

**Returning Our Veterans to Employment and Reintegration (ROVER):  
National Surveys of Assistance Dog Providers and Veterans**

Request for Office of Management and Budget Review and Approval  
for Federally Sponsored Data Collection

Section B

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## **B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods**

### **B1. Respondent Population and Selection of Respondents**

#### Survey 1: Assistance Dog Providers

Although assistance dog providers in the United States is the population of interest, there is no comprehensive listing of these providers from which to sample. As such, a non-probability, convenience sample of providers will be identified using multiple strategies; including an Internet search using multiple search engines; a search of organizations by NAICS (North America Industry Classification System) codes conducted using Hoover's Lead Builder, a marketing database; and existing lists of assistance dog providers available on the websites of assistance dog advocacy groups and accrediting organizations. In recognition that a convenience sample does not permit inferences to the population of providers, attempts will be made to establish as complete a list as possible to increase coverage by the survey.

The internet search will identify organizations across the United States training the following types of assistance dogs: service dogs, service animals, therapy dogs, visitation dogs, recreation support dogs, social therapy dogs, guide dogs, hearing dogs, seeing eye dogs, eye dogs, sight dogs, mobility dogs, mobility assistance dogs, balance dogs, disability dogs, hearing dogs, hearing ear dogs, signal dogs, psychiatric service dogs, PTSD dogs, anxiety dogs, emotional support dogs, skilled companion dogs, home help-mate dogs, companion dogs, court dogs, medic alert dogs, seizure alert dogs, seizure response dogs, diabetic alert dogs, autism dogs, detection dogs, facility dogs, facilitated service dogs, 3rd party dogs, READ dogs, high schooled assistance dogs, emergency response dogs, search & rescue dogs, career dogs, and police dogs. The search by NAICS code using Hoover's Lead Builder will provide a listing of organizations coded as 812910 Pet Care (except Veterinary) Services.

Any assistance dog providers that do not have a webpage listing key dog terms described above, are not included in Hoover's Lead Builder, and are not listed by any advocacy groups or accrediting organizations will necessarily be excluded from the survey because we will be unable to identify or contact them.

The information and the internet link to the web-based survey will be sent by email to approximately 1000 organizations. This number of organizations is estimated on the basis of a partially completed Google search that already identified hundreds of assistance animal providers. On the basis of similar surveys of small businesses or non-profit organizations, it is estimated that approximately 300 or 30% of the organizations will complete the survey.

After the list of providers is generated, the contact information (email, mailing address, phone number, and website address) for each provider will be verified by a research assistant using an online search engine (e.g., Google).

The link to the survey will be sent to identified assistance dog providers in an initial email (See attachment C1) and then again, if necessary, after a follow-up phone call 6 weeks after the initial email (See attachment C2). Respondents that choose to participate in the survey will be able to

access the survey online at any time for 8 weeks following the initial notification. There are no scheduled appointments.

Due to the online nature of this survey, respondents must have access to the internet. Because the provider organizations were identified via web searches and the present of a webpage for each organization, all providers recruited for this survey should have internet access. So, this requirement should not be an issue.

## Survey 2: Veterans

This survey will target Veterans in the United States from all service branches and all war eras. They will be recruited with assistance from several Veteran agencies and organizations including each state's Veterans Affairs Office, the VA National Centers for PTSD with locations in Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, California, and Hawaii, regional VA Medical Centers, VA Centers of Excellence in Health Research and Development Service also located in several states, Office of the US Army Surgeon General, and other national, state, and local Veterans advocacy groups such as Wounded Warriors Project. We will also work with the Office of Adjutant Generals of the National Guard in various states to help disseminate announcements of the survey.

According the U.S. Census Bureau statistics for 2010 there were approximately 21.8 million Veterans and 1.1 million reservists and, as of December 31, 2011, DOD statistics show that there were 1.2 million active duty personnel across all service branches. With the assistance and cooperation of our partner organizations and agencies, announcements of the survey are expected to reach approximately 5% or 1.2 million of the total 24.1 million Veterans, reservists, and active duty personnel. Of those, we conservatively estimate that 5% or 60,000 will be interested in responding to the survey announcements. Despite current public interest in matters concerning assistance animals, not all of these individuals are expected to complete the survey. However, in a recent (unrelated) survey study of veterans residing in West Virginia only, responses were obtained from 1,000 (12.5%) individuals using similar recruitment procedures (Suh, 2012). In another similar study, the response rate of veterans was 10% (Scotti, 2008). Based on these examples, we conservatively estimate a 10% response rate from among the estimated 60,000 interested veterans from across all 50 states for a total number of 6,000 respondents (see Table A.12).

Due to the online nature of this survey, respondents must have access to the internet; paper copies will not be provided. We are recruiting Veteran respondents via Veteran's organizations which presumably have resources, such as internet access, available to their member veterans. Also, many of the Veteran Agencies will be recruiting veteran respondents by emailing the recruitment flyer. The exclusion of veteran respondent's without access to the internet may be a limitation of this study.

