

REQUEST FOR GENERIC CLEARANCE
VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
OMB CONTROL NUMBER 2900-0569

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) request for the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) extension of its generic clearance to conduct voluntary customer survey activities for fiscal years 2007 through 2009 is attached.

VBA will continue to ensure that the survey activities described meet the requirements of the Executive Order 12862 using the OMB Resource Manual for Customer Surveys as guidance.

VBA's mission is to provide benefits and services to veterans and their families in a responsive, timely, and compassionate manner in recognition of their service to the nation. To carry out that charge, VBA must earn the respect and trust of veterans, employees, and the public by becoming an organization which is easily accessible by veteran customers for all VA benefits and services; rapidly, accurately processes requests for benefits; provides clear, understandable, timely, and informative communications; serves as a good steward of the resources entrusted for our use; and provides employees with training opportunities and job satisfaction.

As VBA and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) move toward a world class provider of services and benefits to our nation's veterans and their families, the importance of voluntary customer surveys will continue to grow in not only assessing what customers experience and expect but also as an integral part of an expanding performance measurement system, in keeping with the Government Performance and Results Act. Customer surveys, as required by Executive Order 12862, will also allow VBA to measure progress against its published customer service standards, to continue to refine these standards as needed, and to assess customer service interventions.

For the past three years, VBA has surveyed its customers to determine satisfaction in how services are provided. In the attached request for renewal of the generic clearance, we are seeking to continue to move toward a centrally directed series of information gathering activities that will be statistically valid, reliable and actionable. VBA has national surveys to include all business lines. The resultant survey data can be instrumental in directing and providing measurement of national and local service improvement issues.

We will ensure that all survey results are shared with VA management so that the findings may be included in business plans and serve as the voice of the customer and employee in policy and program decision-making. We will also ensure the customer's voice reflects a cross-section of our client population to the greatest extent possible.

Prior to implementing any survey activity included in this generic clearance proposal, we have provided and will continue to provide a copy of the survey instrument, supporting statement describing the activity, and the number of burden hours involved.

VA has an internal review process in place for all Administration survey activities submitted for review. The staff includes personnel experienced in survey research and design as well as knowledgeable of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) requirements. Each submission is reviewed to ensure that it meets PRA standards and agrees with the terms of the generic clearance.

Every effort is expended to ensure that survey results are circulated to all concerned, from senior management to front-line employees. In addition, the results, in the form of reports, as well as survey instruments and mailing materials, are posted to the VBA's Surveys internal website for all Department personnel to see. Further, this information is posted to a VBA internet site, <http://www.vba.va.gov/surveys/>, for the general public and particularly for survey respondents so that they may see the results of the surveys in which they participated.

To the extent possible, after a survey activity has concluded and before the next one starts, a review process is conducted of survey activities to determine: the effectiveness of the instruments used, if the resultant reports are received and understood as intended, and how the survey process may be improved, particularly with respect to response rates.

Also included in this package are examples of survey instruments to provide examples of the quality of survey research being conducted in VA and VBA.