



441 G St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20548

July 29, 2016

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
United States Senate

**Veterans Health Administration: Personnel Data Show Losses Increased for Clinical Occupations from Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015, Driven by Voluntary Resignations and Retirements**

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) provided health care to about 6.7 million veterans through its 167 VA medical centers (VAMC) and more than 1,000 outpatient facilities in fiscal year 2015.<sup>1</sup> VHA has faced a growing demand by veterans for its health care services, a trend that is expected to continue. For example, the total number of annual outpatient medical appointments VHA provided increased by 17.1 million visits (or about 20 percent) from fiscal year 2011 through 2015.

In 2015, VHA had about 195,900 clinical employees in 45 types of occupations.<sup>2</sup> To meet the growing demand for care, VHA has implemented a number of targeted hiring initiatives, such as a mental health hiring initiative, which brought on about 5,300 staff nationwide from 2012 to 2013.

Despite its hiring efforts, we and others have expressed concerns about VHA's ability to ensure that it has the appropriate clinical workforce to meet the current and future needs of veterans, due to factors such as national shortages and increased competition for clinical employees in hard-to-fill occupations.<sup>3</sup> VHA officials also have expressed concern with its own hiring

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<sup>1</sup>Outpatient facilities include community-based outpatient clinics and health care centers. Community-based outpatient clinics are located in areas surrounding VAMCs and provide primary care and some specialty care services that do not require a hospital stay. Health care centers are large multi-specialty outpatient clinics that provide surgical services.

<sup>2</sup>The 195,000 clinical employees are employed specifically in the VHA occupations covered by 38 U.S.C § 7401—a specific section of law that provides VHA with the authority to hire clinical employees. This number does not include employees of the veteran canteen service, or the VHA central office, health care providers who provided services through contracts, or medical residents or trainees that were intermittently employed or in non-pay status. This number does include some types of trainees, such as interns and post-doctoral fellows.

<sup>3</sup>See Government Accountability Office (GAO), *VA Primary Care: Improved Oversight Needed to Better Ensure Timely Access and Efficient Delivery of Care*, [GAO-16-83](#) (Washington, D.C.: October 8, 2015); *VA Mental Health: Clearer Guidance on Access Policies and Wait-Time Data Needed*, [GAO-16-24](#) (Washington, D.C.: October 28, 2015); *VA Health Care: Oversight Improvements Needed for Nurse Recruitment and Retention Initiatives*, [GAO-15-794](#) (Washington, D.C.: September 30, 2015); *VA Health Care: Actions Needed to Ensure Adequate and Qualified Nurse Staffing*, [GAO-15-61](#) (Washington, D.C.: October 16, 2014); VA Office of the Inspector General, *Veterans Health Administration: Audit of Physician Staffing Levels for Specialty Care Services*, 11-01827-36 (Washington,

capabilities since 2014 when a well-publicized series of events called into question the ability of veterans to gain timely access to care from VHA.<sup>4</sup>

The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Veterans Choice Act) required the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) to identify and report annually on the five VHA clinical occupations with the largest staffing shortages.<sup>5</sup> In January 2015, the VA OIG reported that these were physicians, registered nurses, physician assistants, psychologists, and physical therapists.<sup>6</sup> (See Enclosure I, Table 2 for a description of these five occupations.) For the purposes of this report, we refer to these as the five shortage occupations.

You asked us to review issues related to retention of clinical employees at VHA. This report examines

- 1) how VHA collects and uses information on employees' decisions to leave clinical occupations, and
- 2) what trends, if any, exist over the last 5 years in the number of, and reasons for, VHA employee losses from the five shortage occupations.

To examine how VHA collects and uses information on employees' decisions to leave clinical occupations, we reviewed relevant VHA documentation that described its processes for collecting and using information on departing employees' decisions to leave, including information on VHA's human resources (HR) processes, data systems, and exit survey. We also interviewed VHA officials knowledgeable about how information from departing employees is collected and used, including officials from VHA's Offices of Workforce Management and Consulting, Healthcare Leadership Talent Institute, and Healthcare Talent Management.

To examine what trends, if any, exist over the last 5 years in the number of, and reasons for, VHA employee losses from the five shortage occupations, we analyzed 5 years of trend data—from fiscal years 2011 through 2015—from VHA's HR data systems and exit survey for the five shortage occupations. To provide additional insights, we also identified the 10 clinical occupations that had the highest loss rates—the percentage of employee losses relative to the total number of employees in that occupation—in fiscal year 2015 and analyzed the number and reasons for VHA employee losses from these occupations using the same data.<sup>7</sup> (See

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D.C.: December 27, 2012), and VA Office of the Inspector General, *OIG Determination of Veterans Health Administration's Occupational Staffing Shortages*, 15-00430-103 (Washington, D.C.: January 30, 2015).

<sup>4</sup>In 2014, news outlets began reporting about extended wait-times for veteran appointments at VHA medical facilities. Subsequent investigations by us, the VA OIG, and others substantiated allegations of extended wait-times and we found that VHA employees responsible for scheduling appointments at certain facilities engaged in inappropriate practices to make wait-times appear more favorable.

<sup>5</sup>Pub. L. No. 113-146, § 301, 128 Stat. 1754, 1784 (2014) (codified at 38 U.S.C. § 7412).

<sup>6</sup>The VA OIG reviewed VHA data on occupational attrition rates and vacancies, and facilities' rankings of occupations for which they have a critical need. The VA OIG then weighted these rankings based on additional factors, such as the total number of facilities that ranked an occupation as a critical need.

<sup>7</sup>When we conducted this analysis, we found that the occupation of therapeutic medical physicist had a loss rate of about 8.7 percent, which placed it within the 10 occupations with the highest loss rate for fiscal year 2015. However, VHA did not have data for 4 of the 5 years included in our review because data for this position were not separately captured prior to fiscal year 2015. As such, we excluded this occupation from our analysis and, instead, included practical nurse, which had the next highest loss rate.

Enclosure I, Table 3 for a description of these 10 occupations.) We assessed the reliability of these data in several ways, including reviewing each data source for reasonableness and consistency with other published reports that used the same data, conducting internal checks for missing or erroneous data, and interviewing VHA officials knowledgeable about its reliability. Based on these activities, we determined that the data we used were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report. We also reviewed our prior work and work of the VA OIG that described staffing shortages and issues with the retention of clinical employees. Additionally, we interviewed knowledgeable VHA officials about these trends.

We conducted this performance audit from January 2016 to July 2016 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.

## **Results in Brief**

We found that VHA collects data on the reasons clinical employees leave the agency and uses that data for planning purposes. VHA collects personnel data on the number of and reasons for clinical employee losses, including voluntary resignations, retirements, or removals due to adverse actions, in its HR databases and through a voluntary exit survey. VHA uses this information to evaluate its workforce needs and inform its recruitment and retention efforts.

We also found that VHA losses for the five shortage occupations incrementally increased from about 5,900 employees in fiscal year 2011 to about 7,700 in fiscal year 2015. Voluntary resignations and retirements were the primary drivers of VHA's losses for these occupations, with resignations accounting for about 54 percent, and retirements 36 percent of losses annually, though reasons differed for some occupations. We found a similar trend for all clinical occupations across VHA overall. VHA's exit survey indicated that advancement issues or dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the work were commonly cited as the primary reasons respondents in the five shortage occupations left VHA.

## **VHA Collects and Uses Personnel Data and an Exit Survey to Develop Workforce Plans and Inform Retention Efforts**

VHA collects information on the reasons employees leave VHA clinical occupations—loss type—through personnel actions recorded on employees' official personnel files and entered into VHA's HR databases.<sup>8</sup> These databases provide information on the number of employees who leave each year, and loss type, such as voluntary resignation (quitting), transfer to another government agency, voluntary retirement, or removal due to adverse actions.

VHA also collects self-reported information on the reasons employees leave clinical occupations through an optional exit survey offered to voluntarily departing employees prior to their departure. This survey asks departing employees to identify the most important reasons for their decisions to leave VA, their plans after leaving VA, and their level of satisfaction with various aspects of their jobs. Overall, an average of 30 percent of all clinical employees who left

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<sup>8</sup>Personnel files include the Standard Form 50 which constitutes the official documentation of federal employment. VHA HR employees enter information from this and other forms into VHA's Personnel and Accounting Integrated Data (PAID) and WebHR data systems. Through these forms, VHA collects the OPM-approved categories for the types of reasons employees leave (e.g. voluntary resignation), referred to as loss type.

voluntarily completed VHA's exit survey over the past 5 years, though the response rate varied by occupation. VHA HR officials told us that a 30 percent response rate is typical for exit surveys. In comparison, for example, according to the Office of Personnel and Management, its 2015 senior executive service exit survey also had a response rate of about 30 percent.<sup>9</sup>

Further, according to VHA officials, some VHA program offices and medical centers may collect additional information through other surveys or exit interviews. For example, many VA facilities administer a survey to departing registered nurses to better understand their job satisfaction and identify opportunities to improve retention of registered nurses. Both the decision to use such additional surveys or exit interviews and the manner in which they are administered varies; data from these surveys are generally not aggregated at the VHA level.

