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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-1020](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

To better assist veterans with service-connected disabilities seeking employment, in 2005, the Departments of Labor (Labor) and Veterans Affairs (VA) signed an agreement to coordinate employment services for disabled veterans. Around the same time, VA rolled out a redesigned employment program for these veterans, known as the Five-Track program, which also established an employment coordinator position and job resource labs. To help Congress understand the status of these initiatives, GAO was asked to provide information on (1) the progress in implementing the 2005 agreement and challenges to implementation, (2) the status of implementation of VA's Five-Track program and challenges posed by recently returning veterans, and (3) the role of employment coordinators and job resource labs in serving veterans. To obtain this information, GAO interviewed Labor and VA officials and national veterans' service organizations, and conducted site visits in five states.

What GAO Recommends

To ensure the implementation of their agreement and the efficient and effective use of resources, GAO recommends that Labor and VA develop a comprehensive plan to implement their agreement and undertake additional guidance and monitoring efforts, and that VA review the role of the employment coordinator, and assess the use of the job resource labs. The agencies agreed with our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-1020.

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

DISABLED VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT

Additional Planning, Monitoring, and Data Collection Efforts Would Improve Assistance

What GAO Found

Labor and VA have implemented some elements of their agreement to coordinate efforts, but face challenges executing the agreement on the state level and lack a complete plan for implementing and assessing the progress of the agreement. Labor and VA have implemented one element of the agreement—establishing three joint work groups—but have only partially implemented or taken no action on the others. In addition, all five states we visited had implemented at least some elements of the agreement that need to be carried out on the state level, but faced challenges implementing others. Labor and VA have not developed an implementation plan that includes long-range time frames and benchmarks to measure progress. Further, Labor and VA have not fully assessed state actions to implement the agreement and may not have provided states with sufficient guidance.

While VA has mostly implemented its Five-Track employment program for disabled veterans, the employment needs of newly returning veterans may pose challenges. VA officials have completed a pilot study, trained staff, distributed orientation materials, and deployed employment coordinators, but other components remain in process. Some officials expressed concerns that employment programs for disabled veterans—including the Five-Track program—may not be prepared to meet the needs of participants returning from recent conflicts, who VA predicts will be more likely than previous returning veterans to have certain disabilities, such as those associated with traumatic brain injuries. VA has begun efforts to address these needs.

VA employment coordinators and job resource labs in the five states we visited provided employment assistance to a limited number of veterans and some of their functions were available elsewhere. Employment coordinators provided direct employment services for veterans and also performed job development and outreach activities. However, employment coordinators we met with provided limited services to veterans outside their local areas, and similar services were available elsewhere. Job resource labs provided some additional resources for veterans, but according to some staff, not many veterans are using the labs. Job resource labs also appeared to duplicate other available services.

VA Job Resource Labs: Detroit, Michigan, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota



Source: GAO.