

**GAO**

Accounting and Information  
Management Division

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August 1998

**Civil Agencies Information  
Systems Issue Area**

**Active Assignments**

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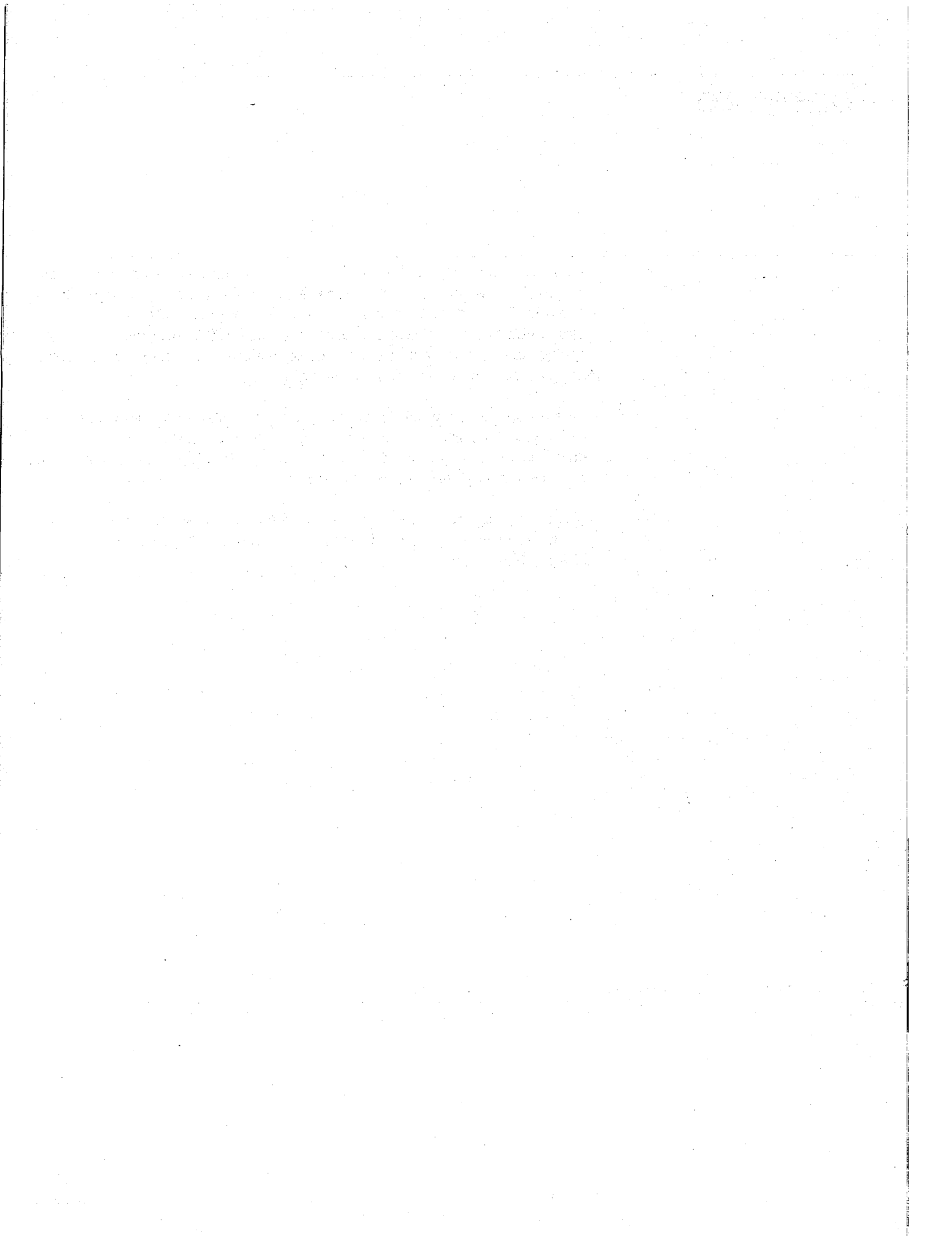
# Foreword

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This report was prepared primarily to inform Congressional members and key staff of ongoing assignments in the General Accounting Office's Civil Agencies Information Systems issue area. This report contains assignments that were ongoing as of August 17, 1998, and presents a brief background statement and a list of key questions to be answered on each assignment. The report will be issued quarterly.