According to HR officials, VHA uses the information it collects through personnel actions and the exit survey in its workforce planning processes as well as its recruitment and retention efforts. For example:

- VHA's National Healthcare Recruitment Service regularly uses data collected through personnel actions to focus its recruitment efforts on occupations that are hard to fill and have high turnover rates and to help determine which professional events recruitment staff should attend to solicit interest by potential job candidates. Exit survey data are used to gain an understanding of recruitment challenges, such as pay levels, and help guide recruitment and retention activities at the local level.
- VHA's Workforce Planning Team uses data from personnel actions and the exit survey in the VHA Workforce and Succession Strategic Plan to identify trends in the number and reasons for employee losses. This report is used by senior and local leaders to make management decisions related to retaining the workforce, such as using retention incentives for specific occupations.
- VHA's Workforce Education Program uses data from personnel actions and the exit survey to make decisions about VHA's scholarship program—one of VHA's employee retention tools—and the number of scholarship awards for specific occupations.<sup>10</sup>

According to VHA officials, the personnel and exit survey data are made available to leadership within VHA, its Veterans Integrated Service Networks, and its medical centers through Web-based tools, such as the HR Dashboard.<sup>11</sup> VHA leaders at all levels may use this information to

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<sup>9</sup>The "federal senior executive service occupations" category includes most managerial, supervisory, and policy positions responsible for directing the work of an organizational unit or exercising important policy-making, policy-determining, or other executive functions, among other things.

<sup>10</sup>VHA has a number of scholarship programs that are used to help retain clinical employees. According to VHA officials, scholarship programs include, for example: the Health Professionals Scholarship Program, which awards scholarships to students who are receiving education or training in health care disciplines for which recruitment and retention of qualified personnel is difficult, and the Employee Incentive Scholarship Program, which authorizes VA to award scholarships to current employees pursuing degrees or training in health care disciplines for which recruitment and retention of qualified personnel is challenging.

<sup>11</sup>VHA is divided into geographic based networks known as Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN). Each geographical area has a VISN director who is responsible for making decisions and allocating regional resources.

VHA HR Dashboard is an internal website that provides access to HR data.

make decisions about allocating resources for retention programs, such as additional training opportunities.

## VHA Losses for the Five Shortage Occupations Increased from Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015, Driven by Voluntary Resignations and Retirements

### VHA's Losses for the Five Shortage Occupations Increased Annually, and Loss Rates Varied by Year and Occupation

The number of employees that VHA lost from the five shortage occupations increased each year, from about 5,900 employees in fiscal year 2011 to about 7,700 in fiscal year 2015, which accounted for about 50 percent of VHA's total losses across all clinical occupations during this period. We found a similar trend for all clinical occupations across VHA—losses increased annually during this period. (See table 1).

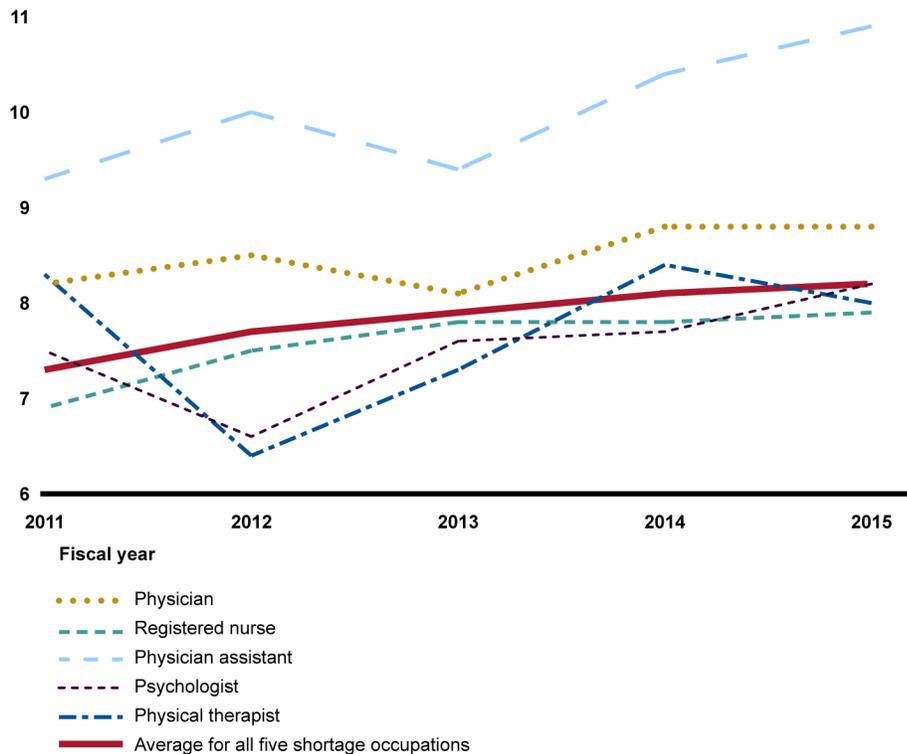
**Table 1: Number of Employees, Losses, and Loss Rate for the Five Shortage and All Clinical Occupations at VHA, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Five Shortage Occupations</b>					
Total number of employees lost	5,897	6,332	6,726	7,254	7,734
Average number of employees	80,420	81,892	85,299	89,460	94,109
Loss rate (percent)	7.3	7.7	7.9	8.1	8.2
<b>All Clinical Occupations</b>					
Total number of employees lost	11,843	12,588	13,523	14,788	15,901
Average number of employees	162,809	167,344	177,315	185,962	195,914
Loss rate (percent)	7.3	7.5	7.6	8.0	8.1

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

From fiscal year 2011 through 2015, occupation loss rates for each of the five shortage occupations varied annually, though most saw an overall increase during this period (see fig. 1). Physician assistants consistently had the highest loss rate among the five shortage occupations. The loss rate for physician assistants increased from 9.3 to 10.9 percent during this period. The loss rate for physical therapists decreased from fiscal year 2011 to 2012 (from 8.3 to 6.4 percent), but then increased to 8.0 percent in fiscal year 2015. (See Enclosure II for a breakdown of the loss rates—including the number of losses, the number of employees, and the individual loss rates per year for each of the five shortage occupations—from fiscal year 2011 through 2015.)

**Figure 1: Loss Rates for Each of the Five Shortage Occupations, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**  
Percentage



Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

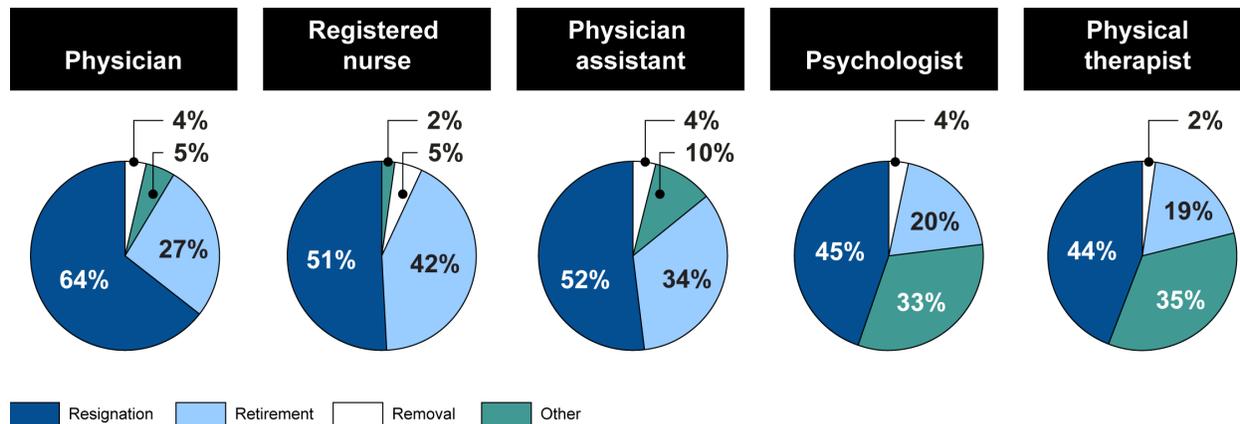
In addition to our review of VHA’s five shortage occupations, we also identified the 10 clinical occupations within VHA with the highest loss rates as of fiscal year 2015. The loss rates for these 10 occupations also varied (ranging from 5.3 percent to 10.9 percent each year from fiscal year 2011 through 2015). We found that two of the five shortage occupations—physician assistants and physicians—were among this group of the 10 highest loss-rate occupations each year from fiscal year 2011 through 2015. Additionally, two other occupations—medical support assistants and nursing assistants—were also consistently among this group of the 10 highest loss-rate occupations each year during this period.<sup>12</sup> The six remaining occupations were technical positions that were generally small in overall number, such as medical supply aides and technicians. According to VHA HR officials, employees in these occupations generally do not require specialized education or licensing; thus, they tend to be more easily replaced than those in the five shortage occupations. (See Enclosure III for a breakdown of these loss rates for each of the 10 clinical occupations with the highest loss rates, including the number of losses, the number of employees, and the individual loss rates per year from fiscal year 2011 through 2015.)

Voluntary Resignations and Retirements Were the Primary Drivers of VHA Losses, though Reasons Differed for Some Occupations

<sup>12</sup>Medical support assistants schedule veterans’ appointments and thus play a critical role in ensuring veterans’ access to care and nursing assistants attend to basic patient needs and support other nursing staff.