## **B2. Procedures for the Collection of Information**

### Survey 1: Assistance Dog Providers

The information and the internet link to the web-based survey will be sent by email to approximately 1000 organizations (procedures to identify of these organizations described in B1). This number of organizations is estimated on the basis of a partially completed Google search that already identified hundreds of assistance animal providers. On the basis of similar surveys of small businesses or non-profit organizations, it is estimated that approximately 300 or 30% of the organizations will complete the survey.

The link to the survey will be sent in an initial email (See attachment C1) and then again, if necessary, after a follow-up phone call 6 weeks after the initial email (See attachment C2). Respondents that choose to participate in the survey will be able to access the survey online at any time for 8 weeks following the initial notification. There are no scheduled appointments.

It is unlikely, but possible that individuals other than assistance dog providers will gain access to this survey. Because we will not be linking the name of assistance dog providers with their survey results, we will have no way of determining which responses are legitimately from assistance dog providers. However, the link to the survey will be sent out to previously identified assistance dog providers, so access to the survey by other individuals should be very rare. This is a potential limitation of this data collection; however, many surveys encounter similar limitations.

This is a one-time data collection. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

## Survey 2: Veterans

This survey will target Veterans in the United States from all service branches and all war eras. They will be recruited with assistance from several Veteran agencies and organizations including each state's Veterans Affairs Office, the VA National Centers for PTSD with locations in Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, California, and Hawaii, regional VA Medical Centers, VA Centers of Excellence in Health Research and Development Service also located in several states, Office of the US Army Surgeon General, and other national, state, and local Veterans advocacy groups such as Wounded Warriors Project. We will also work with the Office of Adjutant Generals of the National Guard in various states to help disseminate announcements of the survey.

The above-listed agencies will be sent an email containing the information regarding the survey (see Attachment D2) and asked to disseminate this information to as many Veterans as possible. Agencies will also be provided with a flyer advertising the survey (see Attachment D1). Some agencies will receive the flyer via email and other (local) agencies will either receive the flyer via email or from a visit to the facility where the survey is discussed with staff and recruitment of Veterans is requested more personally by NIOSH research team members. Agencies will be asked to both display the flyer in their facility and to email it to as many Veterans as possible. The flyer outlines the purpose of the survey, the topics to be covered, and the expected time to complete the survey (60 minutes). Each agency will be contacted approximately 6 weeks after the initial contact by phone to follow up (See attachment D3). Respondents that choose to participate in the survey will be able to access the survey online at any time. There are no

scheduled appointments. Respondents that choose to participate in the survey will be able to access the survey online at any time for 8 weeks following the initial notification.

It is unlikely, but possible that individuals other than veterans will gain access to this survey. Because we will not be linking the name of veterans with their survey results, we will have no way of determining which responses are legitimately from veterans. However, the link to the survey will be sent out to Veteran's Agencies, who will then recruit through their member databases, so access to the survey by other individuals should be very rare. This is a potential limitation of this data collection; however, many surveys encounter similar limitations.

This is a one-time data collection. The survey will take approximately 60 minutes to complete.

Both surveys:

Because both surveys are hosted on an internet site (Survey Monkey), no direct interaction between the NIOSH research staff and respondents will occur, therefore, trained interviewers are not required to deliver the surveys. However, individuals conducting follow-up phone calls will be familiar with the script used for these phone conversations (See attachments C2 and D3),

Periodically during the survey period and at the conclusion of the survey period, the electronic files containing survey responses will be copied from the Survey Monkey site to NIOSH file servers by NIOSH personnel where it will be stored in a secure manner. At the conclusion of the survey period, all data files will be deleted from the Survey Monkey site

### **B3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates and Deal with Nonresponse**

Both surveys:

To maximize efficiency and reduce burden, two web-based surveys are proposed for 100% of data collection. The surveys will be constructed for easy respondent use, allowing the automatic administration of skip patterns, while maintaining a simple, seamless navigation. The majority of the questions are multiple choice, requiring a simple and easy mouse-click response. Web-based surveys have gained increasing acceptance as a research tool as they offer many advantages (Dillman, 2000), including:

- Cost effective (no postage or telephone bills required).
- Time effective (response speed faster due to ease of answering questions and navigation with skip patterns).
- All responses are automatically generated, allowing for minimal data cleaning and rapid tabulation of findings.
- Respondents can exit the survey at any time and resume where they ended.
- Less effort for respondents due to no mailing back survey.
- Lower rate of item nonresponse (Kwak & Radler, 2002).

Multiple measures will be taken to maximize response rates (See section B.1 for more information on expected response rates). First, a Project ROVER team member will contact all

Veteran agencies and assistance dog organizations approximately 6 weeks after the initial contact by phone as a reminder and to answer any questions or concerns (see Attachment C2 and D3). The initial email will be resent if necessary (See attachment C1 and D2). Date, time, and detail of all phone calls will be logged using an Excel database. If, after contact, the Veteran agency or assistance dog organization chooses not to participate in the research study, the organization or agency name will be dropped from the study sample database and no further contact will be attempted.

