

SUPPORTING STATEMENT – PART A

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Need for the Information Collection

In July of 2012, President Obama announced that a redesigned Transition Assistance Program was launching, aimed at better preparing service members for their transitions into civilian life. The redesigned program, named Transition Goals Plans Success (GPS), resulted from the President's mandate to both the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs that they establish Joint Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force. An interagency partnership formed, and Defense, Labor, and other partners have brought together their lessons learned to develop a comprehensive curriculum for today's separating service members. Although Transition GPS has already been implemented, it is still a very new program, and adaptations will occur as the program ages and both efficiencies and inefficiencies are discovered. In this light, the purpose of this study is to determine both the successes and challenges that veterans face as they reintegrate into their civilian lives, from a life-course perspective. Since veterans' needs will vary greatly depending on where they are in their life courses upon separation from service, it is important for the Transition to Veterans Program Office (TVPO) to understand these differences. To gather input from recently transitioned veterans, service members who have transitioned from active duty to reserve status, and those still serving on active-duty but approaching their separation points, CNA will conduct focus groups with each of these populations.

Per the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011, which makes amendments to section 1144 of title 10 U.S.C.,

The Secretary of Labor shall develop a method to assess the outcomes for individuals who participate in the program established under this section. The Secretary of Defense shall provide to the Secretary of Labor any data on participation in the program that is necessary for the Secretary of Labor to develop such method.

These focus groups will provide much of this necessary information. We are thus using title 10, section 1144 as our authorization.

2. Use of the Information

The CNA study team will use focus group discussions as a qualitative input into an otherwise quantitative study. We will tabulate commonly-heard responses, and provide TVPO with insights regarding how transition needs vary for different populations, whether there are currently any populations who feel under-served by the Transition GPS program, and whether any slight modifications to the program could help address this.

Our research design is simple; we will collect voluntary demographic data at our focus groups, via in-take forms, and ask participants to speak with us about their transition experiences. The in-take forms will be voluntary, and will collect no personally-identifiable-information, only demographics, so that we may compare the characteristics of our sample to the

population of separating service members at large. Our focus group protocol contains questions on community involvement, relocation decisions upon service separation, initial intentions after separation, reintegration challenges, and the impacts of transition programs on their ease of reintegration. Our primary objective is to obtain information on the aspects of separation/reintegration which are most difficult, thus identifying areas where modifications to transition programs could help ease transition. It is also critical that we capture those aspects of the program that are working well and viewed by veterans as being highly effective, as efforts should be made to maintain or strengthen these.

3. Use of Information Technology

We will be digitally recording the focus groups, and transcribing them after the discussions are completed, so that we do not have to worry about capturing all comments in our notes. This is the only technological component. Otherwise, facilitators will be reading questions from printed paper, and participants will discuss.

4. Non-duplication

There are no current or recent surveys or focus groups of transitioning servicemembers which capture information about their life courses, their reintegration challenges, the transition programs' successes, and also identify areas for improvement in the existing transition assistance programs.

5. Burden on Small Business

Not applicable.

6. Less Frequent Collection

We will be conducting each focus group one-time, and will not be conducting any sort of follow-up with the participants.

7. Paperwork Reduction Act Guidelines

Not applicable.

8. Consultation and Public Comments

60-day Federal Register Notice: Proposed Collection; Comment Request; OMB Control Number 0704-TBD, was filed for public inspection on Tuesday, July 23, and published in the Federal Register on Wednesday, July 24.

Federal Register/ Vol. 78, No. 142 / Thursday, July 24, 2013 / Notices 44552.

No comments were received.

30-day Federal Register Notice: Published in Federal Register on 12/27/13; Vol. 78, Page 78939. The public comment period closed on 01/27/14. No comments were received in the regulations.gov website.