According to VHA’s personnel data, voluntary resignations and retirements accounted for about 90 percent of VHA’s losses from the five shortage occupations annually from fiscal year 2011 through fiscal year 2015.<sup>13</sup> The percent of losses due to voluntary resignations from the five shortage occupations averaged 54 percent during this period and retirements averaged 36 percent. However, for some occupations, voluntary resignations and retirements accounted for a smaller proportion of employee losses. For example, for physical therapists and psychologists, the resignation rate averaged about 44 percent and retirement averaged about 19 percent during the 5-year period. In these occupations, other reasons—primarily expiration of their appointments—averaged about 35 and 33 percent of losses, respectively. According to VHA officials, expirations of appointments occur when a nonpermanent, time-limited appointment ends due to the expiration of the work or the funds available for the position. For physical therapists and psychologists, the use of trainees, such as interns or post-doctoral fellows, accounted for the majority of losses due to expirations of appointments. Removals accounted for a small proportion (5 percent or less, on average) of losses in each of these five occupations (see fig. 2).<sup>14</sup> (See Enclosure IV for a breakdown of the reasons employees from the five shortage occupations left each year from fiscal year 2011 through 2015.)

**Figure 2: Reasons Employees Left the Five Shortage Occupations, Five-Year Average for Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**



Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Resignations include employees who quit and voluntarily transferred to other government agencies. Retirement includes voluntary retirements and retirements due to disability or special situations, such as voluntary early retirement. Removals include terminations that occurred during a probationary period, and removals due to adverse actions. Other reasons employees may depart VHA include death, separations due to a reduction in force (layoffs) or an employee entering into a uniformed service, and expirations of nonpermanent, time-limited appointments, including trainees, such as interns or post-doctoral fellows.

Totals may exceed 100 percent due to rounding.

<sup>13</sup>Resignations include employees who quit and voluntarily transferred to other government agencies. Retirement includes voluntary retirements and retirements due to disability or special situations, such as voluntary early retirement.

<sup>14</sup>Removals include terminations that occurred during a probationary period and removals due to adverse actions.

Voluntary resignations and retirements accounted for 84 percent of VHA's losses from the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates annually from fiscal year 2011 through fiscal year 2015. The percentage of losses due to voluntary resignations from these 10 occupations averaged about 55 percent during this period and retirements averaged 30 percent. (See Enclosure V for a breakdown of the reasons employees from the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates left the agency each year from fiscal year 2011 through 2015.)

The following summarizes the reasons for leaving VHA cited by exit survey respondents in the five shortage occupations:<sup>15</sup>

- 28 percent said that advancement and 21 percent said that dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the work, such as concerns about management and obstacles to getting the work done, was the primary reason they were leaving. Other than retirement, these were the most commonly cited reasons.<sup>16</sup>
- 71 percent said that a single event generally did not cause them to think about leaving, while 28 percent reported that it did.
- 65 percent were generally satisfied with their jobs over the past year, while 25 percent reported that they were not.
- 50 percent indicated that they were generally satisfied with the quality of senior management, while 31 percent were not.
- 69 percent said that their supervisors did not try to change their minds about leaving, while 30 percent reported that they did.
- 73 percent felt that their immediate supervisors treated them fairly at work, while 15 percent reported that they did not.
- 67 percent felt that they were treated with respect at work, while 19 percent reported they were not.
- 50 percent reported that one or more benefits would have encouraged them to stay, such as alternative or part-time schedules (25 percent) or student loan repayment or tuition assistance (12 percent), among others.<sup>17</sup>

(See Enclosure VI for more details from the exit survey responses from the five shortage occupations.)

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<sup>15</sup>VHA's exit survey is offered to employees who voluntarily resign or retire. The response rate for the five shortage occupations averaged about 30 percent over the past 5 years. For each question, some respondents may have opted not to respond or provided a response other than what is summarized here. Percentages are approximate.

<sup>16</sup>We grouped like responses together to create these categories. For example, we aggregated the number of responses for "advancement – lack of opportunity within VHA" and "advancement – unique opportunity elsewhere" into a single category, 'advancement.'

<sup>17</sup>Exit survey respondents were instructed to either select all benefits that may have encouraged them to stay or to select 'no benefits would have helped.' Of the 9,623 employees from the five shortage occupations who completed an exit survey from fiscal year 2011 through 2015, about 60 percent (5,830) reported that no benefits would have helped encourage them to stay. Because respondents who did not select 'no benefit would have helped' could select more than one response, the responses by the different benefit categories are not mutually exclusive.

VHA's exit survey results were similar for respondents from the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates to those in the five shortage occupations. For example, respondents from these 10 occupations also said that advancement issues (34 percent) and dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the work (20 percent) were among their primary reasons for leaving. Additionally, the majority said that a single event generally did not cause them to think about leaving (71 percent) and about 47 percent reported that one or more benefits would have encouraged them to stay, such as an alternative or part-time schedule (22 percent) or student loan repayment or tuition assistance (12 percent), among others. (See Enclosure VII for more details from the exit survey responses from the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates.)

#### Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We are not making recommendations in this report. We provided a draft of this report to VA for review and comment. VA provided written comments, which are reprinted in enclosure VIII. In their comments, VA provided historical context for loss rate trends. For example, they noted that loss rates decreased during the economic downturn of 2008 to 2009 and that current loss rates represent a return to the rates seen in fiscal years 2006 to 2007. VA also noted that VHA's workforce challenges mirror those of the health care industry, including the growing national shortage of physicians and nurses and increased competition for health care professionals in hard-to-fill occupations. Additionally, VA suggested we use other, non-VA data sources to provide additional context, however that was outside the scope of this report. VA also provided technical comments which we incorporated as appropriate.

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We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7114 or [draperd@gao.gov](mailto:draperd@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 who made major contributions to this report include Lori Achman (Assistant Director), Jennie Apter, LaKendra Beard, Fred Caison, Sarah Harvey, Kelli Jones, Vikki Porter, and Jennifer Whitworth.

Sincerely yours,



Debra A. Draper  
Director, Health Care

Enclosures – 8

## Enclosure I: VHA Clinical Occupation Descriptions

The following tables describe the responsibilities and specialized education requirements for the five shortage occupations and the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates.

**Table 2: Responsibilities and Specialized Education Requirements of the Five Shortage Occupations**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>	<b>Specialized Education and Licensing Requirements</b>
Physician	Administer, supervise, or perform professional and scientific work in one or more fields of medicine through the practice of medicine or direct patient service, research and experimental work, or determining disability evaluations and ratings. Physicians are required to hold current licenses to practice medicine or surgery.	Complete medical school and have a license to practice. The majority of physicians are also board certified—a testing and certification process that deems the physician qualified to provide particular types of health care services.
Registered nurse	Provides care to patients, administers medications, documents patients' medical conditions including admissions and discharges, analyzes test results, establishes treatment plans, and operates medical equipment.	Complete a nursing education program, pass a nurse licensing examination, and have a license to practice.
Physician assistant	Takes medical histories, examining and treating patients, ordering and analyzing lab tests and x-rays, prescribing medication, and treating minor injuries.	Graduate from an accredited physician assistant program, pass a national certifying exam, and have a license to practice.
Psychologist	Evaluates, diagnoses, and treats mental and emotional disorders, using psychological tests, interviews, and psychotherapy. Some states grant prescribing privileges to medical psychologists holding a post-doctoral master's degree or equivalent in clinical psychopharmacology.	Obtain a professional doctoral degree in psychology and (typically) complete a period of post-doctoral practice under the supervision of a licensed psychologist, and have a license to practice.
Physical therapist	Provide services that help restore function, improve mobility, relieve pain, and limit physical disability. Treat disability, injury, and disease by use of light, heat, cold, water, electricity, massage, and therapeutic exercises. Perform tests of range of motion, strength, and ability to perform activities of daily living. Instruct patients in muscle re-education and in the use of prosthetic devices.	Obtain a graduate degree from an accredited physical therapist program and take a national licensure exam. Licensing requirements vary among the states.

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration and Office of Personnel Management. | GAO 16-666R

**Table 3: Responsibilities and Specialized Education Requirements for the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>	<b>Specialized Education and Licensing Requirements</b>
Physician assistant	Takes medical histories, examining and treating patients, ordering and analyzing lab tests and x-rays, prescribing medication, and treating minor injuries.	Graduate from an accredited physician assistant program, pass a national certifying exam, and have a license to practice.
Medical support assistant	Supervises, leads, or performs administrative support work in connection with the care and treatment of patients in wards, clinics, or other medical units. The work includes scheduling veteran appointments and serving as a receptionist, record keeping, and providing support to the medical staff.	None.
Medical supply aide and technician	Provides wards, clinics, operating rooms, and other hospital facilities with medical supplies, instrument sets, and equipment.	None.
Optometrist	Applies professional optometric knowledge and skills in examining and analyzing the eye for diseases and defects and prescribing correctional lenses or exercises.	Graduate from an accredited optometry school, pass a national examination, and obtain a license from a regulatory board of optometry.
Nursing assistant	Attends to basic patient needs such as providing personal care to patients (e.g., assistance with bathing, dressing, and personal hygiene), carries out non-specialized duties (e.g., measure blood pressure), and supports other nursing staff.	Has registered as a nursing assistant with their state health department, and passed a written competency examination upon completion of a state-approved training program, generally lasting 3 to 12 weeks.
Medical records technician	Encompasses a range of technical support positions which supervise or perform work in connection with processing medical records. It also includes the analysis, coding, compilation, or extraction of medical records data.	None.
Health technician (optometry)	Assists ophthalmologists in treating outpatients, preoperative and postoperative patients, general appointments and newly consulted patients. This position has four major components: technical functions, optician functions, photography functions, and clinic management functions.	None.
Physician	Administer, supervise, or perform professional and scientific work in one or more fields of medicine through the practice of medicine or direct patient service, research and experimental work, or determining disability evaluations and ratings. Physicians are required to hold current license to practice medicine or surgery.	Completed medical school, and have a license to practice. The majority of physicians are also board certified—a testing and certification process that deems the physician qualified to provide particular types of health care services.
Medical records administration	Manage, preserve, analyze, and develop policies and procedures on the use of diagnostic and therapeutic medical records.	None.
Practical nurse	Takes patient vital signs, provides basic care, and administers medications, but generally does not provide certain complex patient care services such as patient assessments or administration of intravenous medications.	Obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent and passed a licensing examination upon completion of a state-approved program available at technical schools and community colleges, typically lasting 1 year.

