What GAO Found

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

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

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

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

Source: GAO.