VA Has Opportunities to Enhance Its Oversight and Provide More Comprehensive Information on Its Website

What GAO Found
According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), veterans’ use of nursing home care increased 3 percent, from an average daily census of 37,687 to 38,880 veterans, from fiscal years 2012 to 2017. VA projects that use will increase 16 percent from fiscal years 2017 to 2022 with the aging of Vietnam War veterans. VA’s nursing home expenditures increased 17 percent (8 percent adjusted for inflation), from $4.9 billion to $5.7 billion, from fiscal years 2012 to 2017.

To perform this work, GAO reviewed VA policies and information on inspections and interviewed VA officials. GAO also selected six VA medical centers based on factors such as their participation with CLCs, SVHs, and CNHs and location. For each, GAO interviewed medical center officials and officials from corresponding VA regional offices, CLCs, SVHs, and CNHs.

What GAO Recommends
GAO is making four recommendations, including recommendations for VA to enhance its oversight of the quality of care provided to veterans in CLCs, SVHs, and CNHs and include on its website information about the quality of care for SVHs that is comparable to what it provides on CLCs and CNHs. VA concurred with two recommendations and concurred in principle with two recommendations.

GAO Highlights
Highlights of GAO-19-428, a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study
VA provides nursing home care for veterans whose health needs are extensive enough to require skilled nursing and personal care in an institutional setting. VA provides or pays for the cost of nursing home care for eligible veterans.

GAO was asked to examine VA nursing home care. In this report, GAO 1) describes utilization of and expenditures for VA-funded nursing home care, 2) examines VA’s use of inspections to assess the quality of nursing home care and its oversight of the process, and 3) examines the information VA publicly provides through its website on the quality of nursing home care.

To perform this work, GAO reviewed VA policies and information on inspections and interviewed VA officials. GAO also selected six VA medical centers based on factors such as their participation with CLCs, SVHs, and CNHs and location. For each, GAO interviewed medical center officials and officials from corresponding VA regional offices, CLCs, SVHs, and CNHs.

What GAO Recommends
GAO is making four recommendations, including recommendations for VA to enhance its oversight of the quality of care provided to veterans in CLCs, SVHs, and CNHs and include on its website information about the quality of care for SVHs that is comparable to what it provides on CLCs and CNHs. VA concurred with two recommendations and concurred in principle with two recommendations.

View GAO-19-428. For more information, contact Sharon Silas at (202) 512-7114 or silass@gao.gov.