

**Public Law 117-16: Training in High-demand Roles to  
Improve Veteran Employment Act (THRIVE Act)**

**Ninth Quarterly Report to Congress**

**June 2024**

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
and U.S. Department of Labor**

## Executive Summary

On March 11, 2021, the COVID-19 [Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program](#) (VRRAP) was enacted by Section 8006 of P.L. 117-2, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP), with aid targeted to assist individuals and businesses with recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers VRRAP, in consultation with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), to provide education and training for high-demand jobs to veterans who are unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. VA made applications for VRRAP available to veterans on May 3, 2021. VRRAP's design is based on the Veteran Retraining Assistance Program. To address the COVID-19 pandemic's immediate impact on veterans' employment, Congress added the word "rapid" to emphasize the goal of connecting veterans with short-term training to help them get hired quickly. Eligible training programs include GI Bill-approved education programs, excluding bachelor's and graduate degrees, and Veterans Employment through Technology Education Courses (VET-TEC)-approved programs. VRRAP provides up to 12 months of retraining assistance to an eligible veteran for the pursuit of a covered program of education. The program was funded up front with the entire \$386 million available for enrollment before December 11, 2022.<sup>1</sup>

On June 8, 2021, the VRRAP authorizing language was amended by P.L. 117-16, the [Training in High-demand Roles to Improve Veteran Employment Act \(THRIVE Act\)](#), requiring VA to enter into memoranda of understanding with nonprofit organizations for the purpose of facilitating the employment of veterans participating in VRRAP and permitting VA to modify the list of high-demand occupations compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The THRIVE ACT also required VA, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, to:

- contact each veteran who pursues a covered program of education to notify the veteran of the availability of employment placement services upon completion of the program; and
- reach out to VRRAP graduates to ask about their program experience and employment.

VRRAP's authorizing language also requires the Comptroller General, after VRRAP sunsets, to report to Congress on the outcomes and effectiveness of the program.

The THRIVE Act directed DOL to report VRRAP participant outcomes to the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs on a quarterly basis, beginning in June 2022. DOL's [Veterans' Employment and Training Service \(VETS\)](#) receives program outcome data from VA's [Veterans Benefits Administration \(VBA\)](#) to report VRRAP data in accordance with the THRIVE Act's requirements. The THRIVE Act requires DOL to submit reports on the:

1. percentage of participating veterans who found employment before the end of the second calendar quarter after exiting the program;
2. percentage of such veterans who found employment before the end of the fourth calendar quarter after exiting the program;
3. median earnings of all such veterans for the second quarter after exiting the program; and

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<sup>1</sup> VA stopped accepting new VRRAP enrollments on the statutory deadline of December 11, 2022.

4. percentage of such veterans who attain a recognized postsecondary credential during the 12-month period after exiting the program.

This report provides a snapshot of VRRAP participant outcomes as of June 4, 2024, the latest information available at the time this report was prepared.

## Data and Limitations

VBA implements and oversees VRRAP and data collection associated with program participation, while VETS produces quarterly reports on program outcomes.

VBA supplies VETS with de-identified participant-level data reported by VRRAP educational institutions and VRRAP participants. The participant-level variables include application ID, graduation date, early termination date, employment date, and salary amount.

VRRAP participant-level data is collected from two sources: the VRRAP Customer Experience Surveys and the VRRAP Employment Certification Forms.

- The Customer Experience Surveys are conducted and electronically collected through VSignals, VA's customer feedback platform. All veterans who have completed a VRRAP program are contacted by email at the 30-, 60-, 90-, and 180-day designated milestones to report their employment and postsecondary credential status. VA has conducted the Customer Experience Surveys, which are voluntary, since May 2022. As of June 4, 2024, the average response rate for surveys has been 20.9 percent of all those invited to participate. On September 28, 2022, VA received OMB approval to publicly share data from the surveys (see Federal Register Notice at [87 FR 25701](#), May 2, 2022).
- In consultation with VETS, VBA updated its reporting system in June 2023 to allow for input of all data from the VRRAP Employment Certification Form ([VA Form 22-10201, Employment Certification](#)). The employment certification form allows VRRAP participants to provide their status related to their obtainment of a postsecondary credential. According to VBA, at the time this report was prepared, only three veterans had reported attaining a postsecondary credential using VA Form 22-10201. Therefore, it was determined to be insufficient to respond to the statutory requirement.
- Educational institutions supply participating veterans with the VRRAP Employment Certification Form (VA Form 22-10201), by email, as part of the [Department of Veterans Affairs' milestone-based payment process](#) for VRRAP tuition and fees. VRRAP educational institutions report when veterans begin the program (which initiates the 50 percent payment), complete the program (criterion for the next 25 percent payment), and find employment in the field of study (criterion for final 25 percent payment). VBA has not received Employment Certification Forms for every participant enrolled to date. Accordingly, this report does not include data from all program participants and is limited to employment and salary data reported to VBA as of June 2024. Educational establishments reported 13,326 participants reached a program end date (98 percent of 13,653) by May 28, 2024. Of the 13,326 participants who reached a program end date, 7,968 reported graduating (60 percent) and 2,496 verified finding employment (19 percent). It is important to note that the response numbers cover the