This report was compiled from information available in GAO's internal management information systems. Because the information was downloaded from computerized data bases intended for internal use, some information may appear in abbreviated form.

If you have questions or would like additional information about assignments listed, please contact Joel Willemsen, Director, on (202) 512-6408.



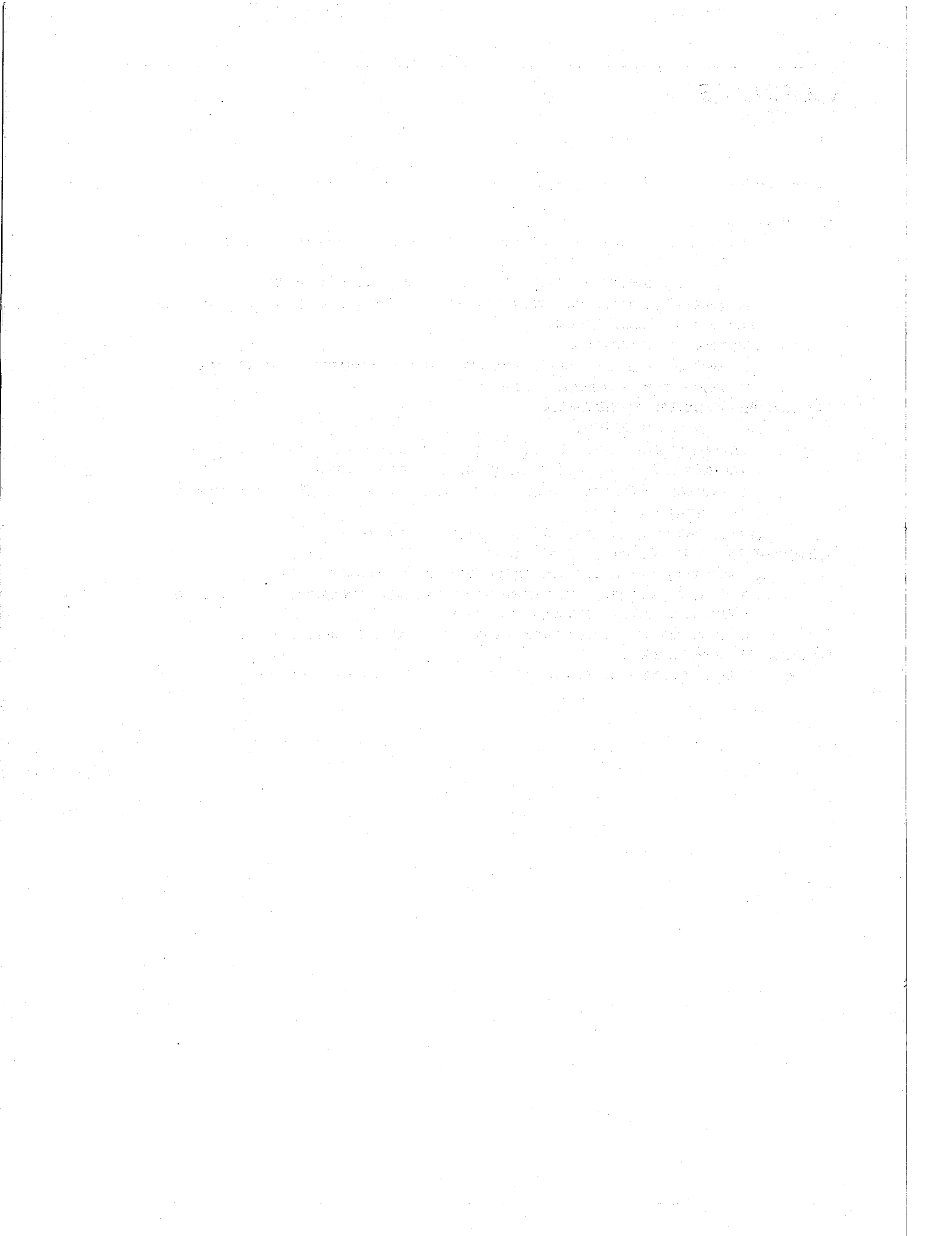
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## Civil Agencies Information Systems

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### HIGH RISK SYSTEMS-CAIS

**TITLE: HRA:28 REVIEW OF PERSONNEL ISSUES RELATING TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE YEAR 2000 COMPUTING PROBLEM (410327)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** In previous quarterly reports to OMB on progress addressing the Year 2000 computer issue, some agencies described problems in acquiring or retaining skilled personnel. In response to the requester's concern voiced during recent GAO testimony, AIMD and GGD will look at personnel issues surrounding the federal government's efforts to respond to the Year 2000 problem. GGD will focus on personnel tools that federal agencies can utilize to obtain or retain staff working on Year 2000. The general objectives for the AIMD/GGD assignment are: (1) What is the nature and extent of the Year 2000 personnel issues being reported by federal agencies? (2) What is being done to address personnel shortages related to the Year 2000 problem?

