

VA MISSION Act of 2018: Section 505 – Personnel Transparency Quarter Ending June 30, 2020

Executive Summary

September 4, 2020

This report is submitted pursuant to section 505 of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (VA MISSION Act) (Public Law 115- 182), regarding “Personnel Transparency.” Under section 505(a), the VA Secretary shall make publicly available on a quarterly basis information pertaining to staffing and vacancies, specifically including: the number of personnel encumbering positions, the number of accessions and separation actions processed during the prior quarter, the number of vacancies by occupation, and the percentage of new hires hired within the time-to-hire target of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

In the fiscal year (FY) 2020 2nd quarter report, VA introduced a distinction between funded and unfunded vacant full-time equivalent employees (FTEs). Due to requests to reflect this distinction at the facility level, VA is reporting funded and unfunded vacant positions by VA medical center and occupation in separate tables. VA anticipates that with the completion of the forthcoming position validation review and other process improvements, these tables will become significantly more precise over time. Note that positions reported as unfunded are the focus of VA’s ongoing position validation efforts and do not necessarily reflect a gap in VA’s staffing capacity.

As of June 30, 2020, VA had 396,224 employees onboard (includes full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees), representing a total of approximately 387,167 onboard FTEs. With funding for 390,539 FTEs in VA’s FY 2020 appropriation, VA had approximately 3,374 funded vacant FTE at the end of the 3rd quarter FY 2020.¹ This FTE level represents a fill rate of 99.4% for the funded FTEs provided by Congress. Additionally, during the 3rd quarter of FY 2020, VA had a net increase of 3,562 onboard employees, reflecting successful hiring, low turnover rates, and additional funding for FTEs.

At the end of FY 2020 Q3, VA’s authoritative data source for employees and positions (HR•Smart) reflected ~51,600 unfunded vacant positions.² Unfunded vacant FTE do not necessarily indicate that there is a staffing gap or funding shortfall impacting the VA’s mission. As noted in the 2nd quarter executive summary, in early March, VA announced internal system changes to the HR•Smart system to put controls in place to enhance position management processes with better data integrity and gain fidelity in the reported positions, particularly vacant positions. It was expected that these HR•Smart system and business process changes would enable a comprehensive position validation review. This validation process was designed to include participation from financial managers to

¹ Funded vacant FTEs are the difference between funded FTEs appropriated by Congress and the onboard FTEs at a point of time, which for the purposes of this report is the end of the day on June 30, 2020. Due to rounding used in calculating the FTEs, these aggregate numbers are approximately correct, but may be off by 1 FTE.

² Unfunded vacant positions reflect the number of vacant HR•Smart positions that are in excess of funded FTEs in the appropriations provided by Congress.

ensure positions marked as “budgeted” have available funds to support actual hiring. Unfortunately, due to the impact of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 pandemic, those changes were postponed. Thus, VA is not yet at the point where the HR•Smart reported vacancies are indicative of true current and budgeted positions, but VA is making progress to define and document its full staffing capacity.

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?

Accessions (Hiring) and Separations

Accessions are personnel actions that result in the addition of an employee to VA (i.e., transfers-in from another agency, and new hires to the federal government) and contribute to increases in onboards. Separations are personnel actions resulting in the loss of an employee from VA (i.e., transfers-out, quits, retirements, terminations or removals, death, and other separations).

Full-time equivalents (FTEs)

Full-Time Equivalent refers to the total number of regular straight-time hours worked by employees divided by the number of compensable hours applicable to each fiscal year (regular method); or, the total regular hours worked in a fiscal year (2,080 hours) divided by 26 biweekly pay periods (pay period method). OMB A-11 Circular § 85.5(c).

Onboard Employees

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; as VA hires some part-time employees (i.e. partial FTEs), onboard figures consistently exceed FTE figures. Onboard does not include intermittent staff, those in a non-pay status, non-salaried health professional trainees or other volunteers.

Time-To-Hire

Time-To-Hire represents the percentage of new hires for the Department who were hired within the 80 calendar-daytime-to-hire target of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), disaggregated by Administration. Per OPM’s new Mission Critical Occupation (MCO) Resource Chart guidance, all hires in USA Staffing are now included in the time-to-hire calculation, including New Hires that are simply onboarded in USA Staffing and are not associated with an

announcement (i.e., non-competitive hiring actions).

Vacant FTE

Positions that do not have an employee in the position, measured by the total number of compensable hours associated with that position (with one FTE equaling 2,080 hours). Vacant positions may be funded or unfunded. As referenced earlier in this executive summary, work is ongoing to put controls in place to enhance position management processes with better data integrity and gain fidelity in the reported positions, particularly vacant positions. This work will improve the data quality of manpower and funding data.

Applying for a position at VA

The Section 505(b) MISSION Act Annual Report (June 2020) 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/>.