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration, Office of Personnel Management, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and medical information websites. | GAO 16-666R

## Enclosure II: VHA Clinical Occupation Loss Rate Data for the Five Shortage Occupations

The following tables describe the loss rate data, including the number of losses and employees, for the five shortage occupations.

**Table 4: Number of Losses for the Five Shortage Occupations, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	5-year average
Physician	1,671	1,768	1,735	1,979	2,071	1,845
Registered nurse	3,652	4,025	4,358	4,560	4,879	4,295
Physician assistant	175	187	179	206	225	194
Psychologist	274	254	336	362	407	327
Physical therapist	125	98	118	147	152	128
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,897</b>	<b>6,332</b>	<b>6,726</b>	<b>7,254</b>	<b>7,734</b>	<b>6,789</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

**Table 5: Number of Employees in the Five Shortage Occupations, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	5-year average
Physician	20,297	20,692	21,446	22,423	23,500	21,672
Registered nurse	53,071	53,949	55,904	58,603	61,702	56,646
Physician assistant	1,877	1,880	1,899	1,977	2,067	1,940
Psychologist	3,675	3,829	4,425	4,709	4,947	4,317
Physical therapist	1,502	1,541	1,625	1,749	1,893	1,662
<b>Total</b>	<b>80,420</b>	<b>81,892</b>	<b>85,229</b>	<b>89,460</b>	<b>94,109</b>	<b>86,237</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

**Table 6: Loss Rate for the Five Shortage Occupations, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>5-year average</b>
Physician	8.2	8.5	8.1	8.8	8.8	8.5
Registered nurse	6.9	7.5	7.8	7.8	7.9	7.6
Physician assistant	9.3	10.0	9.4	10.4	10.9	10.0
Psychologist	7.5	6.6	7.6	7.7	8.2	7.6
Physical therapist	8.3	6.4	7.3	8.4	8.0	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>7.9</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

### Enclosure III: VHA Clinical Occupation Loss Rate Data for the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates

The following tables describe the loss rate data, including the number of losses and employees, for the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates.

**Table 7: Number of Losses for the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	5-year average
Physician assistant	175	187	179	206	225	194
Medical support assistant <sup>a</sup>	969	1,088	1,403	1,658	1,929	1,409
Medical supply aide and technician	221	225	213	205	245	222
Optometrist	47	56	67	86	87	69
Nursing assistant	929	886	938	982	1,056	958
Medical records technician	156	152	197	182	230	183
Health technician (Optometry)	12	9	16	17	20	15
Physician	1,671	1,768	1,735	1,979	2,071	1,845
Practical nurse	1,033	1,110	1,162	1,114	1,256	1,135
Medical records administration	29	29	29	39	38	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,242</b>	<b>5,510</b>	<b>5,939</b>	<b>6,468</b>	<b>7,157</b>	<b>6,063</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

<sup>a</sup>Medical support assistants schedule veterans' appointments.

**Table 8: Number of Employees for the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>5-year average</b>
Physician assistant	1,877	1,880	1,899	1,977	2,067	1,940
Medical support assistant <sup>a</sup>	10,308	12,004	15,183	16,397	18,453	14,469
Medical supply aide and technician	2,416	2,444	2,469	2,462	2,447	2,447
Optometrist	692	716	763	826	884	776
Nursing assistant	10,054	10,173	10,606	11,003	11,278	10,623
Medical records technician	2,268	2,269	2,310	2,385	2,469	2,340
Health technician (optometry)	161	168	182	200	215	185
Physician	20,297	20,692	21,446	22,423	23,500	21,672
Practical nurse	13,251	13,394	13,789	14,126	14,486	13,809
Medical records administration	461	471	476	469	438	463
<b>Total</b>	<b>61,784</b>	<b>64,212</b>	<b>69,123</b>	<b>72,267</b>	<b>76,237</b>	<b>68,724</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

<sup>a</sup>Medical support assistants schedule veterans' appointments.

**Table 9: Loss Rate for the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	5-year average
Physician assistant	9.3	10.0	9.4	10.4	10.9	10.0
Medical support assistant <sup>a</sup>	9.4	9.1	9.2	10.1	10.5	9.7
Medical supply aide and technician	9.2	9.2	8.6	8.3	10.0	9.1
Optometrist	6.8	7.8	8.8	10.4	9.9	8.8
Nursing assistant	9.2	8.7	8.8	8.9	9.4	9.0
Medical records technician	6.9	6.7	8.5	7.6	9.3	7.8
Health technician (optometry)	7.5	5.3	8.8	8.5	9.3	8.0
Physician	8.2	8.5	8.1	8.8	8.8	8.5
Practical nurse	7.8	8.3	8.4	7.9	8.7	8.2
Medical records administration	6.3	6.2	6.1	8.3	8.7	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>8.8</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

<sup>a</sup>Medical support assistants schedule veterans' appointments.

## Enclosure IV: Reasons for VHA Clinical Employee Losses for the Five Shortage Occupations

The following tables describe the reasons clinical employees from the five shortage occupations left VHA.

