

**Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) DES
Customer Satisfaction Survey**

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), through its Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), administers an integrated program of benefits and services, established by law, for Veterans, service personnel, and their dependents and/or beneficiaries. Public Law 110-181, National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2008, Section 1644(g) required VA and DoD to conduct a joint pilot program to test concepts for a more efficient and Service member centric disability evaluation system (DES), and produce a final report to Congress setting forth a final evaluation and assessment of the Pilot program, with recommendations for legislative or administrative actions the Secretary considers appropriate in light of the findings of the Pilot Program. The interim report to Congress submitted by VA and DoD on November 20, 2008 identified a Balanced Score Card approach to evaluating and assessing the efficacy of the Pilot and Service member satisfaction. One of the four dimensions of the Balanced Scorecard is Customer Satisfaction. The Senior Oversight Committee (SOC) determined that to adequately assess Customer Satisfaction, the Service members and Veterans participating in the DES Pilot would be surveyed during, and one year after separation from service. All survey findings will be reported to Congress. To meet this requirement VA must survey individuals who participated in the DES Pilot one year after separation to determine the level of customer satisfaction with the program. Data obtained through the information collection will be used to evaluate and, if necessary, revise the way the DES Pilot is conducted in an effort to raise customer service standards. In response to this recommendation from the NDAA 2008, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA or VBA) will implement the use of a one-year post-separation survey for DES Pilot participants to determine the level of customer satisfaction.

VBA will use employees from field offices to survey veterans who have completed the DES pilot.

This data collection enables the VBA to track and compare performance overall as well as at each DES Pilot site. Doing so will enable the VBA to gauge the effectiveness improving Service member satisfaction with the new DES Pilot process.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from current collection.

The information collected from the surveys will be used to support the Final Report to Congress on the DES Pilot. The data will enable the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to understand, quantify and analyze customer satisfaction levels among veterans who participated in DES. Since currently there are no other means of evaluating satisfaction with the veterans' experience with DES, these results offer the VBA critical information that can be used to formulate operational changes in the DES pilot program to ensure that veterans and active duty personnel are effectively served.

These data will be used by four primary constituents: 1) Field Directors; 2) Directors of each benefit program (Compensation & Pension, Insurance, Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment; Loan Guaranty; and Education); 3) VBA Senior Leadership, to make operational improvements; and 4) Senior DoD Leadership to assess the overall effectiveness of the DES Pilot program based upon Customer Satisfaction.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

The proposed survey methodology involves a live telephone interview. Specifically, a live-phone interviewer will introduce the purpose of the survey and answer any questions the veteran may have before beginning the survey. Once a veteran agrees to participate, the interviewer will conduct the survey.

VBA staff will develop, administer, and analyze the survey.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.

As noted previously, the VBA is not currently collecting any DES customer satisfaction data from veterans, so there is no duplication across other efforts conducted within the VBA. Additionally, review of available data suggests that there are no outside sources of data, which VBA could use to obtain a representative sample of veterans feedback on DES Pilot customer satisfaction.

Finally, to prevent duplication within the survey (i.e. calling the same veteran more than once) VBA will review the call list.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.

No small businesses or other small entities are impacted by this information collection.

6. Describe the consequences to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

If VBA is unable to proceed with the collection of the data for this survey, VBA will not be able to fulfill its obligation, in collaboration with DoD, to complete an effective review of the DES Pilot process, and make appropriate recommendations for legislative and administrative actions in the submission of the Final Report to Congress, as required by Public Law 110-181, Section 1644(g).

If VBA is unable to proceed with the collection of the data, it will not have the benefit of receiving veteran feedback on what is important to them or how best to improve their service and to best serve the needs of veterans. The collection of the data will enable VBA to track and document improvements or declines in DES customer satisfaction and service delivery over time.

