

GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-21-71](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The VA MISSION Act of 2018 established a new community care program, the VCCP, aimed at providing care to veterans when it could not reasonably be delivered by providers at VA medical facilities. The act also requires VA to exclude from participation in the VCCP providers who lost a license for violating medical license requirements in any state or who VA removed from employment for quality of care concerns or otherwise suspended from VA employment.

The VA MISSION Act included provisions for GAO to report on the implementation of restrictions on certain health care providers' participation in the VCCP. This report examines, among other issues, VA and contractor processes to implement these eligibility restrictions on provider participation in the VCCP.

GAO reviewed VA's contracts and contractor policies related to VCCP provider credentialing, interviewed VA and contractor officials, and assessed the provider credentialing requirements and processes. In addition, GAO collected data on former VA providers and compared these data to the database of VCCP providers.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations to VA, including that VA require its contractors to have credentialing and monitoring policies that ensure compliance with VA MISSION Act license restrictions and that it assess the risk to veterans when former VA providers with quality concerns continue to provide VCCP care. VA generally agreed with GAO's three recommendations.

View [GAO-21-71](#). For more information, contact Sharon M. Silas at (202) 512-7114 or silass@gao.gov

February 2021

VETERANS COMMUNITY CARE PROGRAM

Immediate Actions Needed to Ensure Health Providers Associated with Poor Quality Care Are Excluded

What GAO Found

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has implemented contracts with Optum and TriWest to set up networks of community providers as part of the new Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP). However, the two contractors' processes for implementing eligibility restrictions established by the VA MISSION Act, as outlined in their policies and reflected in their contracts, may not consistently exclude all ineligible providers from participating in the VCCP. The VA MISSION Act prohibits providers from participating in the VCCP if they have lost a state medical license, for example, as a result of revocation or termination for cause or due to concerns about poor quality of care. However, VA's contracts with these contractors do not require the verification of providers' history of license sanctions, including a revoked license, in all states during credentialing. Only one of the two contractors has a process that includes verifying providers' licensure history in all states and neither has a sufficient process for continuously monitoring provider licenses.

Contractor Processes for Implementing VA MISSION Act Restrictions on Community Care Provider Eligibility

	VA MISSION Act state licensure restrictions		VA MISSION Act VA employment history restrictions
	Process for verifying history of lost license	Process for continuous monitoring	Process for verifying VA employment history (beginning May 2019)
Regions 1, 2, and 3 (Optum)	X	X	✔
Region 4 (TriWest)	✔	X	✔

 VHA performs check
  Contractor performs check
  Check not performed

Source: GAO analysis of VA community care contracts and credentialing policies. | GAO-21-71

In May 2019, VA began tracking providers who do not meet the eligibility restrictions established by the VA MISSION Act. However, this tracking does not address providers removed from VA prior to this date. As of September 2020, VA had deactivated 136 ineligible VA providers from VCCP participation. GAO reviewed data going back to July 1, 2016 and identified an additional 227 providers that had been removed from VA employment and are potentially providing care in the VCCP. VA stated it has no plans to further review these providers. VA officials said these providers were eligible to participate in the VCCP because they were removed from VA employment before the VA MISSION Act restrictions were effective. Thus, there is a continued risk that former VA providers associated with quality of care concerns are participating in the VCCP.