



Interview and Discussion Group Protocols for the Institute of Medicine Evaluation of the VA Mental Health Services

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Estimated burden: 60 minutes
Expiration Date xx/xx/xxxx

The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995: This information is collected in accordance with section 3507 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. Accordingly, we may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number. We anticipate that the time expended by all individuals who complete this survey will average sixty (60) minutes. This includes the time it will take to follow instructions, gather the necessary facts and respond to questions asked. Customer satisfaction is used to gauge customer perceptions of VA services as well as customer expectations and desires. The results of this telephone/mail survey will lead to improvements in the quality of service delivery by helping to achieve services. Participation in this survey is voluntary and failure to respond will have no impact on benefits to which you may be entitled.

IOM VA MH Services Evaluation
Family/Friends of OIF/OEF/OND Veterans
Not Using VA Behavioral Health Services
Discussion Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today. My name is _____ and this is my colleague _____. We work for Westat, a research organization based in Rockville, MD. Westat is under contract to the Institute of Medicine, part of the National Academy of Sciences, to undertake a Congressionally-mandated study assessing the array of mental health and substance use services available to veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through the VA. We are also tasked with learning why some of these veterans either never have gone to the VA for these services, or went a couple of times and decided not to go back. Today we'd like to hear about your experiences trying to encourage a veteran from one of these recent conflicts to seek help for a mental health or substance use disorder. We're interested in where you sought information about services and the veteran's response to your efforts. We're also interested in your suggestions for things the VA could do to ensure that veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have access to needed behavioral health services and supports.

Before we get started there are a few things I should mention. This is a research project and your participation is voluntary. You don't have to answer any of our questions that make you uncomfortable and you can stop the interview at any time. We have planned for this interview to last no more than 60 minutes.

For this study, we will be going to all Veterans Health Networks across the country to see if there are common issues across geographic areas, or if there things being done successfully in some locations that could be tried in others. Once our visits are completed, we will submit our findings in a report

to a committee that has been assembled through the Institute of Medicine; the committee will then incorporate our findings into a larger report that will go to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Congress. It also will be released to the public. However, we will make every effort to keep the information you share with us private. We are not using any names in our report and our goal is to summarize findings such that comments cannot be attributed to a particular individual. The IOM staff and committee member who are joining us on each site visit have also agreed to maintain your privacy.

Do you have any questions? [ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS]

Finally, with your permission, we would like to record this interview. This recording will be used to help us recall exactly what was said when we go to summarize our findings. The recordings and any notes we have will be stored on Westat's server. They will be accessible only to the Westat project team. We will destroy the recordings after the study is complete. Are you okay with us recording?

IF PERMISSION WAS GIVEN TO RECORD ASK AGAIN IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS. ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS.

If there are no further questions or concerns, I'd like to start the audio recording now.

TURN ON RECORDER: For the purposes of the recording I am going to ask you to state if you are still willing to participate in this interview and if I have your permission to audio tape our discussion.

I. BACKGROUND

I'd like to start off by having you tell us a little bit about yourself: How long have you lived in this area? What kind of work do you do (for example, do you have any experience with providing mental health or substance use services)? And how is the veteran related to you (Child? Spouse? Friend)?

II. EXPERIENTIAL NARRATIVE

I'd like you to tell me a story about your experiences trying to get your family member/friend into mental health or substance use services. I'm particularly interested in hearing about any experiences you may have had with working with the VA or, if you never contacted the VA, why not. I'm also interested in hearing about the veteran's reactions to any recommendations you tried to make. You can start your story wherever you like and you can talk as long as you like, but tell me whatever you think is important for me to hear to understand what you've tried to do for your friend/family member and what you think his/her barriers to service use are.

POSSIBLE PROBES, dependent upon the flow of the narrative

- Thinking back, what led you to first talk with your friend/family member about getting help? (Troubling behavior? Worrisome things the person was saying?) How receptive was s/he to that conversation? Explain.
- Did you make any phone calls to try to find services for your friend/family member?
IF YES:
 - o Whom did you call? How helpful were the people with whom you spoke? Explain.
 - o What, if any, experience did you have contacting the VA? IF NEVER CONTACTED THE VA, ASK WHY NOT. PROBE ON STIGMA, NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF VA SERVICES, ETC.
- What, if any, VA or military resources did you use? How useful were those? Explain.
- Did your friend/family member make any calls to try to find services? IF YES, PROBE ON WHO WAS CALLED, THE HELPFULNESS OF THE CONTACTS.
- Did your friend/family member ever contact the VA about receiving services there?
 - o IF NO - Why do you think s/he didn't explore what was available through the VA?
 - o IF YES BUT DIDN'T GET SERVICES - What was the reason s/he wasn't able to obtain services through the VA? [PROBE ON EASE

AND TIMELINESS OF GETTING AN APPOINTMENT; ABILITY TO GET TRANSPORTATION TO THE VA; DIDN'T HAVE DESIRED SERVICES]

- o IF RECEIVED SERVICES THROUGH VA BUT STOPPED
 - Why did s/he stop going to the VA? [PROBE ON ABILITY TO GET FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT WITH SAME CLINICIAN OR IN A TIMELY MANNER; CONCERN ABOUT STIGMA; DIFFICULTY GETTING TO THE FACILITY]
 - What, if anything, did the VA do to try to re-engage your friend/family member? Why do you think those efforts did not work?
 - What do you think they could have tried to do to re-engage your friend/family member, but did not? Why do you think that might have been successful?

III. GOING FORWARD

What advice would you give to other family members or friends who are trying to get their friends/family members who are veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan into services for mental health or substance use disorders?

- Would you encourage them to contact the VA? Why or why not?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience?

Thank you for your time.