

Highlights of [GAO-08-75](#), a report to congressional requesters

VETERANS' BENEFITS

Improved Operational Controls and Management Data Would Enhance VBA's Disability Reevaluation Process

Why GAO Did This Study

To help ensure that veterans are properly compensated for disabilities, VA is required to perform disability reevaluations for specific disabilities. VA also performs reevaluations whenever it determines there is a need to verify either the continued existence or current severity of veterans' disabilities. VBA completed about 17,700 reevaluations in fiscal year 2005. GAO was asked to review the Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) disability reevaluation program. This report assesses (1) the operational controls VA uses to ensure the effectiveness of the disability reevaluation process and (2) the management information VA collects and uses to manage the disability reevaluation process. To conduct this study, GAO analyzed VBA data, reviewed federal regulations and VBA procedures, conducted site visits, and interviewed VBA officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that VA modify its electronic diary date system to ensure that the appropriate reevaluations are scheduled to occur; develop additional methods to ensure accuracy of completed and cancelled reevaluations; clarify its guidance so that all regional offices use the same criteria for measuring the timeliness of reevaluations; and develop a plan to collect and analyze data on the results of reevaluations. VA concurred with our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-08-75.

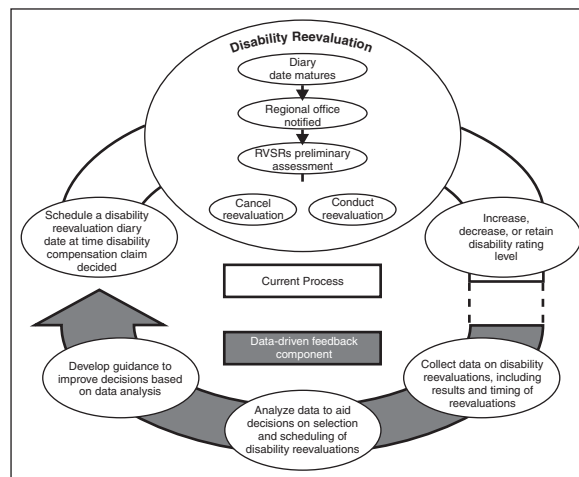
To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Daniel Bertoni at (202) 512-7215 or bertonid@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

VBA's operational controls do not adequately ensure that staff schedule or conduct disability reevaluations as necessary; however, VBA is planning to improve some of the controls. VBA claims processing software does not automatically establish or prompt regional office staff to schedule a time – known as a diary date – to determine whether a disability reevaluation should proceed. Consequently, some cases that require a reevaluation may never receive it. After the diary date matures, staff perform a preliminary review of a veteran's claim file to determine if a more comprehensive reevaluation should be conducted. If staff determine during this review that a reevaluation is no longer needed, the reevaluation is cancelled. However, cancellations are not tracked or subject to quality assurance reviews to ensure adherence to program policies and procedures. VBA plans on improving some of its control mechanisms through its new claims management system, the Veterans Service Network (VETSNET), including developing the ability to track cancellations. However, VBA has no plans to include a prompt for scheduling reevaluation diary dates in VETSNET.

VBA cannot effectively manage the disability reevaluation process because some of the data it collects are inconsistent and it does not systematically collect and analyze key management data. While VBA collects data on the amount of time regional offices take to conduct disability reevaluations, these data are not consistent because regional offices use different starting points for measuring timeliness. Also, VBA does not know the types of disabilities being reevaluated, the length of time before reevaluations are conducted, or the results of the reevaluations. As a result, VBA cannot ensure that it is effectively and appropriately using its resources.

VBA Reevaluation Process with an Added Data Driven Feedback Component



Source: GAO.