**Table 10: Reasons Employees Left the Five Shortage Occupations, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Physician</b>												
Resignation	1,122	67.1	1,172	66.3	1,097	63.2	1,256	63.5	1,273	61.5	1,184	64.2
Retirement	397	23.8	411	23.2	481	27.7	564	28.5	633	30.6	497	27.0
Removal	65	3.9	80	4.5	68	3.9	63	3.2	72	3.5	70	3.8
Other	87	5.2	105	5.9	89	5.1	96	4.9	93	4.5	94	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,671</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,768</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,735</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,979</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,071</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,845</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Registered nurse</b>												
Resignation	1,867	51.1	1,972	49.0	2,182	50.1	2,316	50.8	2,532	51.9	2,174	50.6
Retirement	1,514	41.5	1,749	43.5	1,863	42.7	1,937	42.5	2,018	41.4	1,816	42.3
Removal	200	5.5	198	4.9	207	4.7	201	4.4	203	4.2	202	4.7
Other	71	1.9	106	2.6	106	2.4	106	2.3	126	2.6	103	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,652</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,025</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,358</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,560</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,879</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,295</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Physician assistant</b>												
Resignation	97	55.4	95	50.8	100	55.9	108	52.4	102	45.3	100	51.6
Retirement	60	34.3	72	38.5	61	34.1	72	35.0	64	28.4	66	33.8
Removal	9	5.1	6	3.2	5	2.8	9	4.4	11	4.9	8	4.1
Other	9	5.1	14	7.5	13	7.3	17	8.3	48	21.3	20	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Psychologist</b>												
Resignation	118	43.1	109	42.9	145	43.2	144	39.8	210	51.6	145	44.5
Retirement	59	21.5	49	19.3	53	15.8	76	21.0	82	20.1	64	19.5
Removal	11	4.0	13	5.1	8	2.4	17	4.7	9	2.2	12	3.6
Other	86	31.4	83	32.7	130	38.7	125	34.5	106	26.0	106	32.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Physical therapist</b>												
Resignation	58	46.4	43	43.9	58	49.2	55	37.4	68	44.7	56	44.1
Retirement	29	23.2	18	18.4	22	18.6	28	19.0	24	15.8	24	18.9
Removal	4	3.2	2	2.0	2	1.7	6	4.1	1	0.7	3	2.3
Other	34	27.2	35	35.7	36	30.5	58	39.5	59	38.8	44	34.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Resignations include employees who quit and those who voluntarily transferred to other government agencies. Retirement includes voluntary retirements and retirements due to disability or special situations, such as voluntary early retirement. Removals include terminations that occurred during a probationary period, and removals due to adverse actions. Other includes death and expirations of nonpermanent, time-limited appointments.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 11: Number and Percent of Physicians Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>1,122</b>	<b>67.1</b>	<b>1,172</b>	<b>66.3</b>	<b>1,097</b>	<b>63.2</b>	<b>1,256</b>	<b>63.5</b>	<b>1,273</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>1,184</b>	<b>64.2</b>
Quit	1,098	65.7	1,150	65.0	1,076	62.0	1,239	62.6	1,244	60.1	1,161	63.0
Transfer to another government agency	24	1.4	22	1.2	21	1.2	17	0.9	29	1.4	23	1.2
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>27.7</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>27.0</b>
Disabled	13	0.8	14	0.8	12	0.7	17	0.9	12	0.6	14	0.7
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	384	23.0	397	22.5	469	27.0	547	27.6	621	30.0	484	26.2
<b>Removal</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>3.8</b>
Termination during probation	22	1.3	16	0.9	22	1.3	21	1.1	25	1.2	21	1.1
Adverse actions	43	2.6	64	3.6	46	2.7	42	2.1	47	2.3	48	2.6
<b>Other</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>5.1</b>
Death	27	1.6	33	1.9	29	1.7	19	1.0	22	1.1	26	1.4
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	60	3.6	72	4.1	60	3.5	77	3.9	70	3.4	68	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,671</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,768</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,735</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,979</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,071</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,845</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 12: Number and Percent of Registered Nurses Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>1,867</b>	<b>51.1</b>	<b>1,972</b>	<b>49.0</b>	<b>2,182</b>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>2,316</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>2,532</b>	<b>51.9</b>	<b>2,174</b>	<b>50.6</b>
Quit	1,820	49.8	1,923	47.8	2,135	49.0	2,264	49.6	2,465	50.5	2,121	49.4
Transfer to another government agency	47	1.3	49	1.2	47	1.1	52	1.1	67	1.4	52	1.2
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>1,514</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>1,749</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>1,863</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>1,937</b>	<b>42.5</b>	<b>2,018</b>	<b>41.4</b>	<b>1,816</b>	<b>42.3</b>
Disabled	98	2.7	109	2.7	69	1.6	91	2.0	111	2.3	96	2.2
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	1,416	38.8	1,640	40.7	1,794	41.2	1,846	40.5	1,907	39.1	1,721	40.1
<b>Removal</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>4.7</b>
Termination during probation	61	1.7	56	1.4	66	1.5	60	1.3	65	1.3	62	1.4
Adverse actions	139	3.8	142	3.5	141	3.2	141	3.1	138	2.8	140	3.3
<b>Other</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>2.4</b>
Death	48	1.3	63	1.6	63	1.4	65	1.4	68	1.4	61	1.4
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	23	0.6	43	1.1	43	1.0	41	0.9	58	1.2	42	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,652</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,025</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,358</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,560</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,879</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,295</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 13: Number and Percent of Physician Assistants Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>55.4</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>55.9</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>52.4</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>51.6</b>
Quit	93	53.1	90	48.1	97	54.2	102	49.5	100	44.4	96	49.6
Transfer to another government agency	4	2.3	5	2.7	3	1.7	6	2.9	2	0.9	4	2.1
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>34.1</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>35.0</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>33.8</b>
Disabled	5	2.9	8	4.3	0	0.0	2	1.0	5	2.2	4	2.1
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	55	31.4	64	34.2	61	34.1	70	34.0	59	26.2	62	31.8
<b>Removal</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4.1</b>
Termination during probation	1	0.6	1	0.5	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4	1	0.4
Adverse actions	8	4.6	5	2.7	5	2.8	8	3.9	10	4.4	7	3.7
<b>Other</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10.4</b>
Death	1	0.6	2	1.1	3	1.7	2	1.0	5	2.2	3	1.3
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	8	4.6	12	6.4	10	5.6	15	7.3	43	19.1	18	9.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 14: Number and Percent of Physical Therapists Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43.9</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>49.2</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>44.1</b>
Quit	55	44.0	41	41.8	57	48.3	55	37.4	64	42.1	54	42.5
Transfer to another government agency	3	2.4	2	2.0	1	0.8	0	0.0	4	2.6	2	1.6
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18.9</b>
Disabled	3	2.4	1	1.0	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.8
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	26	20.8	17	17.3	21	17.8	28	19.0	24	15.8	23	18.1
<b>Removal</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.3</b>
Termination during probation	1	0.8	1	1.0	2	1.7	2	1.4	1	0.7	1	1.1
Adverse actions	3	2.4	1	1.0	0	0.0	4	2.7	0	0.0	2	1.3
<b>Other</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>27.2</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>30.5</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>39.5</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>34.7</b>
Death	2	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.3
Separation <sup>b</sup>	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.2
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	31	24.8	35	35.7	36	30.5	58	39.5	59	38.8	44	34.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 15: Number and Percent of Psychologists Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>43.1</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>42.9</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>51.6</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>44.5</b>
Quit	104	38.0	95	37.4	131	39.0	135	37.3	197	48.4	132	40.5
Transfer to another government agency	14	5.1	14	5.5	14	4.2	9	2.5	13	3.2	13	3.9
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>19.5</b>
Disabled	3	1.1	2	0.8	3	0.9	3	0.8	2	0.5	3	0.8
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	56	20.4	47	18.5	50	14.9	73	20.2	80	19.7	61	18.7
<b>Removal</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3.6</b>
Termination during probation	4	1.5	8	3.1	3	0.9	2	0.6	0	0.0	3	1.0
Adverse actions	7	2.6	5	2.0	5	1.5	15	4.1	9	2.2	8	2.5
<b>Other</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>32.5</b>
Death	4	1.5	3	1.2	4	1.2	6	1.7	2	0.5	4	1.2
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	82	29.9	80	31.5	126	37.5	119	32.9	104	25.6	102	31.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

## Enclosure V: Reasons for VHA Clinical Employee Losses for the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates

The following tables describe the reasons clinical employees from the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates left VHA.

**Table 16: Reasons Employees Left the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Physician assistant</b>												
Resignations	97	55.4	95	50.8	100	55.9	108	52.4	102	45.3	100	51.6
Retirements	60	34.3	72	38.5	61	34.1	72	35.0	64	28.4	66	33.8
Removals	9	5.1	6	3.2	5	2.8	9	4.4	11	4.9	8	4.1
Other	9	5.1	14	7.5	13	7.3	17	8.3	48	21.3	20	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Medical support assistant<sup>a</sup></b>												
Resignations	452	46.6	577	53.0	726	51.7	912	55.0	1,141	59.1	762	54.0
Retirements	263	27.1	298	27.4	436	31.1	492	29.7	527	27.3	403	28.6
Removals	152	15.7	135	12.4	150	10.7	182	11.0	204	10.6	165	11.7
Other	102	10.5	78	7.2	91	6.5	72	4.3	57	3.0	80	5.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,088</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,403</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,658</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,929</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,409</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Medical supply aide and technician</b>												
Resignations	85	38.5	93	41.3	81	38.0	91	44.4	122	49.8	94	42.6
Retirements	80	36.2	69	30.7	70	32.9	75	36.6	66	26.9	72	32.5
Removals	41	18.6	52	23.1	48	22.5	33	16.1	43	17.6	43	19.6
Other	15	6.8	11	4.9	14	6.6	6	2.9	14	5.7	12	5.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Optometrist</b>												
Resignations	14	29.8	17	30.4	19	28.4	28	32.6	25	28.7	21	30.0
Retirements	6	12.8	7	12.5	8	11.9	11	12.8	11	12.6	9	12.5
Removals	3	6.4	0	0.0	4	6.0	6	7.0	0	0.0	3	3.8
Other	24	51.1	32	57.1	36	53.7	41	47.7	51	58.6	37	53.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Nursing assistant</b>												
Resignations	358	38.5	366	41.3	425	45.3	454	46.2	522	49.4	425	44.4
Retirements	292	31.4	279	31.5	269	28.7	263	26.8	283	26.8	277	28.9
Removals	212	22.8	199	22.5	218	23.2	224	22.8	206	19.5	212	22.1
Other	67	7.2	42	4.7	26	2.8	41	4.2	45	4.3	44	4.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>929</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,056</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Medical records technician</b>												
Resignations	72	46.2	65	42.8	84	42.6	84	46.2	115	50.0	84	45.8
Retirements	68	43.6	77	50.7	88	44.7	77	42.3	98	42.6	82	44.5
Removals	11	7.1	6	3.9	18	9.1	13	7.1	10	4.3	12	6.3
Other	5	3.2	4	2.6	7	3.6	8	4.4	7	3.0	6	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Health technician (optometry)</b>												
Resignations	7	58.3	5	55.6	5	31.3	10	58.8	12	60.0	8	52.7
Retirements	4	33.3	3	33.3	9	56.3	5	29.4	5	25.0	5	35.1
Removals	1	8.3	1	11.1	2	12.5	2	11.8	2	10.0	2	10.8
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	5.0	0	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Physician</b>												
Resignations	1,122	67.1	1,172	66.3	1,097	63.2	1,256	63.5	1,273	61.5	1,184	64.2
Retirements	397	23.8	411	23.2	481	27.7	564	28.5	633	30.6	497	27.0
Removals	65	3.9	80	4.5	68	3.9	63	3.2	72	3.5	70	3.8
Other	87	5.2	105	5.9	89	5.1	96	4.9	93	4.5	94	5.1

<b>Total</b>	<b>1,671</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,768</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,735</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,979</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,071</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,845</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Practical Nurse</b>												
Resignations	564	54.6	585	52.7	649	55.9	590	53.0	729	58.0	623	54.9
Retirements	326	31.6	384	34.6	364	31.3	376	33.8	407	32.4	371	32.7
Removals	123	11.9	116	10.5	128	11.0	126	11.3	98	7.8	118	10.4
Other	20	1.9	25	2.3	21	1.8	22	2.0	22	1.8	22	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,033</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,110</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,162</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,114</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,256</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,135</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Medical records administration</b>												
Resignations	9	31.0	10	34.5	16	55.2	17	43.6	17	44.7	14	42.1
Retirements	17	58.6	17	58.6	13	44.8	20	51.3	21	55.3	18	53.7
Removals	1	3.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	5.1	0	0.0	1	1.8
Other	2	6.9	2	6.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Resignations include employees who quit and those who voluntarily transferred to other government agencies. Retirement includes voluntary retirements and retirements due to disability or special situations, such as voluntary early retirement. Removals include terminations that occurred during a probationary period, and removals due to adverse actions. Other includes death and expirations of nonpermanent, time-limited appointments.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Medical support assistants schedule veterans' appointments.

