment
(GAO-20-416)

GAO Recommendation: The Secretary of Veterans Affairs should incorporate key elements of a performance assessment system, such as establishing performance goals and taking steps to assess outcomes for the Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36), Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership, and VetSuccess on Campus programs.

VA Response: Concur. The Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) programs are developed and operated at the local facility level to assist student Veterans with their educational endeavors. The goals of each VITAL program vary from site to site, based on local staffing resources, the number of campuses served and student Veteran needs. While the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP) provides overarching guidance regarding core areas of VITAL (e.g., on campus clinical services, outreach, education, training and care management) the manner in which these services are delivered appropriately varies systemwide.

As VHA strongly agrees with the importance of performance goals, OMHSP will develop a protocol of having each local VITAL site set appropriate local metrics annually. These metrics may include the number of student Veterans enrolled in VA health care; the number of VITAL participants engaging in VA mental health services; the number of faculty and staff who attend education and training about student Veterans; the number of VITAL participants persisting (enrolling the next semester); and the number of VITAL participants graduating from an Institute of Higher Learning or a technical school. The protocol will include a plan for OMHSP to review the local metrics. Target Completion Date: December 2021.

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service continues to monitor usage of the Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36) program. This service is provided by contract counseling when not conducted by a VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) or VR&E Counselor. VBA's Office of Transition and Economic Development (TED) and VR&E Service are developing performance and outcome goals geared toward providing Chapter 36 services that meet the needs of Service members, Veterans and dependents. VBA's realignment of the Chapter 36 contracted counseling program from VR&E Service to TED is expected to be complete by October 1, 2020. Currently, TED is analyzing existing measures within VR&E's Corporate Waco, Indianapolis, Newark, Roanoke, and Seattle (CWINRS) system and drafting potential measures. In addition, TED and VR&E Service are preparing an infrastructure for new measures post-CWINRS. This will require development of a new information technology (IT) solution to enable the tracking of new measures. The IT solution development and deployment processes may take up to 3 years before completion. Therefore, a target completion date for implementing

1 of 3

Enclosure

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Response to the
Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report
MILITARY AND VETERAN SUPPORT: Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers Obtain Civilian Employment
(GAO-20-416)

performance goals and assessing outcomes for the Chapter 36 program cannot be provided at this time.

Regarding the VetSuccess on Campus program, in fiscal year 2019, VBA strengthened its performance assessment system with new performance metrics for all VR&E VSOC Counselors. Outcomes for VSOC Counselors are assessed by tracking the number of student Service members, Veterans and dependents (hereafter referred to as "student Veterans") served and the type of services provided to these student Veterans. This information is reported annually to Congress in accordance with the Colmery Act.

To assess outcomes as recommended by GAO, VSOC Counselors will have to assume the role of a more traditional case manager. This will most likely result in the need for additional funding and full-time equivalent (FTE) employees to support the effort. There are currently over 87,000 student Veterans attending the 104 campuses designated as VSOC sites. Currently, the VSOC program does not have a case management component. Looking at the current VSOC participants, with more than 87,000 student Veterans and the requirement to maintain a ratio of one VR&E Counselor to 125 participants, the VSOC program would require a total of 640 FTE. The VSOC program currently only has 87 FTE. As the VSOC program expands in the future, each additional campus will require at least 6 new FTE. VR&E Service will need to leverage the Case Management System Solution that is being built for VR&E Counselors to develop a case management component specific to VSOC Counselors. This process will likely take up to 3 years to develop and implement. VBA's VR&E Service expects to be able to establish performance goals and assess outcomes for the VSOC program, after the Case Management System Solution is deployed. Therefore, a target completion date cannot be determined at this time.

Enclosure

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Response to the
Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report
MILITARY AND VETERAN SUPPORT: Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers Obtain Civilian Employment
(GAO-20-416)

Technical Comments:

Page 46, Table 15, Row 5:

Department of Veterans Affairs	Warrior Training Advancement Course	☒ b	☑	☑	☒

VA Comment: The VBA Warrior Training Advancement Course (WARTAC) program is not described correctly in Table 15. All four boxes should be checked for WARTAC as VBA has defined the performance goals for this program, and an evaluation of this program has been completed within the last 5 years. Evaluation of this program is currently in progress by way of our triannual review of all local VA/Department of Defense memoranda of understanding. Therefore, VBA requests all four boxes be checked to accurately describe the WARTAC program.

Department of Veterans Affairs
May 2020

Text of Appendix IX: Comments from the Department of Veterans Affairs

Page 1

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS WASHINGTON

May 18, 2020
Ms. Cindy S. Brown Barnes Director
Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues

U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Barnes:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reviewed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report: MILITARY AND VETERAN SUPPORT: Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers Obtain Civilian Employment (GAO-20-416).

The enclosure contains the actions to be taken to address the draft report recommendation. VA appreciates the opportunity to comment on GAO's draft report.

Sincerely,

Brooks D. Tucker Acting Chief of Staff
Enclosure

Page 2

Enclosure

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Response to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report MILITARY AND VETERAN SUPPORT:

Performance Goals Could Strengthen Programs that Help Servicemembers Obtain Civilian Employment (GAO-20-416)

GAO Recommendation:

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs should incorporate key elements of a performance assessment system, such as establishing performance goals and taking steps to assess outcomes for the Educational and Vocational Counseling (or Chapter 36), Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership, and VetSuccess on Campus programs.

V A Response:

Concur. The Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) programs are developed and operated at the local facility level to assist student Veterans with their educational endeavors. The goals of each VITAL program vary from site to site, based on local staffing resources, the number of campuses served and student Veteran needs. While the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP) provides overarching guidance regarding core areas of VITAL (e.g., on campus clinical services, outreach, education, training and care management) the manner in which these services are delivered appropriately varies systemwide.

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Page 3

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Page 4

Technical Comments: Page 46, Table 15, Row 5:

VA Comment:

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Department of Veterans Affairs
May 2020

Appendix X: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Cindy S. Brown Barnes, (202) 512-7215 or brownbarnesc@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Meeta Engle (Assistant Director), Lucas Alvarez (Analyst-in-Charge), David Ballard, Sandra Baxter, Daniel Benson, Alex Galuten, David Reed, and Monica Savoy made significant contributions to this report. Also contributing to this report were: Amy Anderson, Vincent Balloon, Sheranda S. Campbell, Amy E. MacDonald, Michelle St. Pierre, Joy Solmonson, Curtia Taylor, Sarah E. Veale, James T. Whitcomb, and Christopher G. Woika.

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U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7814,
Washington, DC 20548

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Appendix XI: Accessible Data

Data Tables

Figure 1: Three Programs Accounted for Majority of Federal Career Assistance Obligations to Facilitate Civilian Employment, Fiscal Year 2017

4 Largest programs pie chart

Post 9/11 GI Bill	$11.1 billion
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment	$1.4 billion
Dependents Educational Assistance Program (or Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance)	$553 million
All 32 other programs	$1.2 billion

All 32 other programs pie chart

DOD Tuition Assistance	$456 million
All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill)	$299 million
Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	$175 million
All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance (or Montgomery GI Bill)–Selected Reserve	$130 million
All other programs	$170 million

Source: Source: GAO Analysis of obligation data provided by federal agencies operating these programs. | GAO-20-416