There are four existing surveys that contain measures of veterans' reintegration. They are the Current Population Survey, the American Time Use Survey, the National Survey of Veterans, and the Pew Social and Demographic Trends Survey of Veterans. Individually, none of these surveys provides sufficient information to answer all of our questions of interest, and we are not able to merge them at the individual level. We will use the available information in the existing data sources to identify ways in which veterans reintegrate and the associated challenges. However, these sources cannot capture all possible challenges; this is why we are supplementing this information by conducting focus groups with recently transitioned veterans.

At this point there are no planned surveys collecting our information of interest. Although there is another survey being conducted by the DMDC for the Transition to Veterans Program Office, that survey will not collect the information we need for all of our questions of interest. The DMDC survey concentrates on evaluating the actual content that is presented in the Transition GPS courses, while our study examines the experiences of veterans after they have transitioned from service.

9. Gifts or Payment

Subjects will incur no costs to participate in the study and they will receive no compensation for their participation.

10. Confidentiality

At the beginning of the focus group, the participants will be read the following statement by the facilitator:

Your decision to take part in this discussion is completely voluntary. You may refuse to take part, or choose to stop your participation, at any time. A decision to refuse to take part or to stop being a part of this focus group will not have a negative effect on you in any way. There is also no direct benefit from being in this study; however, taking part will inform future transition programs and policy decisions. Your completion of the provided intake form is also completely voluntary.

All information discussed today will be both anonymous and held in confidence by CNA. We will be recording today's discussions solely for the purpose of later transcribing your inputs. We will summarize and report the information you provide with the responses of others. We will not link responses to any single individual. The information collected on the intake forms will be used only to characterize the population with which we speak; none of that information will be linked to you or your responses. To serve as a reference in writing our summary document, we will take notes during today's discussion. The notes will not include personally identifying information about the group's participants.

We will not be collecting or associating your name or any other identifiable information with the discussion we have today. The information provided will not become part of your military record and will not affect your career or your future benefits in any way. We also ask that you not share the specifics of what is said in this group with others, so as to maintain the confidentiality of the process. The focus group will last two hours. At the end of our discussion, we will distribute an “intake form,” collecting information on you demographic and service-related characteristics. This form should take no more than ten minutes to complete. Your completion of the intake form is also completely voluntary. These forms will collect no personally identifiable information. We will leave the room while you complete these forms, and will have no way of matching your responses to your characteristics. We are collecting this information only to be able to characterize the overall demographic and service-related characteristics of our focus groups.

Are there any questions about your participation in this discussion session?

The facilitator will not begin conducting the discussion until all of the group members' questions have been answered.

CNA will retain the responses/discussion logs until the completion of the study and publication of final results. This data will be stored on CNA's secure server and will not be available to CNA personnel who are not on the study team.

No personal identifiers will be involved.

CNA follows the data rules of the Bureau of the Census in reporting summary statistics on small populations, including the rule that no summary statistics will be reported for groups of fewer than five individuals. Risk of identification is minimal. CNA requires that all project deliverables, reports, briefings, etc., be reviewed internally before release to the sponsor. That review includes a search for occasions of inadvertent release of information that could lead to subject identification. The individual selected to review reports will not be part of the same team as the principal investigator or the project research staff. CNA will store the data on its secure server upon the conclusion of the study.

We are not collecting personal identifiers and we will not be retrieving responses and analyzing them by an identifier. Based on this, I believe that we do not require a PIA and SORN but will need confirmation from the OSD Privacy Office.

Only members of the CNA study team, the CNA SCO administrators, and TVPO will have access to the electronic database. The CNA study team members are: Dr. Lauren Malone, Dr. Kyle Kretschman, Dr. Elizabeth Bradley, Dr. Shannon Desrosiers, Dr. Michelle Dolfini-Reed, Mr. David Gregory, Ms. Cathy Hiatt, Mr. Jeffery Peterson, Ms. Anita Hattiangadi, and Dr. Jennifer Schulte. The CNA SCO administrators are Ms. Anne Brambora and Mr. Martin Tamm.

