VA MISSION Act of 2018:
Section 505 – Personnel Transparency
Quarter Ending September 30, 2019

Executive Summary
November 22, 2019

VA remains committed to building and sustaining a workforce that can carry out VA's vision of providing Veterans and their families with the world-class benefits and services they have earned, with high standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability and stewardship. Achieving full staffing capacity is critical to VA being able to carry out its mission, and improved outcomes show that Veterans are being well served.

With approximately 390,000 employees onboard as of September 30, 2019, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) remains the second largest Federal Agency in the United States. Under section 505(a) of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (VA MISSION Act) (Public Law 115-182), the VA Secretary shall make publicly available on a quarterly basis information pertaining to "VA Personnel Transparency." This information shall include the number of personnel encumbering positions, the number of accessions and separation actions processed during the prior quarter, the number of vacancies, and the percentage of new hires hired within the time-to-hire target of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

In the 4th quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 (i.e. the quarter ending September 30, 2019), VA's talent acquisition strategies resulted in a net increase of 4,127 onboard[1] strength since the 3rd quarter FY 2019 MISSION Act Personnel Transparency report, while maintaining turnover and vacancy rates well below industry standards. **VA's approximate 9-9.5% turnover rate compares favorably with other large Cabinet-level agencies, which averaged 11% turnover in recent years.**[2] VA's workforce continues to grow, commensurate with VA's significant budget growth over the past 10 years, both of which increased due to augmented business requirements and workload. Most of the vacancies are the result of average turnover in such a large organization, in addition to new positions that are added to increase capacity. VA is making progress on its manpower management capabilities, to fine tune staffing data and to better identify staffing gaps.

The 4th Quarter FY 2019 VA Personnel Transparency report shows the following:

- **VA** reports 389,888 total onboard employees (i.e., personnel encumbering positions); 13,591 accession actions; 8,852 separation actions; and a total of 49,204 vacant Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)[3]. In addition, 49% of all new hires were hired within the OPM time-to-hire target of 80 calendar days. Total onboards increased by 4,127 during 4th quarter, and vacancies increased by 77 FTEs.
- **VHA** reports 349,646 total onboard employees; 12,288 accession actions;8,009 separation actions; and a total of 43,406 vacant FTEs. In VHA, 48% of all new hires were hired within the OPM time-to-hire target of 80 calendar days. Total onboards increased by 3,480 during 4th quarter, and vacancies increased by 375 FTEs. VHA accounts for approximately 90% of positions in VA.

- **VBA** reports 23,986 total onboard employees; 781 accession actions; 501 separation actions; and a total of 2,461 vacant FTEs. In VBA, 66% of all new hires were hired within the OPM time-to-hire target of 80 calendar days. Total onboards increased by 417 during 4th quarter, and vacancies increased by 36 FTEs.
- **NCA** reports 2,009 total onboard employees; 66 accession actions; 79 separation actions; and a total of 148 vacant FTEs. In NCA, 77% of all new hires were hired within the OPM time-to-hire target of 80 calendar days. Total onboards decreased by 29 during 4th quarter, and vacancies decreased by 10 FTEs.
- **Staff Offices** report 14,247 total onboard employees; 456 accession actions; 263 separation actions; and a total of 3,190 vacant FTEs. In VA Staff Offices, 42% of all new hires were hired within the OPM time-to-hire target of 80 calendar days. Total onboards increased by 259 during 4th quarter, and vacancies decreased by 324 FTEs.

VA is committed to accurate position management together with efficient staffing to fill vacancies and increase the size of the workforce to meet Veteran demand for healthcare, benefits, and memorial services. Historical staffing and vacancy data are available on VA's Web site at https://www.va.gov/employee/va-mission-act-section-505-data/.

How do I interpret the data?[4]

Onboards
Onboards (i.e., the number of personnel encumbering positions) are the number of employees (i.e., headcount) onboard at the time the data are reported. Note that "onboards" differ from "FTE," which is a budgetary term based on compensable hours as opposed to headcount.

Accessions (Hiring) and Separations
Accessions are personnel actions that result in the addition of an employee to an agencys staff (i.e., transfers-in from another agency, and new hires to the Federal government) and generally lead to increases in onboards. Separations are personnel actions resulting in the loss of an employee from the agencys staff (i.e., transfers-out, quits, retirements, terminations or removals, deaths, and other separations).

Vacancies
Unencumbered positions with a valid workload requirement that are budgeted and approved by a resources board. Note that vacancies may be in various stages of the hiring process, from creating and posting a job announcement to pending the security clearance process.

Time-To-Hire
OPM's 80 calendar day time-to-hire target is used for positions filled through a Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) posted to USAJobs. The count begins when a hiring need is validated and ends with the employee's entry on duty (i.e. start date). For health care professionals hired by VHA, the time to hire includes the extra requirement of credentialing which lengthens the time to hire average for those occupations.

Applying for a position at VA

The Section 505(b) MISSION Act Annual Report (June 2019) identifies the steps VA is taking to achieve full staffing capacity. VA is continuously recruiting for committed professionals who are dedicated to serving our Nation's Veterans. Employment at VA provides a competitive salary and benefits package and a strong work/life balance. Above all else, the highest honor in working at VA is the opportunity to serve the brave men and women who have served our Nation. Additional information regarding careers at VA can be found at https://www.vacareers.va.gov/.

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1. Onboard is the number of employees in a pay status at the end of a quarter (the head count by a particular date including full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees).
2. OPM Fedscope data retrieved in July 2018 https://www.fedscope.opm.gov/index.asp
3. Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) is the total number of regular straight-time hours worked by employees divided by the number of compensable hours applicable to each fiscal year. OMB A-11 Circular §85.5(c)
4. Onboards, accessions, separations and vacancies exclude trainees, medical residents, intermittent, non-pay status, OIG, and Veterans Canteen Service employees.