

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-222](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

OCWR is an independent, non-partisan office that administers and enforces various provisions related to fair employment and occupational safety and health within the legislative branch. Responding to concerns about sexual harassment in the workplace, Congress passed the Reform Act in 2018, which expanded worker protections and overhauled the process for resolving workplace claims, including claims relating to discrimination and harassment. The act also required OCWR to create a secure, electronic claims system and appoint a confidential advisor to assist claimants, among other requirements.

The Reform Act includes a provision for GAO to review OCWR's management practices. This report examines (1) the status of OCWR's efforts to address new requirements in the Reform Act; (2) how OCWR is incorporating key management practices to implement the new requirements; and (3) the extent to which OCWR implemented recommendations from a related 2004 GAO report.

GAO reviewed documentation on OCWR's processes, interviewed officials from OCWR and selected legislative branch offices, and assessed how OCWR's actions aligned with key organizational change management practices that GAO identified and key project management practices from the Project Management Institute.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making six recommendations to OCWR to better incorporate key management practices as it implements requirements, and to improve its strategic planning. OCWR agreed with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-20-222](#). For more information, contact Yvonne D. Jones at (202) 512-6806 or [jonesy@gao.gov](mailto:jonesy@gao.gov).

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# OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL WORKPLACE RIGHTS

## Using Key Management Practices Would Help to Fully Implement Statutory Requirements

### What GAO Found

The Office of Congressional Workplace Rights' (OCWR) mission is to effectively implement and enforce the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (CAA), as amended in 2018 by the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 Reform Act (Reform Act). OCWR has implemented three of the four Reform Act requirements that generally became effective June 19, 2019, as shown below. Three other Reform Act requirements—track and report data and assessments, conduct a workplace climate survey, and educate and assist legislative branch offices—are in progress.

#### Implementation Status of Reform Act Requirements Generally Effective June 19, 2019

Requirement	Status <sup>a</sup>
Manage changes to the Administrative Dispute Resolution process	Completed
Appoint or designate confidential advisor	Completed
Create a secure electronic claims reporting system <sup>b</sup>	Completed
Establish and maintain a program for the permanent retention of its records	Not completed

Source: GAO analysis of OCWR information and the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 Reform Act, Public Law No. 115-397 (2018). | [GAO-20-222](#)

<sup>a</sup>GAO obtained updates on implementation status as of October 9, 2019.

<sup>b</sup>In 2020, GAO will issue two reports on OCWR's cybersecurity practices. The reports will discuss the extent to which OCWR has implemented security controls for its electronic claims reporting system.

OCWR has incorporated some key management practices when implementing requirements, such as managing risks associated with appointing a confidential advisor. However, opportunities exist to further incorporate key management practices in OCWR's work. For example:

- **Addressing risks.** OCWR has not yet developed policies and procedures to address the risks associated with permanently retaining sensitive records, such as ensuring they remain confidential when stored in multiple locations.
- **Measuring performance.** OCWR has not established measurable performance targets and milestones or related performance measures. Doing so would allow OCWR to determine if it is making progress toward its long-term goals and better communicate with congressional and other stakeholders about its progress.
- **Monitoring effectiveness.** OCWR routinely conducts educational activities, such as holding brown bag events and online training, and performs a variety of outreach activities. OCWR has new opportunities every 2 years to collect data through the workplace climate survey on the extent to which legislative branch employees are aware of OCWR's services and their rights under the CAA.

GAO found that OCWR implemented most recommendations from a 2004 GAO report examining OCWR's management controls. GAO also found that OCWR later stopped implementing a recommendation related to information technology (IT) planning, including ensuring that it obtained necessary IT skills. Without IT strategic planning, including recruiting and retaining staff with mission-critical IT skills, OCWR may be less able to carry out its strategic initiatives.