

**OMB# 2900-XXXX**  
**Estimated burden: 35 minutes**  
**Expiration Date XX/X/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 35 minutes. This includes the time it will take to follow instructions, gather the necessary facts and respond to questions asked. The purpose of this web-based survey is to help VA to better understand why Veterans choose to use or not use VA mental health services available to them. The survey results will lead to improvements in the quality of service delivery by helping to improve Veterans' access to VA mental health services. Participation in this survey is voluntary and failure to respond will have no impact on benefits to which you may be entitled.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why is this study important?

Following the large number of deployments and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the number of military members with mental health problems has been rising. All Veterans who need services do not seek them or receive them from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system. This study will help the VA to better understand unmet needs and barriers to receiving care and may help the VA improve the quality of the mental health care they provide.

### Who is conducting this study?

Congress directed the VA to conduct this survey with assistance from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies. The IOM is an independent, nonprofit organization that works outside of government to provide independent, expert advice on scientific and medical issues to decision makers and the public. The IOM is working with Westat, an independent contractor, to survey the Veterans selected for this study.

### What is Westat?

Westat is a research organization headquartered in Rockville, Maryland. Westat has over 50 years of experience conducting large health-related research projects for many government agencies, including the Department of Defense and the VA.

### How did you get my name and address?

We obtained your name and address through the VA. We will not use your contact information for any purpose other than for this survey or share it with anyone else.

### Why did you choose me to participate in this study?

The VA provided us with a list of Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND). We randomly selected your name along with about 20,000 other OEF/OIF/OND Veterans from this list to invite you to participate in the study.

### What will the survey ask?

You will be asked about your use of health services through the VA and your opinions about VA health services, whether you have used them or not. You will also be asked questions about your health and well-being.

### How long will the survey take?

On average the survey will take about 35 minutes, but this will depend on your responses to the questions. For some people, the survey is shorter than that, and for others it is longer.

### Can I use my smartphone to complete the survey?

Yes. It's OK to complete the survey on your smartphone or other mobile devices, like a tablet.

### Do I have to complete the web survey in one sitting?

No. If you need to stop before completing the survey, you may log in again later to complete it. Your prior responses will be saved.

### Will other information about me be used for this study?

The information you provide in the survey will be combined with administrative data provided by the VA about health services you may have used. Survey responses and administrative data together will allow researchers to

better understand why Veterans may or may not use the VA for their health care needs.

Will my information be kept confidential?

Yes. We will do everything we can to keep all data confidential including your survey responses and administrative data that Westat, our contractor, receives from the VA about health services you may have used. Only researchers at Westat and IOM-appointed experts who are approved to work on this study and who have signed an agreement to keep all data confidential will have access to individual survey and administrative data for analysis purposes. Westat will provide the VA with the survey responses, but will have deleted your name and any other information that could be used to identify you. The IOM will release a publicly available report in 2017. When reporting the results of this study, all information about you will be combined with information from other Veterans, and only group statistics will be reported. We will not disclose your responses or data to anyone who could use it to identify you or any other participants. Westat will destroy all data in its possession no later than one year after the study has been completed or, if the VA requests additional analysis, after that analysis has been completed.

To further help us protect your privacy, we have obtained a Certificate of Confidentiality from the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). With this Certificate, we cannot be forced (for example by court order or subpoena) to disclose information that may identify you in any federal, state, local, civil, criminal, legislative, administrative, or other proceedings. The researchers will use the Certificate to resist any demands for information that would identify you, except to prevent serious harm to you or others, and as explained below. You should understand that a Certificate of Confidentiality does not prevent you, or a member of your family, from voluntarily releasing information about yourself, your family, or your involvement in this study. If an insurer or employer learns about your participation, and obtains your consent to receive research information, then we may not use the Certificate of Confidentiality to withhold this information. This means that you and your family must also actively protect your own privacy. You should understand that we will in all cases, take the necessary action, including reporting to authorities, to prevent serious harm to yourself, children, or others. A Certificate of Confidentiality does not represent an endorsement of the research study by the Department of Health and Human Services or the National Institutes of Health.

Am I required to complete this survey?

No. You do not have to complete the survey; participation is entirely voluntary and there are no penalties for refusing

to answer any question or stopping at any time. However, this is an important study and we hope you will want to participate. Your responses are important. Understanding the experiences and perspectives of Veterans is important for making improvements in the VA mental health services.

Will my VA benefits be affected if I decide not to participate?

No. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. However, by participating in this study and telling us about your experiences, you (and other Veterans who participate) may help to improve the VA mental health services.

What if I have more questions about this survey?

Please contact Westat's survey support center at Support@VeteranHealthAccessSurvey.org or toll-free at 1-855-763-8696. For questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Westat Human Subjects Protection Office at 1-888-920-7631. Please leave a message with your full name and phone number beginning with the area code, note that you are calling about the OEF/OIF/OND Veterans' Access to Health Services Survey, and someone will return your call as soon as possible.