

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 on 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.

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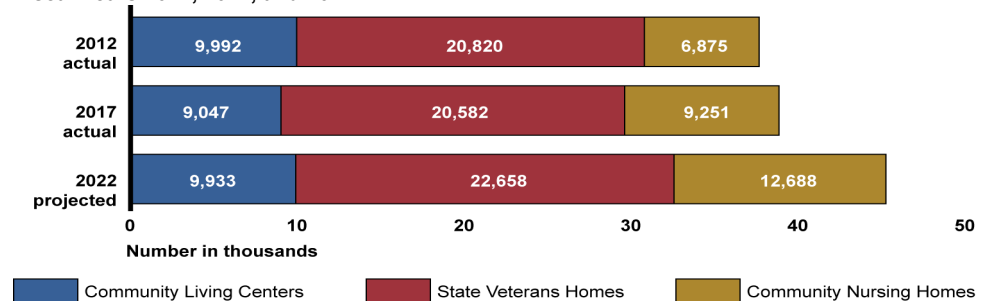
VA NURSING HOME CARE

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.

VA's Actual and Projected Average Daily Census of Veterans in Nursing Homes, by Setting, Fiscal Years 2012, 2017, and 2022



During the contract year completed in 2018, VA contractors conducted required inspections of community living centers (CLC) (VA-owned and -operated) and state veterans homes (SVH) (state-owned and -operated) to ensure they complied with quality standards. Selected VA medical centers also completed required annual reviews of Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services data and conducted optional onsite reviews for community nursing homes (CNH), with which VA contracts. However, VA has opportunities to enhance its oversight. For example, VA did not conduct the quarterly monitoring of contractor performance as stipulated in its contract for CLC inspections from April 2017 to April 2018. VA officials also said they intended to regularly observe contractors conducting inspections to ensure they effectively determine compliance with standards, but have not done so due to competing demands. Officials also said they had performed these observational assessments in the past but were unable to provide documentation of them occurring. Conducting and documenting the quarterly observational assessments would allow VA to identify areas for improvements and to take any needed corrective actions.

VA's *Access to Care* website provides publicly available information about the quality of CLCs and CNHs based on inspections. Veterans and their families can use the website to help inform their decisions on nursing home placement. However, the website does not include any SVH information. Although VA has access to SVH quality information, according to VA officials, they are not required to publicly report it. For some SVHs, VA is the only source for quality care information. Some of the quality information is available locally, but the VA website is an important tool for veterans and their families. Providing SVH information on its website could enhance veterans and their families' ability to evaluate all nursing home options.