

RALEIGH, (SGRToday.com) - VA medical centers are having trouble keeping up with demand for services offered by the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (Family Caregiver Program). As a result, according to a new GAO report, some VA medical centers had difficulties managing the larger-than-expected workload, and some caregivers experienced delays in approval determinations and in receiving program benefits.

Officials originally estimated that about 4,000 caregivers would be approved for the program by September 30. However, by May, about 15,600 caregivers had been approved--more than triple the original estimate.

The full report can be found at [gao.gov](http://gao.gov).

The GAO website summary of the report continues:

“The program's staffing was based on VA's initial assumptions about the potential size of the program and consisted of placing a single caregiver support coordinator at each VAMC to administer the program. In addition, each VAMC was to provide clinical staff to carry out essential functions of the program, such as conducting medical assessments for eligibility and making home visits. This led to implementation problems at busy VAMCs that did not have sufficient staff to conduct these program functions in addition to their other duties.

As a result, timelines for key program functions, such as those for completing applications within 45 days and making quarterly home visits to caregivers, are not being met. VHA has taken some steps to address staffing shortages; however, some VAMCs have not been able to overcome their workload problems because the program continues to grow at a steady rate--about 500 approved caregivers are being added to the program each month. Federal internal control standards emphasize the need for effective and efficient operations, including the use of agency resources.”