

Health-Care Use Survey for OEF/OIF Veterans

STUDY FACT SHEET

What is this project about?

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is responsible for providing high quality medical and other services to returning veterans. To achieve this mission, it is critical that the VA understands some of the reasons veterans do and do not use VA health care. The research study, which is funded by the VA Health Services Research & Development Service, aims to provide the VA with a better understanding of factors that impact OEF and OIF veterans' use of both VA and non-VA healthcare services. This study is being conducted by the VA Boston Healthcare System, with assistance from the [SURVEY RESEARCH FIRM NAME], which is helping the VA distribute and collect this survey to/from OEF and OIF veterans.

Why do you want to survey me? How did you get my name?

We are contacting a random sample of veterans who served in OEF and/or OIF. The Department of Defense's Defense Manpower Data Center provided us with a random list of service members who served in OEF/OIF and your name was on this list. We would like to hear from both men and women with different military experiences throughout the country, so that we get information about the many different experiences, opinions and concerns of OEF/OIF service members.

What kinds of questions does the survey ask?

You will be asked to respond to a series of questions about your opinions and knowledge. The survey includes questions about your use of healthcare services, both within and outside of the VA, as well as about factors that may influence your decision to use healthcare services. The survey should take you approximately 45 minutes to complete and you can choose to answer or skip any question.

Do I have to participate? Will participating or not affect the services or benefits I get from the VA?

No. Participation is completely up to you. If you decide not to participate, it will not affect your VA benefits or access to services in any way. By filling out the survey and returning it to us, you are agreeing to participate in this study. If you choose not to participate now, please return the enclosed postcard which indicates that you prefer not to participate in this study and we will know not to contact you again.

Will what I say be kept private?

Yes. All information from the survey will be kept private. In order to help us keep your information private, we ask that you do not write your name or other identifying information (e.g. address) on the survey. Your answers will be combined with those of approximately 1,000 other OEF/OIF veterans who receive the same survey and released only as summaries in which no individual can be identified. Your personally identifiable information will not be used in any reports from this project.

What steps are taken to ensure my privacy?

Each participant gets a unique project identification number. This number – not your name or address - is on the survey. The number lets us know if we have received a survey from you and

also so we know not to send you any additional mailings. Your name and address will be kept separate from your survey responses and you will mail your survey directly to [SURVEY RESEARCH FIRM NAME], so that your responses can be scanned into a computer. Since your name and address will be kept separate from your survey, [SURVEY RESEARCH FIRM NAME] will not receive any identifying information with your survey. The only link between you and your responses will be your unique project identification number, and then it will be immediately removed from your survey, after which there will be no way of linking your survey responses back to you in any way. All identifying information about you will be kept in password-protected computer files on a secure computer system, and paper copies of the survey will be stored in locked filing cabinets in a locked storage area. These electronic and paper files will only be accessed by research team personnel. Paper records will be shredded and all research data on computer systems will be destroyed within 5 years after the study ends in a manner in which it cannot be retrieved. This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the VA Boston Healthcare System.

Who has access to my information?

Your first and last name, last known mailing address, telephone number, date of birth and social security number were given to research team members at VA's Environmental Epidemiology Service for the sole purpose of updating your current address and sending you this mailing. Your names and mailing address were then given to [SURVEY RESEARCH FIRM NAME], so that they could mail you this survey packet. Our study team at the VA, EES, and [SURVEY RESEARCH FIRM NAME] have taken extensive measures to protect your privacy and ensure your confidentiality. Please be assured that this information will not be shared with anyone else for any reason.

What are the benefits and risks of participating in the survey?

Participation in this survey will not benefit you directly. However, what we learn from you and others will be used to improve services for veterans like you. There are minimal risks associated with completing the survey. There are two main risks. First, you may experience feelings of distress thinking about factors associated with your health-care use. If some questions feel too personal or distressing, it is okay to skip questions you don't want answer. If you would like to talk with someone about how this survey makes you feel, please see the list of helpful phone numbers below. The other risk is a loss of privacy. However, as we have explained above, we have taken a number of steps to protect your privacy.

Will I be compensated for participating in the survey?

Yes, you will be compensated for your time and effort if you choose to complete and return the survey to us. Specifically, you will receive a thank-you check in the amount of \$15 in the mail along with the survey, requesting your participation.

Who can I talk to if I still have questions?

If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please call the Principal Investigator of this study, Dr. Dawne Vogt, at 857-364-5976. If you call in the evenings or on weekends, feel free to leave a message. We will get back to you as soon as possible.

OTHER HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS

(You can call these numbers to get help even if you don't want to take part in the study)

- If you want to talk to someone about your general rights as a study participant, please call the VA Boston HealthCare System Patient Representatives at 857-364-5295.
- If the survey made you distressed or you want to talk to someone about how the survey made you feel, please call Dr. Suzanne Pineles, who is a licensed psychologist and a member of our Research staff, at 857-364-5906. If you have a therapist, you might also want to discuss this survey with him or her.
- If you need emergency care because you took part in this study, the VA will provide care to you. Be sure to tell the VA that you are in a research study. Please call 911 if you have a medical emergency.
- If you aren't sure you are having an emergency and don't want to wait until regular business hours, you may also call the VA Boston HealthCare System at 617-232-7700 and ask the operator to page the psychiatrist on call. Tell the operator that you are a research participant.
- If you are thinking about hurting yourself, please call the **National Suicide Hotline at 1-800 273-8255**.
- If you would like information on resources for OEF/OIF veterans, please feel free to call the Principal Investigator, Dr. Dawne Vogt, at 857-364-5976.