11. Sensitive Questions

We will be collecting demographic data on our voluntary intake form, and it will become part of a dataset. It will not, however, be merged with any responses given to our focus group questions. We are collecting demographic information on our intake forms solely for the purpose of comparing the characteristics of our participating population with the population of currently transitioning service members.

Thus, it will be impossible for a particular respondent's answers to be linked to his or her identity, since this information will never be captured together. Participants will not fill out the intake form until *after* the discussions have occurred and the facilitator has left the room. There will therefore be no way for individuals' responses to be matched to their demographic or serviced-related data from the intake form.

CNA will retain these data until completion of the study and publication of final results. This data will be stored on CNA's DIACAP-certified secure server and will not be available to CNA personnel who are not on the study team. Once the data has been saved onto the server, the original intake forms will be shredded.

12. Respondent Burden, and its Labor Costs

a. Estimation of Respondent Burden

We are hoping to get 150 respondents (all recently transitioned veterans). Each focus group will take 2 hours, including filling out the in-take form. Thus, the total estimated burden is $150 \times 2 = 300$. We may get fewer than 150 respondents, making this estimate an upper bound.

b. Labor Cost of Respondent Burden

As noted above, we are conducting focus groups with 150 members of the general public, and each focus group will take 2 hours. If we do in fact get 150 respondents, the total burden will be 300 hours.

In order to calculate the average cost of this time, we use the median earnings of those with a high school degree, since we expect to be speaking to mainly veterans who were enlisted personnel. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median weekly wage for this population, across all populations, was \$650 in the first two quarters of 2013. This translates to an hourly wage of \$16.25. Thus, for each participant, the labor cost of their burden is 16.25 times 2 hours, or \$32.50. This translates to a total burden of \$4,875 ($\32.50×150).

13. Respondent Costs Other Than Burden Hour Costs

There will be no capital or start-up costs. There will be no operation or maintenance costs.

14. Cost to the Federal Government

The costs incurred by the Federal Government in collecting and processing the information collected are estimated to be as follows:

- Contractor Costs: **\$100,000** for developing focus group facilitators' guides, conducting the focus groups, and synthesizing and analyzing the inputs received. This cost also includes the production of a report detailing these findings
- Additionally, we will require administrative support in coordinating these focus groups from each service. We expect this to be a GS-12, on average, and that it will take two hours of their time. We chose Step 5, on the GS pay table to make these calculations, and this hourly wage is 32.73. Thus, in total, for all four services combined, 8 hours of a GS-12s time totals to **\$262**.
- Total Cost: **\$100,262**

15. Reasons for Change in Burden

This is a new collection.

16. Publication of Results

There are no plans, at this time, to publish results outside of DOD. Any future approval to publish our results will have to be provided by Dr. Susan Kelly, Director, Transition to Veterans Program Office.

We will include our synthesis of the focus group results in our report to the TVPO. In addition to TVPO, we will provide the final report to the Office of the Secretary of Defense and each military department. It is possible that we might present the summarized results at an appropriate conference; however, we have no plans to do so at this time. If the report is approved by TVPO for public release, it could be more widely distributed.

CNA began working on this project in June 2012. The scheduled end date is January 2015. We outline the project tasks and timeline in the table 1.

Table 1. Outline of project tasks and timeline

Project task	Task completion date
Conduct a literature review of military and civilian life stages	August 2012
Assess and analyze the intersection of military and civilian life stages	May 2013
Investigate how members reintegrate with their communities	November 2013
Document results, incorporate sponsor comments, and disseminate	January 2014

Identify and obtain data and create analytical databases	May 2013
Create demographic profiles of at-risk transitioning servicemembers	February 2014
Analyze cohorts and transition outcomes over time	June 2014
Conduct focused discussion groups	December 2014
Provide sponsor with bimonthly updates	January 2015
Document results, incorporate sponsor comments, and disseminate	January 2015

17. Non-Display of OMB Expiration Date

Not applicable.

18. Exceptions to "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Submissions"

Not applicable.