Participation will be voluntary with no incentives for participation beyond self-motivation and no negative impacts for declining to participate. Therefore, we plan on taking the following steps to encourage participation and a high response rate in this research study:

1. Reduced response effort. The survey is web-based, allowing respondents to complete the survey at their leisure.
2. Stakeholders involved with this research project have indicated that this topic is of strong interest to assistance dog providers and Veterans.
3. Phone follow-up 6 weeks after initial email.
6. The survey questions have been designed to be as non-burdensome as possible. This includes ordering the questions in a logical sequence and asking only those questions that are needed for analysis purposes. The majority of survey questions offer simple response options (multiple choice).

Both surveys are only accessible via the internet (i.e., no paper versions of the survey will be available). This may introduce bias in responses. All assistance dog providers were identified through their presence on the world-wide web and thus will be recruited by direct email. In today's business climate, it is unlikely that service dog providers do not have a web presence and thus access to the internet. Furthermore, in researching assistance dog providers through published business and telephone directories, we have not encountered a single organization that does not have a web page. Veterans will be recruited indirectly through various veterans organizations, many of which make resources, such as internet access, available to their members. Despite widespread internet access in the U.S. population, the exclusion of veterans without internet access to the internet is a limitation of this study.

Also, it is unlikely, but possible that individuals other than veterans will gain access to the veteran survey. Because we will not be linking the name of veterans with their survey results, we will have no way of determining which responses are legitimately from veterans. However, the link to the survey will be sent out to Veteran's Agencies, who will then recruit through their member databases, so access to the survey by other individuals should be very rare. This is a potential limitation of this data collection; however, many surveys encounter similar limitations.

As with the veterans survey, it is unlikely, but possible that individuals other than assistance dog providers will gain access to the assistance dog provider survey. Because we will not be linking the name of assistance dog providers with their survey results, we will have no way of determining which responses are legitimately from assistance dog providers. However, the link to the survey will be sent out to previously identified assistance dog providers, so access to the

survey by other individuals should be very rare. This is a potential limitation of this data collection; however, many surveys encounter similar limitations.

Also, the data collected using both surveys is self-report data. As with any self-report data, its accuracy may be questioned. However, due to the interest the respondents are expected to have in the topic area, and that the results of these surveys may impact them directly, we are expecting more accurate results than in most self-report data collection situations.

#### **B4. Tests of Procedures or Methods to be Undertaken**

##### Survey 1: Assistance Dog Providers

Because no survey tool or similar questionnaires exist, we developed novel surveys. Questions were generated to address certain descriptive features or characteristics associated with the services of assistance dog providers. Tables B4.1 show the sections of the survey and question types.

Portions of the surveys went through several rounds of formal and informal pilot testing, mainly with the undergraduate and graduate student volunteers under the direction Professor Joseph Scotti in the Department of Psychology at West Virginia University to assess formatting, style, and phrasing. Nine students completed the various portions of the surveys to assess the time requirements and easy of comprehension. Additional consultations were conducted with survey experts and content experts at NIOSH and West Virginia University. The survey was refined as needed on the basis of feedback obtained from this testing.

**Table B4.1: Survey Sections and Questions – Assistance Dog Provider Survey**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Question #</b>
Organizational Demographics and History	1-6
Services Provided to Clients	7-14
Dog Breed and Training Information	15, 16, 17, 24-45
Veteran Information	18-21
Returning Veterans to Work	22, 23

##### Survey 2: Veterans

Because no survey tool or similar questionnaires exists, we developed a novel survey instrument. Table B4.2 shows the structure of the survey and corresponding questions.

Portions of the survey went through several rounds of formal and informal pilot testing, mainly with the undergraduate and graduate student volunteers under the direction of Joseph Scotti in the Psychology Department at WVU to assess formatting, style and phrasing. Nine students



completed the various portions of the surveys to assess the time requirements and ease of comprehension. Additional consultations were conducted with survey experts and content experts at NIOSH and WVU. The survey was refined as needed on the basis of feedback obtained from this testing.

**Table B4.2: Survey Sections and Questions – Veteran Survey**

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Question #</b>
Respondent demographics	1-12
Barriers and facilitators to employment	13-14
General functioning	15-17
Military service information	19-26
Military experiences	18, 27-37
Pet Attitudes	38, 61-63
Pet history and ownership	39-60
Relationship with dogs	64-66
Depression symptoms	67, 68, 73
PTSD symptoms	69-71, 74
Pet Therapy Attitude	80,81
Regarding having service dog	82-85

**B5. Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects and Individuals Collecting and/or Analyzing Data**

The following individuals will be involved in the design, collection and/or analysis of the data obtained in this study:

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