period from May 3, 2021 to June 4, 2024 (latest program data available), while this report covers participants who exited the program by December 2023 (the June 2024 report reference for the second calendar quarter after exiting the program). Thus, the totals reported here are less than the June response numbers. Subsequent quarterly reports will provide additional, more complete, data.

## Reported Outcomes of VRRAP Participants

**Table 1. Reported graduation and salary outcomes of VRRAP participants within two quarters of exiting the program, June 2024 quarterly report.**

Quarter (3 months end) (1)	Total number of graduates (2)	Total number of participants with an early termination date (3)	Total number of participants who exited the program (4)	Total number of graduates with employment (5)	Total number of graduates with employment within 2 quarters of exiting the program (5)	Total number of graduates with employment and salary (7) within 2 quarters of exiting the program	Percentage of graduates with employment and salary (7) within 2 quarters of exiting the program	Median salary for graduates with employment and salary (8) within 2 quarters of exiting the program
June 2021	4	10	14	1	1	1	25%	\$37,440
Sep. 2021	220	131	351	79	79	77	35%	\$60,000
Dec. 2021	761	353	1114	281	267	250	33%	\$55,000
March 2022	1198	700	1898	453	442	408	34%	\$52,000
June 2022	2079	1188	3267	765	739	692	33%	\$50,000
Sep. 2022	3111	1652	4763	1083	1050	993	32%	\$50,000
Dec. 2022	4303	2404	6707	1436	1397	1316	31%	\$50,000
March 2023	5373	2831	8204	1698	1661	1564	29%	\$49,920
June 2023	6356	3171	9527	1963	1915	1803	28%	\$48,000
Sep. 2023	7198	3387	10585	2158	2105	1977	27%	\$47,500
Dec. 2023	7845	3520	11365	2290	2236	2104	27%	\$46,708
March 2024	7950	3546	11496	2305	2251	2119	27%	\$46,509

**Footnotes:**

(1) Quarter - reported quarter when participant exited the program.

(2) Total number of graduates - total number of participants with a reported graduation date.

(3) Total number of participants with an early termination date - total number of participants with a reported early termination date.

(4) Total number of participants who exited the program - total number of participants with a reported graduation date plus the total number of participants with a reported early termination date.

(5) Total number of graduates with employment - total number of participants with a reported graduation date and reported employment date.

(6) Total number of graduates with employment and salary >=\$1 - the total number of participants with a reported graduation date, reported employment date, and reported salary greater or equal to \$1.00.

(7) Percentage of graduates with employment and salary >=\$1 - the total number of participants with a reported graduation date, employment date, and reported salary greater or equal to \$1.00 divided by the total number of graduates.

(8) Median salary for graduates with employment and salary >=\$1 - the median salary for participants with a reported graduation date, reported employment date, and reported salary greater or equal to \$1.00. The reported salary range varies significantly, with several outliers showing salaries as low as \$1 and one reported salary as high as \$1.2 million. VA advised that the \$1.2 million salary is accurate and is what was self-reported by the veteran and supplied by the educational institution. Instances of relatively low salary amounts are common in this data set. As a result, the \$1.2 million salary had a minimal impact (less than \$50) on the calculation of the median salary. The calculations for median salaries in September and December 2023 were the only ones affected.

Note: The reported employment is based on voluntary response and is not a true reflection of the employment rate.

**Table 2. Reported graduation and postsecondary credential outcomes of VRRAP participants within four quarters of exiting the program, June 2024 quarterly report.**

Quarter (3 months end) <sup>(1)</sup>	Total number of graduates <sup>(2)</sup>	Total number of participants with an early termination date <sup>(3)</sup>	Total number of participants who exited the program <sup>(4)</sup>	Total number of graduates with employment <sup>(5)</sup>	Total number of graduates with employment <sup>(5)</sup> within 4 quarters of exiting the program	Percentage of graduates with employment <sup>(6)</sup> within 4 quarters of exiting the program	Total number of graduates with a post secondary credential	Percentage of graduates with a post secondary credential
June 2021	4	10	14	1	1	25%	(7)	(7)
Sep. 2021	220	131	351	79	79	36%	(7)	(7)
Dec. 2021	761	353	1114	281	274	36%	(7)	(7)
March 2022	1198	700	1898	453	443	37%	(7)	(7)
June 2022	2079	1188	3267	765	748	36%	(7)	(7)
Sep. 2022	3111	1652	4763	1083	1058	34%	(7)	(7)
Dec. 2022	4303	2404	6707	1436	1404	33%	(7)	(7)
March 2023	5373	2831	8204	1698	1665	31%	(7)	(7)
June 2023	6356	3171	9527	1963	1919	30%	(7)	(7)
Sep. 2023	7198	3387	10585	2158	2107	29%	2	0%
Dec. 2023	7845	3520	11365	2290	2236	29%	3	0%
March 2024	7950	3546	11496	2305	2251	28%	(7)	(7)

