DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Congressionally Mandated Report
Annual Report on the Steps Taken to Achieve Full Staffing Capacity

December 2025

Introduction

Section 505(b) of the John S. McCain III, Daniel K. Akaka, and Samuel R. Johnson Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks (MISSION) Act of 2018 (P.L.115-182) established a requirement for VA to submit to Congress an annual report on the steps the Department is taking to achieve full staffing capacity, including the amount of additional funds necessary to enable the Department to reach full staffing capacity. Section 3008(b) of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (P.L.116-315) added the requirement that VA describe the steps it is taking to improve the onboard timeline for facilities in which the duration of the onboard timeline exceeds the Time-to-Hire Model.[1]

This is the seventh annual report VA has issued since the VA MISSION Act was enacted in 2018. The report provides an overview of VA's progress in building and sustaining the workforce needed to carry out VA's vision of providing Veterans and their families with world-class benefits and services they have earned. Since this document is provided in June of each year, the report uses the most recent quarterly data (second quarter (Q) of the fiscal year (FY)) and covers actions taken since the last annual report to advise on current staffing levels and time-to-hire.

Funding for Full Staffing Capacity

As noted in prior reports, "full staffing capacity" refers to the number of full-time equivalent employees[2] (FTE) needed at a point-in-time to accomplish VA's mission to care for Veterans and their families with dignity and respect.[3] Full staffing capacity requirements are dynamic and continually reviewed and updated based upon emerging business and workload requirements. Key drivers that impact full staffing capacity include changes in demand for services, changes in health care trends, and changes in the size and needs of the population being served. These drivers create a hiring environment that is constantly in motion and evolving. VA's assessment of funding

[1] Section 505(b) of P.L.115-82, title V, (June 6, 2018), as amended by P.L.116-315, title III, section 3008 (January 5, 2021) reads in full "The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress an annual report on the steps the Department is taking to achieve full staffing capacity, and to improve the onboard timeline for facilities for which the duration of the onboarding process exceeds the metrics laid out in the Time-to-Hire Model of the Veterans Health Administration, or successor model. Each report shall include the amount of additional funds necessary to enable the Department to reach full staffing capacity and to improve the onboard timeline for facilities for which the duration of the onboarding process exceeds the metrics laid out in the Time-to-Hire Model of the Veterans Health Administration, or successor model."

[2] Full-Time Equivalent refers to the total number of regular straight-time hours worked by employees in a FY divided by the number of compensable hours applicable to each FY (2,080 hours; regular method) or the total regular hours worked in a pay period divided by the number of compensable hours applicable to each pay period (80 hours; pay period method).

[3] Employees are the number of personnel encumbering positions (that is, headcount) onboard at the time the data are reported. Employees differ from FTEs, which is a budgetary term based on compensable hours. Since VA hires part-time employees representing partial FTEs, the employee counts consistently exceed FTE. Employees do not include unpaid health professional trainees or other volunteers, or intermittent, non-salaried employees, potential VA interns, fellows, and grantees.

required to reach full staffing capacity is reflected in the annual President's Budget submission.

VA is providing care and benefits with record high trust levels (79.1% of Veterans trust VA; 92.3% of Veterans trust VA health care at the end of Q1 FY 2025). More Veterans are choosing VA, more Veterans are filing claims at VA, and more Veterans are receiving health care at VA.

As of March 31, 2025, VA had 460,955 onboard employees[4] (includes full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees) representing a total of 451,607 FTEs.[5] The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) accounts for nearly 90% of VA employees.

VA is making significant progress in the development of analytic tools and discipline needed to implement a requirements-based system of validating staffing requirements and tracking data in an authoritative data source. Requirements will consider all categories of staffing available to support VA's mission. These data will be used to more fully inform staffing gaps and strategic hiring of frontline Veteran-facing staff required to meet VA's mission in future-year budget submissions. In the interim, VA uses a wide array of analytic tools to project workload and costs to inform annual budget requests. VA will continue to work with Congress on projected resources needed to enable the Department to carry out the existing mission and any emerging and/or evolving mission requirements.

VA uses extensive data on workload, utilization, Veteran characteristics, and environmental factors for workforce planning and budget formulation.[6] Forecasted staffing estimates (reflected as FTEs) included in the annual budget submissions are based upon a robust analysis of historical and projected workload. VHA uses the VA Enrollee Health Care Projection Model (EHCPM), which incorporates actuarial methods to project Veteran demand for health care. EHCPM supports the formulation of approximately 89% of the VA health care budget and is used to assess the budgetary and workload impact of changes in a dynamic health care environment. EHCPM considers the unique characteristics of the Veteran population and health care factors that impact Veteran enrollment and use of VA services (whether in VA facilities or in the

[4] Onboards (that is, the number of personnel encumbering positions) are the number of employees (that is, headcount) onboard when the data are reported. Note that "onboards" differ from "FTE" which is a budgetary term based on compensable hours as opposed to headcount. VA hires some part-time employees (that is, partial FTEs), as such, onboard figures consistently exceed FTE figures. Onboard counts do not include the following employee categories: intermittent staff, non-salaried health professional trainees, employees in a non-pay status, or volunteers.

