In its September 2015 report, GAO recommended that VA develop a plan with a time frame and a reliable cost estimate for completing VBMS, establish goals for system response time, minimize the incidence of high and medium severity system defects for future VBMS releases, assess user satisfaction, and establish satisfaction goals to promote improvement. VA concurred with GAO’s recommendations.

What GAO Recommends

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What GAO Found

As VA continues its efforts to complete development and implementation of VBMS, three areas could benefit from increased management attention.

- Cost estimating: The program office does not have a reliable estimate of the cost for completing the system. Without such an estimate, VA management and the department’s stakeholders have a limited view of the system’s future resource needs, and the program risks not having sufficient funding to complete development and implementation of the system.

- System availability: Although VA has improved its performance regarding system availability to users, it has not established system response time goals. Without such goals, users do not have an expectation of the system response times they can anticipate and management does not have an indication of how well the system is performing relative to performance goals.

- System defects: While the program has actively managed system defects, a recent system release included unresolved defects that impacted system performance and users’ experiences. Continuing to deploy releases with large numbers of defects that reduce system functionality could adversely affect users’ ability to process disability claims in an efficient manner.

VA has not conducted a customer satisfaction survey that would allow the department to compile data on how users view the system’s performance, and ultimately, to develop goals for improving the system. GAO’s survey of VBMS users found that a majority of them were satisfied with the system, but decision review officers were considerably less satisfied. Although the results of GAO’s survey provide VBA with data about users’ satisfaction with VBMS, the absence of user satisfaction goals limits the utility of survey results. Specifically, without having established goals to define user satisfaction, VBA does not have a basis for gauging the success of its efforts to promote satisfaction with the system, or for identifying areas where its efforts to complete development and implementation of the system might need attention.