**Footnotes:**

<sup>(1)</sup> Quarter - reported quarter when participant exited the program.

<sup>(2)</sup> Total number of graduates - total number of participants with a reported graduation date.

<sup>(3)</sup> Total number of participants with an early termination date - total number of participants with a reported early termination date.

<sup>(4)</sup> Total number of participants who exited the program - total number of participants with a reported graduation date plus the total number of participants with a reported early termination date.

<sup>(5)</sup> Total number of graduates with employment - total number of participants with a reported graduation date and reported employment.

<sup>(6)</sup> Percentage of graduates with employment - total number of participants with a reported graduation date and reported employment date divided by total number of graduates.

<sup>(7)</sup> Total number and percentage of graduates with a postsecondary credential (based on VRRAP Customer Experience Survey responses received during the quarter. The VRRAP Customer Experience Survey was approved by OMB on September 29, 2022. Three participants reported their post secondary credential status as of this report.)

Note: the reported employment is based on voluntary response and is not a true reflection of the employment rate.

## Reported outcomes of VRRAP participants within two quarters of exiting the program, June 2024

Between the inception of the program on May 3, 2021, and June 4, 2024, VRRAP had a total of 13,653 participants. Of the reported 11,365 participants who exited the program by December 2023, 7,845 (69.0 percent) reported graduating. Of those who reported graduating, 2,104 (26.8 percent) reported finding employment within two quarters of exiting the program. The median salary for VRRAP graduates who exited the program by December 2023 and reported finding employment within two quarters was \$46,708.

## **Reported outcomes of VRRAP participants within four quarters of exiting the program, June 2024**

To examine outcomes for VRRAP participants within one year of exiting the program, we looked at outcomes for those who had exited by June 2023. Of the reported 9,527 participants who exited the program by June 2023, 6,356 (66.7 percent) reported graduating. Of those who reported graduating, 1,919 (30.2 percent) reported finding employment within four quarters of exiting the program.

As mentioned above, VBA had not received every participant's Employment Certification Form as of the date this report was prepared. **Therefore, these data are not a true reflection of the employment rate and median salary for participants who exited the program by December 2023.**

The percentage of participants who attain a recognized postsecondary credential during the 12-month period after exiting the program is collected by the VRRAP Customer Experience Surveys. As is noted above, VBA completed system upgrades in June 2023 to allow for VRRAP participants to provide their status related to the obtainment of a postsecondary credential. VBA advises that only three participants had reported their postsecondary credential obtainment status as of date this report was prepared.

VBA advises there are 870 VRRAP participants who have completed a program and have not yet reported employment outcomes but are still within their 180-day reporting window. Additional data on these individuals will be included in subsequent reports.

VBA notes that the eligibility criteria and the steady decrease in veteran unemployment since the launch of VRRAP in May 2021 have influenced veteran participation in the program. The eligibility criteria (which include limitations on age and benefit status and require the veteran to be unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and not in receipt of unemployment benefits) significantly limit the pool of qualifying veterans, while the veteran unemployment rate dropped from 4.4 percent to 2.9 percent from May 2021 to May 2024, further tightening the market for a program like VRRAP.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and concurrent with VRRAP's launch, substantial nationwide investments were made to reduce unemployment or mitigate its impact. Individuals participating in these programs (which included extended unemployment assistance and retraining programs) would not have been eligible for VRRAP and may have found suitable employment through these alternatives, negating their need to participate.

Finally, as has been previously reported, VA has received feedback from educational institutions, indicating that they are unable or unwilling to participate in VRRAP due to the staggered, outcome-based terms of payment. A lack of suitable program options (based on content, schedule, and/or location) may also help to explain the gap between the number of Certificates of Eligibility issued and the number of enrolled participants.

## **Conclusion**

DOL is fully committed to complying with the THRIVE Act reporting requirement to provide the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees with quarterly participant outcome reports. However, given that DOL plays no role in administering VRRAP, and that all information for this report is supplied by VA's VBA, DOL again suggests, in the interests of efficiency and economy, that Congress consider transferring responsibility for the preparation and submission of these quarterly reports to VA.