

Veterans Health Administration White Paper
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Background

In 1993 the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched Project CHALENG (Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups) for Veterans in response to Public Law 102-405 which required VA to make an assessment of the needs of homeless Veterans in coordination with other Federal departments, state and local government agencies, and nongovernmental agencies with experience working with homeless persons. Since 1993, VA has administered a needs assessment in accordance with guidance in Public Law 103-446 and Public Law 105-114.

This collection of information is necessary to ensure that VA and community partners are developing services that are responsive to the needs of local homeless Veterans, in order to end homelessness and prevent new Veterans from experiencing homelessness. Data from CHALENG has assisted VA in developing new services for Veterans such as the Homeless Veteran Dental Program (HVDP), the expansion of the Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program, the Veterans Justice Programs and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF). In addition community organizations use CHALENG data in grant applications to support services for Veterans experiencing homelessness; grant applications are for VA, other Federal, local government, and community foundation dollars, which maximizes community participation in serving homeless Veterans.

Data from the proposed 2019 collection will be provided through a public Fact Sheet and presentations at national conferences. It will also be distributed among VA Homeless Programs at the national (VACO), regional (VISN), and local medical center level to assist in refining existing programs or developing new programs.

No other area of VA conducts an assessment of the needs of Veterans experiencing homelessness. There are no questions of a sensitive nature included in this collection. Number of respondents: over the past five years, CHALENG has averaged approximately 9,700 respondents per year.

Frequency of response is annual, with a one-time response per year.

Issue

- (1) The previous OMB approved CHALENG survey for Veterans and Service Providers is scheduled to expire on March 31, 2019.
- (2) Input from the community, to include congressional feedback is now included that provides an additional one minute to the estimated time burden for each survey – going from 5 to 6 minutes for the Veteran survey and from 8 to 9 minutes for the provider survey.

Points of Contact: VHA National Homeless Program Office (10NC1)

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Modification

- (1) Dental – change Veteran survey from existing item to provide improved business intelligence
 - a. Existing: Dental Care: Never Met (1) – Always Met (4) or N/A
 - b. Change: How would you describe the health of your teeth and gums? Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor

- (2) Legal – add new items based on input from a 2017 public listening session co-sponsored by National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, American Bar Association, U.S. Department of Justice, and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
 - a. Existing (7 items): driver's license, financial guardianship, identification and legal documents, Re-entry, child support issues, outstanding warrants and fines, prevent eviction and foreclosure
 - b. Add (8 items): criminal record, credit issues/debt collection, court fees/fines, ADA issues with rental housing (i.e. ramps, service animals), DV/protection orders, tax issues, discharge upgrade appeals, family law (i.e. divorce, child custody)

- (3) Income/Benefits Services – change from existing item to improve business intelligence
 - a. Existing (1 item): Basic Services (phone, voicemail, address)
 - b. Change (2 items): 1. Basic Communication (working cell phone or phone)
2. Basic Contact Information (reliable mailing address)

- (4) General – based on congressional input:
 - a. Add a free text item to Veteran survey: “Please tell us in your own words: What is the most important resource/service that could help end your homelessness now, or if you are formerly homeless, what is the most important resource that will prevent you from being homeless in the future?”
 - b. Make the instructions time bound: “Based on your experience as a Veteran experiencing homelessness or formerly homeless, please help us understand how well your needs are being met. Within the past 3 months (or 90 days) how well are your needs being met in the following:”.

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