**Table 17: Number and Percent of Physician Assistants Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>55.4</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>55.9</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>52.4</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>51.6</b>
Quit	93	53.1	90	48.1	97	54.2	102	49.5	100	44.4	96	49.6
Transfer to another government agency	4	2.3	5	2.7	3	1.7	6	2.9	2	0.9	4	2.1
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>34.1</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>35.0</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>33.8</b>
Disabled	5	2.9	8	4.3	0	0.0	2	1.0	5	2.2	4	2.1
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	55	31.4	64	34.2	61	34.1	70	34.0	59	26.2	62	31.8
<b>Removal</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4.1</b>
Termination during probation	1	0.6	1	0.5	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4	1	0.4
Adverse actions	8	4.6	5	2.7	5	2.8	8	3.9	10	4.4	7	3.7
<b>Other</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10.4</b>
Death	1	0.6	2	1.1	3	1.7	2	1.0	5	2.2	3	1.3
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	8	4.6	12	6.4	10	5.6	15	7.3	43	19.1	18	9.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 18: Number and Percent of Medical Support Assistants<sup>a</sup> Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>46.6</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>53.0</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>51.7</b>	<b>912</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>1,141</b>	<b>59.1</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>54.0</b>
Quit	381	39.3	470	43.2	645	46.0	766	46.2	922	47.8	637	45.2
Transfer to another government agency	71	7.3	107	9.8	81	5.8	146	8.8	219	11.4	125	8.9
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>28.6</b>
Disabled	38	3.9	54	5.0	63	4.5	77	4.6	100	5.2	66	4.7
Special <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	225	23.2	243	22.3	373	26.6	415	25.0	428	22.1	337	23.9
<b>Removal</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>11.7</b>
Termination during probation	80	8.3	63	5.8	73	5.2	100	6.0	126	6.5	88	6.3
Adverse actions	72	7.4	72	6.6	77	5.5	82	4.9	77	4.0	76	5.4
<b>Other</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>5.7</b>
Death	22	2.3	28	2.6	44	3.1	34	2.1	30	1.6	32	2.2
Separation <sup>c</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>d</sup>	80	8.3	50	4.6	47	3.3	38	2.3	27	1.4	48	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,088</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,403</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,658</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,929</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,409</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Medical support assistants schedule veterans' appointments.

<sup>b</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>c</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>d</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 19: Number and Percent of Medical Supply Aides and Technicians Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>41.3</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>38.0</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>44.4</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>49.8</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>42.6</b>
Quit	75	33.9	82	36.4	78	36.6	81	39.5	105	42.9	84	38.0
Transfer to another government agency	10	4.5	11	4.9	3	1.4	10	4.9	17	6.9	10	4.6
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>32.5</b>
Disabled	6	2.7	9	4.0	4	1.9	12	5.9	7	2.9	8	3.4
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	74	33.5	60	26.7	66	31.0	63	30.7	59	24.1	64	29.0
<b>Removal</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>19.6</b>
Termination during probation	27	12.2	24	10.7	26	12.2	15	7.3	27	11.0	24	10.7
Adverse actions	14	6.3	28	12.4	22	10.3	18	8.8	16	6.5	20	8.8
<b>Other</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5.4</b>
Death	9	4.1	3	1.3	7	3.3	4	2.0	12	4.9	7	3.2
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.4	0	0.1
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	6	2.7	8	3.6	7	3.3	2	1.0	1	0.4	5	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 20: Number and Percent of Optometrists Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>30.0</b>
Quit	14	29.8	16	28.6	19	28.4	28	32.6	23	26.4	20	29.2
Transfer to another government agency	0	0.0	1	1.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.3	1	0.9
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12.5</b>
Disabled	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	6	12.8	7	12.5	8	11.9	11	12.8	11	12.6	9	12.5
<b>Removal</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3.8</b>
Termination during probation	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Adverse actions	3	6.4	0	0.0	4	6.0	6	7.0	0	0.0	3	3.8
<b>Other</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>51.1</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>57.1</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>53.7</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>47.7</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>58.6</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>53.6</b>
Death	0	0.0	1	1.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.3	1	0.9
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	24	51.1	31	55.4	36	53.7	41	47.7	49	56.3	36	52.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 21: Number and Percent of Nursing Assistants Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>41.3</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>49.4</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>44.4</b>
Quit	352	37.9	354	40.0	419	44.7	441	44.9	506	47.9	414	43.2
Transfer to another government agency	6	0.6	12	1.4	6	0.6	13	1.3	16	1.5	11	1.1
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>28.9</b>
Disabled	47	5.1	32	3.6	36	3.8	35	3.6	44	4.2	39	4.0
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	245	26.4	247	27.9	233	24.8	228	23.2	239	22.6	238	24.9
<b>Removal</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>22.1</b>
Termination during probation	100	10.8	92	10.4	113	12.0	126	12.8	104	9.8	107	11.2
Adverse actions	112	12.1	107	12.1	105	11.2	98	10.0	102	9.7	105	10.9
<b>Other</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>4.6</b>
Death	25	2.7	22	2.5	12	1.3	23	2.3	30	2.8	22	2.3
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	42	4.5	20	2.3	14	1.5	18	1.8	15	1.4	22	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>929</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,056</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 22: Number and Percent of Medical Records Technicians Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>42.8</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>42.6</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>50.0</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>45.8</b>
Quit	65	41.7	59	38.8	78	39.6	76	41.8	99	43.0	75	41.1
Transfer to another government agency	7	4.5	6	3.9	6	3.0	8	4.4	16	7.0	9	4.7
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>43.6</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>42.6</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>44.5</b>
Disabled	6	3.8	6	3.9	7	3.6	11	6.0	12	5.2	8	4.6
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	62	39.7	71	46.7	81	41.1	66	36.3	86	37.4	73	39.9
<b>Removal</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6.3</b>
Termination during probation	6	3.8	3	2.0	11	5.6	7	3.8	8	3.5	7	3.8
Adverse actions	5	3.2	3	2.0	7	3.6	6	3.3	2	0.9	5	2.5
<b>Other</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3.4</b>
Death	5	3.2	3	2.0	7	3.6	6	3.3	5	2.2	5	2.8
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	0	0.0	1	0.7	0	0.0	2	1.1	2	0.9	1	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 23: Number and Percent of Health Technicians (Optometry) Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>58.3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>55.6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>58.8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>52.7</b>
Quit	6	50.0	4	44.4	5	31.3	8	47.1	8	40.0	6	41.9
Transfer to another government agency	1	8.3	1	11.1	0	0.0	2	11.8	4	20.0	2	10.8
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>56.3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>35.1</b>
Disabled	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	5.9	1	5.0	0	2.7
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	4	33.3	3	33.3	9	56.3	4	23.5	4	20.0	5	32.4
<b>Removal</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10.8</b>
Termination during probation	1	8.3	1	11.1	2	12.5	2	11.8	1	5.0	1	9.5
Adverse actions	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	5.0	0	1.4
<b>Other</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1.4</b>
Death	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	5.0	0	1.4
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 24: Number and Percent of Physicians Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>1,122</b>	<b>67.1</b>	<b>1,172</b>	<b>66.3</b>	<b>1,097</b>	<b>63.2</b>	<b>1,256</b>	<b>63.5</b>	<b>1,273</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>1,184</b>	<b>64.2</b>
Quit	1,098	65.7	1,150	65.0	1,076	62.0	1,239	62.6	1,244	60.1	1,161	63.0
Transfer to another government agency	24	1.4	22	1.2	21	1.2	17	0.9	29	1.4	23	1.2
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>27.7</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>27.0</b>
Disabled	13	0.8	14	0.8	12	0.7	17	0.9	12	0.6	14	0.7
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	384	23.0	397	22.5	469	27.0	547	27.6	621	30.0	484	26.2
<b>Removal</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>3.8</b>
Termination during probation	22	1.3	16	0.9	22	1.3	21	1.1	25	1.2	21	1.1
Adverse actions	43	2.6	64	3.6	46	2.7	42	2.1	47	2.3	48	2.6
<b>Other</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>5.1</b>
Death	27	1.6	33	1.9	29	1.7	19	1.0	22	1.1	26	1.4
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	60	3.6	72	4.1	60	3.5	77	3.9	70	3.4	68	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,671</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,768</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,735</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,979</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,071</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,845</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 25: Number and Percent of Practical Nurses Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>54.6</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>52.7</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>55.9</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>53.0</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>58.0</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>54.9</b>
Quit	553	53.5	549	49.5	622	53.5	567	50.9	697	55.5	598	52.7
Transfer to another government agency	11	1.1	36	3.2	27	2.3	23	2.1	32	2.5	26	2.3
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>31.6</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>34.6</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>32.4</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>32.7</b>
Disabled	46	4.5	54	4.9	35	3.0	34	3.1	48	3.8	43	3.8
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	280	27.1	330	29.7	329	28.3	342	30.7	359	28.6	328	28.9
<b>Removal</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>10.4</b>
Termination during probation	45	4.4	53	4.8	62	5.3	62	5.6	43	3.4	53	4.7
Adverse actions	78	7.6	63	5.7	66	5.7	64	5.7	55	4.4	65	5.7
<b>Other</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1.9</b>
Death	14	1.4	20	1.8	17	1.5	17	1.5	17	1.4	17	1.5
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	6	0.6	5	0.5	4	0.3	4	0.4	5	0.4	5	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,033</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,110</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,162</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,114</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,256</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,135</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when a nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

**Table 26: Number and Percent of Medical Records Administrators Who Left VHA, by Reason, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
<b>Resignation</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>31.0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>55.2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>43.6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>42.1</b>
Quit	5	17.2	10	34.5	14	48.3	17	43.6	16	42.1	12	37.8
Transfer to another government agency	4	13.8	0	0.0	2	6.9	0	0.0	1	2.6	1	4.3
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>58.6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>58.6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>44.8</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>55.3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>53.7</b>
Disabled	1	3.4	1	3.4	1	3.4	1	2.6	1	2.6	1	3.0
Special <sup>a</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voluntary	16	55.2	16	55.2	12	41.4	19	48.7	20	52.6	17	50.6
<b>Removal</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.8</b>
Termination during probation	1	3.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.6
Adverse actions	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	5.1	0	0.0	0	1.2
<b>Other</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2.4</b>
Death	0	0.0	1	3.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.6
Separation <sup>b</sup>	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expiration of appointment <sup>c</sup>	2	6.9	1	3.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Personnel Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup>Special retirements include non-regular retirements, such as voluntary early retirements.