**TITLE: HRA 28:EVALUATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S YEAR 2000 READINESS (511230)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** In FY 1998, the Department of Education (ED) will administer about \$47 billion in student financial aid to about 8 million students. These aid programs are supported by 9 major information systems. The systems pay interest to lenders on millions of student loans and track billions of dollars in liabilities for defaulted loans. To reduce the risk of financial loss, ED must ensure that these systems are year 2000 (Y2K) compliant well before December 31, 1999. Our objective is to determine how effectively ED is addressing the Y2K challenge for its student financial aid systems.

**TITLE: HRA 28:REVIEW OF FEDERAL OVERSIGHT OF YEAR 2000 EFFORTS IN STATE COMPUTER SYSTEMS USED IN FEDERAL WELFARE PROGRAMS (511246)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** State and local governments administering federal poverty programs face a particularly serious challenge in preparing themselves for the year 2000 given their heavy reliance on computer systems and the fact that many of these systems were not designed to recognize dates beyond 1999. Accordingly, we will determine 1) what year 2000 guidance federal agencies (e.g., HHS' Administration for Children and Families and Health Care Financing Administration and USDA's Food and Nutrition Service) have provided to state governments, 2) what year 2000 oversight and monitoring the federal agencies have performed, and 3) the status of selected state systems and examples of consequences these agencies could face by not addressing the year 2000 problem in time.

**TITLE: YEAR 2000 PERSONNEL ISSUES (511252)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** In their quarterly reports to OMB on progress in addressing the Year 2000 issue, many agencies described problems in acquiring or retaining skilled personnel. In April 1998, GAO recommended that the Chairman of the President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion develop a Year 2000 personnel strategy. 1. What is the nature and extent of the Year 2000 personnel issues being reported by federal agencies? 2. What is being done to address personnel shortages related to the Year 2000 problem?

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**TITLE: HRA 25: REVIEW OF THE SULPHUR MOUNTAIN NEXT GENERATION WEATHER RADAR (NEXRAD) (511445)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** A recent conference report mandated that GAO review a report conducted by the Rose Institute of Claremont McKenna College that identified performance problems with the Next Generation Weather Radar (NEXRAD) located on Sulphur Mountain, Ventura County, CA. We agreed to review these performance problems focusing on determining (1) the radar's ability to provide information that is used to provide accurate and timely warning of flash floods and (2) whether the radar is intended to provide low-level data necessary to predict wind shear for Los Angeles international airport.

**TITLE: HRA 22: FAA ATC INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT (511462)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** FAA's high-risk air traffic control (ATC) modernization program is a multi-billion dollar portfolio of information technology (IT) investments. Effectively managing the program requires disciplined selection, control, and evaluation of these investments. FAA's new Acquisition Management System is intended, in part, to improve its investment management process. (1) To what extent does FAA have an integrated, comprehensive approach for selecting, controlling, and evaluating ATC IT investments as prescribed by legislation and OMB guidance? (2) To what extent are FAA efforts to improve its ATC IT investment management approach consistent with these requirements and guidance and responsive to any problems we identify?

### CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS-CAIS

**TITLE: HRA 28: VA YEAR-2000 EFFORTS (511228)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The Year 2000 computer problem poses serious risk to information systems worldwide. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), like other government agencies, must address the Year 2000 problem in its current systems. For example, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) must ensure Year 2000 compliance for its hospital systems as well as for biomedical devices provided to veterans. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) must ensure that benefits provided to veterans are not delayed due to Year 2000 problems. GAO has been requested to conduct a review to assess the status of (1) VHA's Year 2000 program and (2) VBA's Year 2000 program.

**TITLE: DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) INITIATIVES (511232)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has, over the years, initiated several information technology (IT) initiatives to improve service delivery to veterans. The objective of this review is to assess the status of three VA initiatives--the master veteran record, the Veterans Benefit Administration's (VBA) system modernization, and the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) decision support system.



