



Highlights of GAO-03-452T, a statement for the record to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives.

Why GAO Did This Study

By the year 2006, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) projects it will lose a significant portion of its mission-critical workforce to retirement. Since fiscal year 1998, VBA has hired over 2000 new employees to begin to fill this expected gap. GAO was asked to review, with particular attention for new employees, (1) the attrition rate at VBA and the soundness of its methods for calculating attrition and (2) whether VBA has adequate data to effectively analyze the reasons for attrition. To answer these questions, we obtained and analyzed attrition data from VBA's Office of Human Resources, calculated attrition rates for VBA and other federal agencies using a governmentwide database on federal employment, and interviewed VBA officials about their efforts to measure attrition and determine why new employees leave.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-452T

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cynthia Bascetta, Director, Education, Workforce and Income Security, 202-512-7101.

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

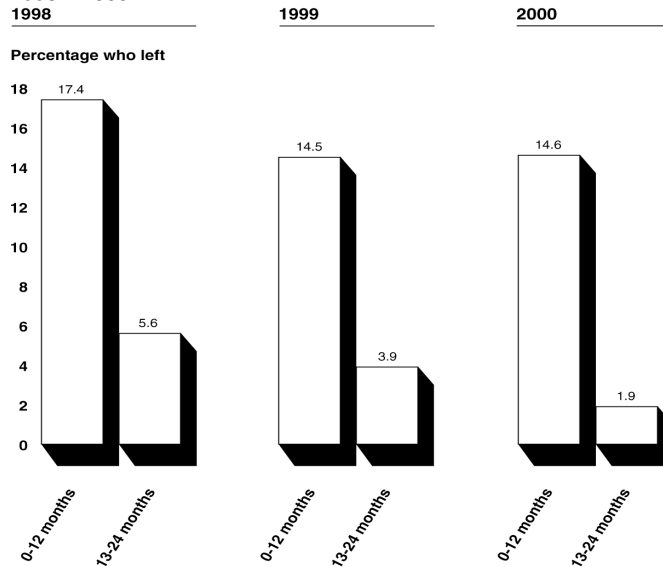
Better Staff Attrition Data and Analysis Needed

What GAO Found

About 15 percent of new examiners hired in fiscal year 2000 left VBA within 12 months of their hiring date, more than double the 6 percent rate of all VBA employees who left in fiscal year 2000. In general, new hire attrition tends to exceed the rate for all other employees, and VBA's 15 percent rate is similar to the attrition rate for all new federal employees hired between fiscal years 1998 and 2000, when as many as 17 percent left within 12 months of being hired.

VBA does not have adequate data on the reasons why employees, particularly new employees, choose to leave the agency. VBA has descriptive data on how employees leave the agency (whether through resignation, retirement, or transfer), but VBA does not have comprehensive data on the reasons employees resign. While VBA collects some data on the reasons for attrition in exit interviews, these data are limited because exit interviews are not conducted consistently, and the data from these interviews are not compiled and analyzed. Without such data, VBA cannot determine ways to address the reasons employees are leaving. Furthermore, VBA has not performed analysis to determine whether it can reduce its staff attrition. Improved collection and analysis of attrition data, including data on the reasons for attrition, could help the agency minimize the lost investment in training, particularly when new employees resign. A forthcoming report will explore options for improving VBA's collection and analysis of attrition data.

Percentage of Examiners Who Left VBA within 2 Years of Their Hiring Date, Fiscal Years 1998 – 2000



Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File.

Note: Data for fiscal year 2000 do not reflect a full 24-month time period.