<sup>b</sup>Separations occur when there is a reduction in force (layoffs) or when employees leave to enter uniformed service.

<sup>c</sup>Expiration of appointments occur when a nonpermanent, time-limited appointments end due to the expiration of work or funds.

## Enclosure VI: Exit Survey Data from Departing Clinical Employees from the Five Shortage Occupations Who Completed VHA's Exit Survey

The following tables describe the responses to various questions—including questions about their primary reason for leaving, job satisfaction, and treatment from their managers—provided by employees from the five shortage occupations who left VHA and completed the exit survey.

**Table 27: Self-Reported Reasons Employees Left the Five Shortage Occupations, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
Advancement	427	26.9	507	30.0	509	26.6	553	28.3	690	27.9	2,686	27.9
Desire for part-time schedule	47	3.0	35	2.1	59	3.1	49	2.5	67	2.7	257	2.7
Family matters	314	19.8	298	17.6	341	17.8	341	17.4	451	18.2	1,745	18.1
Insufficient compensation or benefits	44	2.8	29	1.7	73	3.8	63	3.2	91	3.7	300	3.1
Retirement	388	24.5	425	25.2	460	24.0	442	22.6	563	22.7	2,278	23.7
Work dissatisfaction	312	19.7	348	20.6	406	21.2	427	21.8	536	21.6	2,029	21.1
No response	53	3.3	47	2.8	69	3.6	80	4.1	79	3.2	328	3.4
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>1,585</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,689</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,955</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,477</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9,623</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single reason, but some did not respond. The overall response rate for the five shortage occupations ranged from about 30 to 35 percent, per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 28: Self-Reported Responses to Whether a Single Event Caused Employees from the Five Shortage Occupations to Consider Leaving VHA, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
Yes	443	27.9	468	27.7	549	28.6	575	29.4	684	27.6	544	28.3
No	1,138	71.8	1,216	72.0	1,354	70.6	1,366	69.9	1,785	72.1	1,372	71.3
No response	4	0.3	5	0.3	14	0.7	14	0.7	8	0.3	9	0.5
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>1,585</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,689</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,955</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,477</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,925</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. The overall response rate for the five shortage occupations ranged from about 30 to 35 percent, per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 29: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Employees from the Five Shortage Occupations Were Satisfied with Their Jobs over the Past Year, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
Generally satisfied	1,041	65.7	1,089	64.5	1,242	64.8	1,256	64.2	1,583	63.9	1,233	64.7
Not generally satisfied	392	24.7	406	24.0	472	24.6	487	24.9	619	25.0	472	24.8
Neither satisfied nor not satisfied	136	8.6	171	10.1	187	9.8	193	9.9	256	10.3	182	9.5
No response	16	1.0	23	1.4	16	0.8	19	1.0	19	0.8	17	0.9
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>1,585</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,689</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,955</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,477</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,904</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. We grouped the responses “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” into the category “generally satisfied” and responses “not very satisfied” and “not satisfied at all” into the category “generally not satisfied.” The overall response rate for the five shortage occupations ranged from about 30 to 35 percent, per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 30: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Employees from the Five Shortage Occupations Were Satisfied with Their Senior Managers, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
Generally satisfied	814	51.4	847	50.1	961	50.1	943	48.2	1,216	49.1	956	49.7
Not generally satisfied	458	28.9	527	31.2	589	30.7	618	31.6	780	31.5	594	30.9
Neither satisfied nor not satisfied	296	18.7	302	17.9	353	18.4	374	19.1	456	18.4	356	18.5
No response	17	1.1	13	0.8	14	0.7	20	1.0	25	1.0	18	0.9
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>1,585</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,689</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,955</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,477</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,925</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. We grouped the responses “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” into the category “generally satisfied” and responses “not very satisfied” and “not satisfied at all” into the category “generally not satisfied.” The overall response rate for the five shortage occupations ranged from about 30 to 35 percent, per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 31: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Supervisors Tried to Change Employees' from the Five Shortage Occupations Minds About Leaving, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
Yes	509	32.1	466	27.6	606	31.6	550	28.1	783	31.6	583	30.3
No	1,052	66.4	1,203	71.2	1,287	67.1	1,377	70.4	1,671	67.5	1,318	68.5
No response	24	1.5	20	1.2	24	1.3	28	1.4	23	0.9	24	1.2
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>1,585</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,689</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,955</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,477</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,925</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. The overall response rate for the five shortage occupations ranged from about 30 to 35 percent, per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 32: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Employees from the Five Shortage Occupations Felt Their Supervisor Treated Them Fairly, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
Agree	1,164	73.4	1,203	71.2	1,413	73.7	1,390	71.1	1,828	73.8	1,400	72.7
Disagree	234	14.8	269	15.9	274	14.3	310	15.9	361	14.6	290	15.0
Neither agree nor disagree	176	11.1	201	11.9	213	11.1	236	12.1	273	11.0	220	11.4
No response	11	0.7	16	0.9	17	0.9	19	1.0	15	0.6	16	0.8
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>1,585</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,689</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,955</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,477</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,925</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. We grouped the responses "strongly agree" and "agree" into the category "agree" and responses "disagree" and "strongly disagree" into the category "disagree." The overall response rate for the five shortage occupations ranged from about 30 to 35 percent per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 33: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Employees from the Five Shortage Occupations Felt Respected, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
Agree	1,077	67.9	1,135	67.2	1,292	67.4	1,303	66.6	1,657	66.9	1,293	67.2
Disagree	294	18.5	315	18.7	351	18.3	377	19.3	454	18.3	358	18.6
Neither agree nor disagree	205	12.9	223	13.2	263	13.7	256	13.1	348	14.0	259	13.5
No response	9	0.6	16	0.9	11	0.6	19	1.0	18	0.7	15	0.8
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>1,585</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,689</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,955</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,477</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,925</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. We grouped the responses “strongly agree” and “agree” into the category “agree” and responses “disagree” and “strongly disagree” into the category “disagree.” The overall response rate for the five shortage occupations ranged from about 30 to 35 percent per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 34: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Employees from the Five Shortage Occupations Would Have Been Enticed to Stay by Certain Benefits, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent								
Alternative or part-time work schedule	461	29.1	513	30.4	623	32.5	577	29.5	760	30.7	587	25.4
Telework	71	4.5	98	5.8	133	6.9	129	6.6	203	8.2	127	5.5
Child or dependent care, including a child care center or subsidy	63	4.0	80	4.7	82	4.3	103	5.3	166	6.7	99	4.3
Student loan repayment or tuition assistance	191	12.1	213	12.6	279	14.6	268	13.7	384	15.5	267	11.5
Transit fare subsidy	10	0.6	13	0.8	21	1.1	19	1.0	18	0.7	16	0.7
VA-Paid work and family management benefit	40	2.5	48	2.8	51	2.7	40	2.0	85	3.4	53	2.3
No benefits would have helped	997	62.9	1,062	62.9	1,144	59.7	1,195	61.1	1,432	57.8	1,166	50.4
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>1,585</b>	<b>115.6</b>	<b>1,689</b>	<b>120.0</b>	<b>1,917</b>	<b>121.7</b>	<b>1,955</b>	<b>119.2</b>	<b>2,477</b>	<b>123.1</b>	<b>2,314</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select all applicable benefits or that none of these benefits would have enticed them to stay at VHA. As such, totals exceed 100 percent. The overall response rate for the five shortage occupations ranged from about 30 to 35 percent, per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

## Enclosure VII: Exit Survey Data from Departing Clinical Employees from the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates Who Completed VHA's Exit Survey

The following tables describe the responses to various questions—including questions about primary reason for leaving, job satisfaction, and treatment from their managers—provided by employees from the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates who left VHA and completed the exit survey.

