Veterans Treated for Substance Use Disorders, Fiscal Year 2018

Source: GAO analysis of Veterans Health Administration data. | GAO-20-35

Note: Specialty SUD services are those provided through a clinic or program dedicated to substance use disorder treatment. SUD services include services provided by any type of provider.

VA data show that overall there was little difference in the percentage of veterans using SUD services, including specialty services, in rural and urban areas in fiscal year 2018. However, there were differences for some specific services. For example, in rural areas, 27 percent of veterans with an opioid use disorder received medication-assisted treatment—an approach that combines behavioral therapy and the use of medications—compared to 34 percent in urban areas. In providing SUD services in rural areas, VA faces issues similar to those faced by the general population, including lack of transportation. The agency is taking steps to address these issues, such as using local service organizations to transport veterans for treatment.