

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-24](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD and VA play key roles in offering post-combat support to servicemembers and veterans through various programs and activities. Congress mandated that GAO identify DOD and VA programs designed to address the effects of combat on servicemembers who have served during recent conflicts, assist servicemembers and veterans with the transition to civilian life, and raise public awareness of these issues.

In this report GAO identified the number of programs, including the types of services offered that: 1) address the effects of combat on post-9/11 active-duty servicemembers and their families, 2) help post-9/11 servicemembers and veterans transition to civilian life, and 3) help raise public awareness and understanding of servicemembers' and veterans' combat and transition experiences. Also, GAO examined how the lists of programs identified compare with program inventories prepared by DOD and VA pursuant to law. To address these objectives, GAO established and applied its definition of "program." In general, GAO defined programs as federally funded, organized sets of activities agencies undertake that are directed toward specific purposes or goals and are being administered in fiscal year 2014. GAO also searched publicly available sources that contain lists of programs; sent preliminary lists of programs to DOD and VA for verification; and reviewed relevant reports and 2013 program inventories for DOD and VA.

This report contains no recommendations.

View [GAO-15-24](#) and a detailed list of programs at <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-15-24>. For more information, contact Andrew Sherrill at (202) 512-7215 or sherrilla@gao.gov.

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MILITARY AND VETERAN SUPPORT

DOD and VA Programs That Address the Effects of Combat and Transition to Civilian Life

What GAO Found

GAO identified 99 programs provided by the Department of Defense (DOD) to help address the effects of combat on post-9/11 servicemembers, their families, or both. These programs often offer multiple types of services. The services most common are mental health and substance abuse (50), information and referral (37), and case management or care coordination (15).

GAO identified 87 programs administered either by DOD or the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to help post-9/11 servicemembers and veterans transition to civilian life. Some of the 87 programs offer more than one type of service, such as the Transition Assistance Program, which offers employment, education, and information on veterans' benefits, among other services (see figure).

Transition to Civilian Life: Number of DOD and VA Programs by Type of Service



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs. | GAO-15-24

Note: The numbers of programs by type of service do not equal 87 because some programs provide more than one service. The frequency of a type of service does not necessarily indicate its utilization.

GAO identified 12 programs administered by either DOD or VA to raise public awareness and understanding of servicemembers' and veterans' experiences in combat, coming home, and transitioning to civilian life. For example, among the nine DOD programs identified, the Briefings with the Boss program convenes employers and National Guard and Reserve members to discuss issues linked to military service and civilian employment.

The lists of programs that GAO developed using its definition are not comparable with those in DOD's 2013 program inventory and have only limited comparability with VA's 2013 program inventory. This limited comparability is primarily due to differing contexts in which the lists were compiled. While GAO's lists address specific mandated questions, DOD's and VA's lists were developed following Office of Management and Budget guidance, which generally provides flexibility in how agencies define their programs. Both DOD and VA chose to identify programs at a broad level. For example, DOD's inventory is partially organized by its strategic goals. One goal is "preserving and enhancing the all-volunteer force," for which wounded warrior care is cited as a high priority. Under this goal, DOD lists "hospitals" and "regional defense facilities" as programs. In contrast, GAO identified individual programs, such as the Army Wounded Warrior Program and Warrior Transition Units, which were not listed in DOD's inventory.