**Table 35: Self-Reported Reasons Employees Left the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Advancement	274	31.6	358	36.8	355	32.8	342	32.5	478	34.8	1,807	33.8
Desire for part-time schedule	20	2.3	24	2.5	29	2.7	24	2.3	30	2.2	127	2.4
Family matters	156	18.0	167	17.2	173	16.0	203	19.3	260	18.9	959	17.9
Compensation or benefits	29	3.3	28	2.9	32	3.0	38	3.6	40	2.9	167	3.1
Retirement	169	19.5	191	19.7	221	20.4	193	18.3	270	19.7	1,044	19.5
Work dissatisfaction	180	20.8	169	17.4	228	21.1	211	20.1	256	18.6	1,044	19.5
No response	39	4.5	35	3.6	43	4.0	41	3.9	40	2.9	198	3.7
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,052</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5,346</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single reason, but some did not respond. The overall response rate for the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates ranged from about 18 to 21 percent, per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 36: Self-Reported Responses to Whether a Single Event Caused Employees from the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates to Consider Leaving VHA, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	251	29.0	271	27.9	308	28.5	312	29.7	401	29.2	309	28.9
No	614	70.8	698	71.8	758	70.1	735	69.9	968	70.5	755	70.6
No response	2	0.2	3	0.3	15	1.4	5	0.5	5	0.4	6	0.6
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,052</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,069</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. The overall response rate for the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates ranged from about 18 to 21 percent, per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 37: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Employees from the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates Were Satisfied with Their Job over the Past Year, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Generally satisfied	554	63.9	648	66.7	674	62.3	675	64.2	893	65.0	670	63.9
Not generally satisfied	215	24.8	213	21.9	269	24.9	248	23.6	309	22.5	251	24.0
Neither satisfied nor not satisfied	90	10.4	107	11.0	115	10.6	122	11.6	160	11.6	115	11.0
No response	8	0.9	4	0.4	23	2.1	7	0.7	12	0.9	12	1.1
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,052</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,048</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. We grouped the responses “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” into the category “generally satisfied” and responses “not very satisfied” and “not satisfied at all” into the category “generally not satisfied.” The overall response rate for the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates ranged from about 18 to 21 percent per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 38: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Employees from the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates Were Satisfied with Their Senior Managers, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Generally satisfied	466	53.7	521	53.6	561	51.9	528	50.2	724	52.7	560	52.4
Not generally satisfied	233	26.9	245	25.2	294	27.2	304	28.9	373	27.1	290	27.1
Neither satisfied nor not satisfied	160	18.5	195	20.1	216	20.0	215	20.4	265	19.3	210	19.7
No response	8	0.9	11	1.1	10	0.9	5	0.5	12	0.9	9	0.9
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,052</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,069</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. We grouped the responses “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” into the category “generally satisfied” and responses “not very satisfied” and “not satisfied at all” into the category “generally not satisfied.” The overall response rate for the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates ranged from about 18 to 21 percent per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 39: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Supervisors Tried to Change Employees' Minds about Leaving VHA from the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	286	33.0	299	30.8	335	31.0	322	30.6	432	31.4	335	31.3
No	571	65.9	661	68.0	725	67.1	723	68.7	929	67.6	722	67.5
No response	10	1.2	12	1.2	21	1.9	7	0.7	13	0.9	13	1.2
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,052</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,069</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. The overall response rate for the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates ranged from about 18 to 21 percent, per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 40: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Employees from the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates Felt That Their Supervisors Treated Them Fairly, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agree	631	72.8	700	72.0	769	71.1	769	73.1	1,002	72.9	774	72.4
Disagree	134	15.5	143	14.7	187	17.3	144	13.7	178	13.0	157	14.7
Neither agree nor disagree	96	11.1	122	12.6	113	10.5	136	12.9	184	13.4	130	12.2
No response	6	0.7	7	0.7	12	1.1	3	0.3	10	0.7	8	0.7
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,052</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,069</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. We grouped the responses 'strongly agree' and 'agree' into the category "agree" and responses "disagree" and "strongly disagree" into the category "disagree." The overall response rate for the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates ranged from about 18 to 21 percent per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 41: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Employees from the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates Felt Respected, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agree	568	65.5	641	65.9	701	64.8	705	67.0	926	67.4	708	66.2
Disagree	181	20.9	183	18.8	218	20.2	196	18.6	239	17.4	203	19.0
Neither agree nor disagree	111	12.8	138	14.2	150	13.9	146	13.9	199	14.5	149	13.9
No response	7	0.8	10	1.0	12	1.1	5	0.5	10	0.7	9	0.8
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,052</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,069</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select a single response, but some did not respond. We grouped the responses 'strongly agree' and 'agree' into the category "agree" and responses "disagree" and "strongly disagree" into the category "disagree." The overall response rate for the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates ranged from about 18 to 21 percent per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Table 42: Self-Reported Responses to Whether Employees from the 10 Occupations with the Highest Loss Rates Would Have Been Enticed to Stay by Certain Benefits, Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015**

	<u>2011</u>		<u>2012</u>		<u>2013</u>		<u>2014</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>5-year average</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alternative or part-time work Schedule	223	25.7	272	28.0	295	27.3	261	24.8	315	22.9	273	21.5
Telework	47	5.4	56	5.8	71	6.6	71	6.7	107	7.8	70	5.5
Child or dependent care, including a child care center or subsidy	28	3.2	48	4.9	47	4.3	52	4.9	88	6.4	53	4.1
Student loan repayment or tuition assistance	127	14.6	135	13.9	129	11.9	149	14.2	217	15.8	151	11.9
Transit fare subsidy	3	0.3	13	1.3	9	0.8	11	1.0	11	0.8	9	0.7
VA-Paid work and family management benefit	27	3.1	40	4.1	30	2.8	34	3.2	39	2.8	34	2.7
No benefits would have helped	544	62.7	610	62.8	687	63.6	675	64.2	882	64.2	680	53.5
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>115.2</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>120.8</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>117.3</b>	<b>1,052</b>	<b>119.1</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>120.7</b>	<b>1,271</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Exit Survey Data. | GAO-16-666R

Notes: Respondents were instructed to select all applicable benefits or that none of these benefits would have enticed them to stay at VHA. As such, totals exceed 100 percent. The overall response rate for the 10 occupations with the highest loss rates ranged from about 18 to 21 percent per year.

The sum of averages may not sum to total due to rounding.

**Enclosure VIII: Comments from the Department of Veterans Affairs**



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON DC 20420

June 29, 2016

Ms. Debra Draper  
Director, Health Care  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Draper:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reviewed the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) draft report, "**VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION: Personnel Data Show Losses Increased for Clinical Occupations from Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015, Driven by Voluntary Resignations and Retirements**" (GAO-16-666R).

The enclosure provides our general and technical comments. VA appreciates the opportunity to comment on your draft report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gina S. Farrisee".

Gina S. Farrisee  
Deputy Chief of Staff

Enclosure

Enclosure

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Comments to  
Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report  
***“VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION: Personnel Data Show Losses  
Increased for Clinical Occupations from Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015, Driven by  
Voluntary Resignations and Retirements”***  
(GAO-16-666R)

**General Comment:**

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Workforce Services provides support services to more than 315,000 VHA employees and more than 120,000 trainees in areas including human resources, training, education, and professional development.

To achieve VHA's mission of providing exceptional patient-centered care to America's Veterans, it is essential to recruit and retain highly-skilled and dedicated employees functioning at the top of their competency level as well to develop a talented succession pipeline. VHA's workforce challenges mirror those of the health care industry, as a whole, such as the growing national shortage of physicians and nurses and increased competition for health care professionals in hard-to-fill occupations. VHA is working to ensure it has the appropriate workforce to meet current and future needs.

While the general finding that loss rates in VHA for the top five shortage occupations have increased from fiscal year (FY) 2011 to FY 2015, it is critical to note that loss rates decreased significantly in VHA during the economic downturn of 2008-2009. The increases we have seen in recent years for several of these occupations represent a return to the pre-economic downturn rates we saw in FY 2006-2007. Specifically, the FY 2015 rate for physicians is the same as it was in FY 2007 (8.8 percent); the FY 2015 rate for Registered Nurses (7.9 percent) is actually still lower than it was in FY 2006/2007 (8.5 percent/8.3 percent); the FY 2015 rate for Physical Therapists (8 percent) is also still lower than the rates of 10.7 percent and 10.3 percent in FY 2006 and FY 2007. Only the rates for Physician's Assistants (10.9 percent) and Psychologists (8.2 percent) are higher than they were prior to the 2008-2009 economic downturn, when loss rates were 8.5 percent and 6.4 percent, respectively, for those occupations.

In addition to the historical context mentioned above, VHA suggests GAO add any relevant comparison data or benchmarking analysis GAO may have obtained to provide additional context for Congress (i.e., Bureau of Labor Statistics Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey for health care and social services turnover rates).

VHA is strongly committed to developing long-term solutions that mitigate risks to the timeliness, cost-effectiveness, quality, and safety of the VA health care system. VHA is using the input from GAO and other advisory groups to identify root causes and to develop critical actions. VHA is dedicated to sustained improvement in the high-risk areas.

Enclosure

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Comments to  
Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report  
***“VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION: Personnel Data Show Losses  
Increased for Clinical Occupations from Fiscal Year 2011 through 2015, Driven by  
Voluntary Resignations and Retirements”***  
(GAO-16-666R)

The content in this report applies to high-risk area 5 (unclear resource needs and allocation priorities). Effective staffing for VHA medical facilities is critical to meeting VHA's goal to ensure timely health care for Veterans. Improving VHA's ability to forecast, recruit, and retain a workforce continues to be a priority.

(100598)

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