The design and administration of the DES Customer Satisfaction Surveys incorporates significant measures to minimize burden on respondents (see section 12). There are currently no technical or legal obstacles to reduce burden using the planned methods.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted more often than quarterly or require respondents to prepare written responses to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it; submit more than an original and two copies of any document; retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years; in connection with a statistical survey that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study and require the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB.

There are no special circumstances that would require respondents to prepare or submit the documents outlined above, or respond in any type of written form. The surveys will be designed and carried out with appropriate scientific rigor, and will produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study.

8. Part A: If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the sponsor's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the sponsor in responses to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

The 60-day Federal Register (FR) notice was published on March 1, 2010, page 9279. There were no comments received in response to this notice.

8. Part B: Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, clarity of instructions and record keeping, disclosure or reporting format, and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed or reported. Explain any circumstances, which preclude consultation every three years with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained.

VBA worked closely with the DoD Office of the Secretary of Defense personnel involved in the initial surveying of DES Pilot Participants. VBA followed development modeling similar to that of DoD to create survey questions. The final survey reports will be combined into a single joint Final Report to Congress. DoD’s methodology is detailed in the Interim Report to Congress, dated November 20, 2008.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

No payment or gift shall be provided to respondents.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

An assurance of strict confidentiality is made in the introduction respondents receive with the live phone interviewer. Respondents are assured that answers given will be kept confidential under the Privacy Act and will be used for research purposes only. Respondents will also be given the opportunity to opt-out of completing the DES survey during the introduction. The information that respondents supply is protected by law (the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 522a and section 5701 of Title 38 of the United States Code) and system of records 58va21/22/28 Compensation, Pension, Education, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Records-VA.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private; include specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

None of the survey instruments contain any questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Estimate of the hour burden of the collection of information.

TABLE 1: ESTIMATED ANNUALIZED TIME BURDEN, BY RESPONDENT GROUP				
Population surveyed	Number of respondents	Number of responses	Average burden	Total burden

		per respondent	per response (in hours)	hours
Veterans who completed the DES Pilot process at least 1 year prior to the conduction of the survey	403	1	15/60	101
Totals	403	NA	NA	101

TABLE 2: ESTIMATED MONETARY BURDEN, BY RESPONDENT GROUP			
Population surveyed	Number of respondents	Estimate hourly wage	Total cost to all respondents
Veterans who completed the DES Pilot process at least 1 year prior to the conduct of the survey	403	15	\$1,515
TOTALS	403	N/A	\$1,515

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or record keepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 and 14).

- a. There is no start-up capital, operation, or maintenance costs.
- b. Cost estimates are not expected to vary widely. The only cost is that for the time of the respondent (average of 15 minutes per respondent).
- c. There is no anticipated capital start-up cost component.

14. Provide estimates of annual cost to the Federal Government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operation expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information. Agencies also may aggregate cost estimates from Items 12, 13, and 14 in a single table.

The total cost to the Federal Government is estimated at \$9,153. Table 3 below presents the labor costs for conducting the surveys.

a. Processing/Analyzing costs	
(GS-13/5 @ \$48.35 x 403 x 15/60 minutes = \$4,871)	
(GS-9/5 @ \$28.04 x 403 x 15/60 minutes = \$2,825)	
b. Printing and production cost	\$768
c. Total cost to government	\$5,689

These costs include development of the instruments, development of the sampling plan, review of the instrument, locating of respondents, programming of the questionnaire for administration, questionnaire pretest, administration of the instrument, validation, data processing, providing a clean data file, project management and analysis, and reporting.

15. Explain the reason for any changes reported in Items 13 or 14 above.

This is a new information collection.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

There are no plans to publish the reports. No complex analytical techniques will be used.

Time schedule for entire project	
Field Surveys	15-45 days after OMB approval
Analyze Data	45-60 days after OMB approval
Draft Report	60-70 days after OMB approval
Finalize Report	75 Days after OMB approval

17. If seeking approval to omit the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

We are not seeking such approval, as this will be a phone survey with no other vehicle for respondents to complete.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions,” of OMB 83-I.

There are no exceptions.