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**TITLE: YEAR 2000 STATUS OF VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION'S BIOMEDICAL DEVICES (511247)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Responding to congressional concern that computer systems in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) may not be made Year 2000 compliant in time, we conducted a review to assess the status of (1) the Veterans' Health Administration's (VHA) Year 2000 program, and (2) the Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) Year 2000 program. The requester asked that we summarize, in a separate report, the results of our assessment of the status of VHA's and the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Year 2000 programs for biomedical devices, which was done under job code 511228.

**TITLE: USDA'S PLANS AND EFFORTS TO MODERNIZE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN ITS SERVICE CENTERS (511433)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** USDA is establishing 2,500 Service Centers to deliver service to its farm service, rural development, and conservation customers. In doing so, USDA plans to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to modernize information technology for these centers. However, as GAO has reported, USDA has historically had difficulty managing information technology. We will identify USDA's current plans and ongoing efforts to modernize information technology for its service center agencies, and identify the cost estimates associated with these plans.

**TITLE: HUD SYSTEMS INTEGRATION (511436)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** A major cause of HUD being designated as a high risk department is that its information and financial management systems are not integrated and are unreliable. Although HUD's spending on system integration efforts has exceeded the original \$100 million estimate, the systems continue to be listed as an internal control material weakness. GAO has been asked to review HUD's system integration efforts to determine (1) what were the objectives, costs, and completion dates for HUD's initial systems integration effort, and how have they changed, (2) what are the causes for systems integration cost increases and schedule delays, and has HUD taken effective actions to correct them, and (3) if HUD is using best practices to manage the systems integration projects as investments.

**TITLE: HRA 28: REVIEW OF FAA'S YEAR 2000 CONTINGENCY PLANNING EFFORTS (511451)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** GAO recently reported that FAA's efforts to address its Year 2000 date conversion problem have been too slow, leaving little time to renovate, validate, and implement corrective actions on its mission-critical systems. Additionally, systems that have been fixed may encounter unanticipated Year 2000 problems. Consequently, it is imperative that FAA implement sound Year 2000 business continuity and contingency planning efforts. Is FAA adequately performing business continuity and contingency planning for the Year 2000?

### IMPROVING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT-CAIS

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**TITLE: FOLLOW-UP ON SSA'S IMPLEMENTATION OF GAO'S YEAR 2000 RECOMMENDATIONS (511242)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** SSA has been asked to provide congressional committees with monthly updates on its progress in implementing the recommendations contained in GAO's recently issued year 2000 readiness report (GAO/AIMD-98-6). We were subsequently asked to review SSA's monthly reports and assess SSA's progress in addressing our year 2000 recommendations.

**TITLE: HRA 28: REVIEW OF THE HEALTH CARE FINANCING ADMINISTRATION'S (HCFA) YEAR 2000 OVERSIGHT OF MEDICARE CLAIMS PROCESSING CONTRACTORS (511243)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** In May 1997 we reported that the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) had not established adequate oversight of its Medicare claims processing contractors to address potential Year 2000 problems. We have agreed to follow up on those recommendations and assess the extent to which HCFA is (1) overseeing and monitoring Medicare claims-processing contractors' efforts to address the Year 2000 problem, (2) making progress in preparing its internal claims processing-related systems to be Year 2000 compliant, (3) ensuring that all data exchanges necessary for processing Medicare claims are identified, tested, and validated, and (4) developing and initiating business continuity and contingency plans for key business processes.

**TITLE: HRA 28: YEAR 2000 REVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AGENCIES - CAPITOL POLICE (CP) (511441)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The year 2000 computing crisis is quickly becoming the most urgent information processing problem facing government and industry. Because of this, the Chairman of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee requested that GAO review the year 2000 programs of legislative branch agencies. This assignment will focus on the Capitol Police (CP). Specifically, we will determine whether the CP is adequately preparing for and addressing its year 2000 computing issues.

### OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK - CAIS

**TITLE: HCFA'S INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY (511250)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** In September 1995 the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) entered into a two year interagency agreement with the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) to develop automated methods to detect fraud and abuse in the Medicare program. In 1997 HCFA extended that agreement for another year. However, questions have been raised about what benefits HCFA will receive from LANL's work to develop new automated tools. Accordingly, we have been asked to identify the practicability, timing, and amount of benefits resulting from this automation project.

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