

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-106135](#), a statement for the record to the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Coast Guard, within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is the principal federal service responsible for maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship in U.S. ports and waterways. It is composed of approximately 55,200 personnel. Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the service has been charged with additional security-related mission responsibilities. It has also faced increasing responsibilities related to natural disasters and commercial maritime activity.

This statement addresses (1) the Coast Guard's efforts to determine its workforce needs and (2) selected personnel issues.

It is based on seven products GAO issued from November 2019 through June 2022. It also includes updates from January 2022 to July 2022 on actions the Coast Guard has taken to address recommendations from these reports. To perform this prior work, GAO analyzed relevant Coast Guard documentation and data and interviewed officials. For a full list of the reports, see Related GAO Products.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO made numerous recommendations to the Coast Guard in prior reports, including to improve its workforce assessment process. DHS concurred with all recommendations. The Coast Guard has taken steps to address some of these recommendations, and GAO continues to monitor its progress in implementing them.

View [GAO-22-106135](#). For more information, contact Heather MacLeod at (202) 512-8777 or [macleodh@gao.gov](mailto:macleodh@gao.gov).

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## COAST GUARD

### Increasing Mission Demands Highlight Importance of Assessing Its Workforce Needs

#### What GAO Found

In its 2018 Manpower Requirements Plan to Congress, the Coast Guard set a goal to complete manpower requirements determinations—its preferred tool for assessing needed workforce levels—for all of its units. However, the Coast Guard has made limited progress in completing these determinations.

- In [February 2020](#), GAO found that the Coast Guard had completed manpower requirements determinations for 6 percent of its workforce. As of June 2022, the Coast Guard had implemented three of GAO's four recommendations to strengthen its workforce assessment process. Specifically, the Coast Guard updated its guidance, determined necessary personnel to conduct the process, and tracked the extent to which it completed the process for its units. However, it had not yet implemented GAO's recommendation to have a plan with time frames for how it will achieve its workforce assessment goal. The Coast Guard stated it would submit its updated plan to Congress in fiscal year 2022, but it has not yet done so. By updating its plan, the Coast Guard will be better able to track progress towards its goal and make necessary adjustments.
- In [January](#) and [February 2022](#), GAO found that key Coast Guard units—including health care and marine inspections—lacked workforce assessments, although mission demands of these units were increasing. The number of annual days health care staff were needed for surge deployments, such as for hurricane response, nearly quadrupled from fiscal years 2018 through 2021 (from about 4,100 to 16,000), according to the service's data. Officials expressed concern about maintaining already burdened clinic operations when health care staff are deployed. GAO found that the Coast Guard's staffing approach did not account for factors such as surge deployments. Implementing staffing standards for its health services program that do so, would help the Coast Guard best target its resources to meet mission needs.

GAO also reported on selected issues Coast Guard personnel face, including:

- **Child Care.** In [June 2022](#), GAO reported that the Coast Guard operates a small number of facilities for child care. Over 300 children are on waitlists for these facilities, as of March 2022. However, Coast Guard officials acknowledged that its efforts may not relieve the challenges faced by Coast Guard families in remote or geographically isolated areas that could continue to struggle to find child care. As of June 2022, the Coast Guard is working to increase access to quality child care by planning facility improvements and centralizing information to help families find child care in their communities.
- **Education.** In [February 2021](#), GAO reported that military families frequently cited education issues for their children as a drawback to military service, according to the Department of Defense. For example, these children transfer schools up to nine times, on average, before high school graduation.