[5] The total number excludes categories of employees specifically excluded from the quarterly VA MISSION Act reporting under section 505(a) (Office of Inspector General, Veterans Canteen Service, and employees who are intermittent or in a non-pay status). For VHA only, residents, interns, fellows, students, and trainees are excluded.

[6] Veteran characteristics include demographics (age and sex), period of service (cohort), eligibility category, income, travel distance to VA facilities and geographic migration patterns. Many of these factors are dynamic and are expected to change over time. Environmental factors include economic conditions, policies, regulations, and legislation.

community) and is a factor used to determine estimates in the budget, including FTEs. Similarly, the Veterans Benefits Administration uses actuarial models to develop benefits workload projections. These workload projections are subsequently used to forecast staffing requirements for claims examiners. As such, VA's FTE request in its budget submission is the best indicator of workload-based staffing requirements. Staffing capacity gaps are best defined as the difference between funded FTEs and employees onboard.

Staffing Strategies

VA is focusing on becoming more efficient, responsive, and accountable to the Veterans, family members, caregivers, and survivors we are charged with serving. Our goal is to increase productivity and efficiency, eliminate waste and bureaucracy, and improve the delivery of health care and benefits to Veterans. We are going to accomplish this without making cuts to health care or benefits to Veterans and VA beneficiaries. VA will continue to strategically hire for more than 350,000 mission-critical positions as well as other positions that are required to meet mission needs. VA is focused on improving our health care and increasing providers, even as we look to streamline and achieve efficiencies in the future by reducing bureaucracy, unnecessary overhead, and ensuring our resources are focused on the mission of providing health care and benefits for Veterans and VA beneficiaries.

VA will utilize Executive Order 14170: *Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service*, January 20, 2025, in conjunction with the Domestic Policy Council and Office of Personnel Management Memorandum: *Merit Hiring Plan*, May 29, 2025, to improve hiring via the use of talent pools, shared certificates, and streamlining the background check process.

Time-to-Hire and Steps to Improve Onboarding Timeline

Time-to-Hire (T2H) reporting is an Office of Personnel Management requirement that measures the time from the "Hiring Need Validated Date" to the "New Hire Actual Start Date." OPM recommends a T2H target of 80 calendar days; however, this metric applies to Title 5 (T5) hires only. To account for the unique hiring processes associated with Title 38 (T38) and Executive Cadre positions, VA established internal targets which are appropriate for these hiring authorities.

Summary of the T2H metrics as of the end of FY 2025, Q2:

Position Type: T5 and Hybrid Title 38 (HT38)

- T5 and HT38 T2H Target within **80 calendar days: 58%** of USA Staffing hires brought on board met target.

- In FY 2025 (Q1-Q2), T5 and HT38 hires (combined) were brought on in an average of 100 days, with 50% of hires brought on within their respective T2H target of 80 days.
    - For comparison, during FY 2024 (Q1-Q2), T5 and HT38 hires (combined) were brought on in an average of 105 days and met the target 46% of the time.
- In FY 2025 (Q1-Q2), T5 hires were brought on in an average of 92 days, with 54% of hires brought on within their respective T2H target of 80 days.
    - For comparison, during FY 2024 (Q1-Q2), itle 5 hires were brought on in an average of 100 days and hit target 50% of the time.
- In FY 2025 (Q1-Q2), HT38 hires were brought on in an average of 106 days, with 45% of hires brought on within their respective T2H target of 80 days.
    - For comparison, during FY 2024 (Q1-Q2), HT38 hires were brought on in an average of 112 days and hit target 41% of the time.

Position Type: T38

- T38 Target within **100 calendar days: 58%** of USA Staffing hires brought on board met target.
    - In FY 2025 (Q1-Q2), **T38** hires were brought on in an average of 119 days, with 52% of hires brought on within their respective T2H target of 100 days.
        - For comparison, during FY 2024 (Q1-Q2), T38 hires were brought on in an average of 129 days and hit target 43% of the time.

Position Type: Executive Cadre

- Executive Cadre Target within **150 calendar days: 58%** of USA Staffing hires brought on board met target.
    - In FY 2025 (Q1-Q2), **Executive Cadre** hires were brought on in an average of 56 days, with 83% of hires brought on within their respective T2H target of 150 days.
        - For comparison, during FY 2024 (Q1-Q2), Executive Cadre hires were brought on in an average of 137 days and hit target 60% of the time.

One of VA's top priorities is continuous improvement of the hiring process. Fulfilling VA's mission to provide the top-notch care that Veterans deserve is only possible with an enterprise-wide team of the best and brightest in their respective fields.

VA continues to take multiple steps to ensure most mission-critical positions are exempt from the Federal hiring freeze and terminations. More than 350,000 positions are exempted from the hiring freeze, Deferred Resignation Program, and terminations because they provide health care and other vital services to Veterans. Additionally, the agency continues to make efforts to continuously survey non-mission-critical areas and is continuing hiring across the board in order to ensure continued staffing capacity.

Conclusion

VA remains committed to refining a requirements-based workforce management process to ensure it has the right levels of staffing and organizational structure to carry out its mission. The resources provided by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 119-4, March 15, 2025) allows VA to continue to deliver on the Nation's promise to Veterans. VA is providing record levels of timely access to world-class care and timely access to earned benefits, at the highest trust levels. VA is appreciative for Congress' continued support.

Department of Veterans Affairs
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