

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-106969](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

VHA operates one of the nation's largest health care systems, offering services to over 9 million enrolled veterans. VHA has stated that effective oversight is paramount to its ability to deliver quality health care to veterans. However, our prior work found that VHA has faced challenges overseeing veterans' health care. GAO added VA health care to its High-Risk List in 2015, due, in part, to these concerns.

GAO was asked to review how VHA manages selected oversight functions within its central office. This report examines how VHA has (1) organized its oversight offices, (2) followed leading practices for risk management, (3) established an Office of Internal Audit to help meet its oversight needs, and (4) guided select oversight functions through its Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee.

GAO reviewed VHA documentation on its central office oversight functions, such as policies, organizational structure, and meeting minutes; and assessed VHA's processes against relevant criteria. GAO also interviewed VHA officials from its oversight offices and from four VA medical centers and their regional networks selected for variation in geography, rurality, and type of compliance structure used.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations, including that VHA take steps to fully meet leading practices for managing risk; clearly define the purpose of its internal audit function; and take action to ensure its ability to monitor oversight findings. VA concurred with the recommendations and identified steps VHA will take to implement them.

View [GAO-25-106969](#). For more information, contact Alyssa M. Hundrup at (202) 512-7114 or [hundrupa@gao.gov](mailto:hundrupa@gao.gov).

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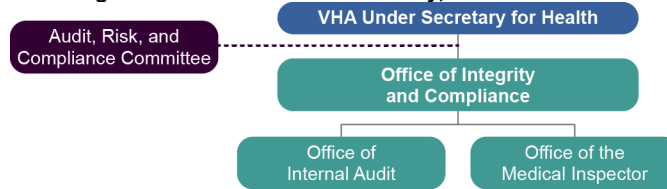
# VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

## Additional Actions Needed to Improve Oversight of Health Care System

## What GAO Found

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) delivers services to veterans in a vast health care system operated by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Three VHA oversight offices are responsible for administering select oversight functions, including compliance, risk management, internal audit, and medical investigations. GAO found that VHA has made various organizational changes to its oversight offices since 2015. Most recently it reorganized them in 2024 with the goal of eliminating fragmentation, overlap, and duplication, according to VHA.

### VHA Oversight Offices and Governance Body, as of 2024



Source: GAO review of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) documentation. | GAO-25-106969

VHA's Office of Integrity and Compliance is responsible for managing risks (threats to achieving VHA's mission), by implementing an agencywide approach to understanding the combined impact of risks. GAO's review showed that VHA has partially followed each of GAO's six leading practices for managing risk. For example, the Office of Integrity and Compliance trained employees on its risk management approach through new courses in fiscal year 2023. However, VHA has not fully met these leading practices, such as by comprehensively identifying risks across its health care system. GAO's prior work has shown that comprehensive risk identification is critical even if the agency does not control the source of the risk. By taking additional steps to fully meet leading practices, VHA can better respond to risks that could potentially interfere with the timeliness and quality of veterans' health care.

VHA established the Office of Internal Audit in 2016 to provide objective information to VHA leadership on how well particular aspects of its health care system are working. However, GAO found the office encountered challenges due to its unclear reporting structure and oversight role. VHA did not define a clear purpose for its internal audit function and had not updated its policy directive in light of its 2024 reorganization. By clearly defining its purpose, VHA can better ensure its Office of Internal Audit is used effectively, such as to provide VHA leadership information on trends and emerging issues.

VHA established the Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee as the governance body that is to guide its oversight and, in turn, make recommendations for system-wide improvements. However, GAO's review of committee documentation from fiscal year 2021 through 2024 found that the committee did not review relevant oversight findings, such as those from its medical investigations, and did not provide recommendations for potential system-wide improvements. Reviewing additional oversight findings and providing such recommendations, as appropriate, may assist the committee in identifying critical opportunities for system-wide improvement.