

SUPPORTING STATEMENT - PART A

2024 Spouse and Family Issues Survey

OMB Control Number 0704-0675

Expiration: 12/31/2026

Summary of changes: Survey will be fielded to a random sample of both active duty and Reserve spouses. The same survey will be fielded to both groups, with skips as appropriate for questions that do not apply to a group. Changes have been made below to add the Reserve population to the responses. In addition, two additional emails were added, if needed to bolster response rates.

1. Need for the Information Collection

The 2024 Spouse and Family Issues Survey (SFIS) will serve as the primary source for reliable and generalizable survey data on the prevalence of suicide ideation and attempts by military spouses (both active duty and Reserve Component) and dependents. DoD is required to report suicide data on military family members per section 567 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2015. This will be the first time the Department of Defense (DoD) has collected this sort of survey data for military spouses and dependents addressing suicide ideation, attempts, and vulnerability/protective factors of suicide. Data available on suicide deaths and risk of spouses and dependents is currently limited. The majority of military family members are civilians whose suicide deaths do not occur on a military installation; as a result, the Department does not have visibility of, or jurisdiction over, these deaths and must seek other methods to obtain information. The DoD Suicide Event Report contains data only on Service members and non-DoD research tends to focus on civilian families. While OPA does currently field a spouse survey, this survey does not include items on suicide behavior and associated evidence-based risk and protective factors known to impact suicide ideations and behaviors. The SFIS will be a critical source of data that cannot be obtained in other ways.

The survey is designed to help DoD inform programs and policies focused on strengthening resilience and mitigating suicidality in military spouses and dependents to enhance understanding of how spouse and family resilience impact force readiness and retention, and to inform the effectiveness of programs and policies under the purview of the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO).

The SFIS will provide unique reliable data to equip policymakers with the information they need to make strategic, data-driven decisions on a vital component of the total force – military spouses and families, providing DoD with information needed to inform programs and policies. The survey will allow for empirically-based responses to Congress related to suicide behavior, risk factors, and protective factors for military spouses and dependents. The SFIS would inform the DoD’s understanding of spouse and dependent suicide risk, and would further inform the NDAA requirements. Congressional members have been briefed that this survey will take place and are supportive of the importance of this data to inform DoD efforts for military families.

2. Use of the Information

The population of interest for the 2024 SFIS-A will consist of spouses of active duty members from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force who are below flag rank. Eligible spouses must be currently married to an active duty member. The population is approximately 605,716 active duty spouses and approximately 351,038 Reserve spouses. The number of survey questions will be 64 questions, including demographic items.

OPA will administer the SFIS as a web-based survey with a paper survey option to maximize response rates. Based on the response data from the 2021 Active Duty Spouse Survey (ADSS), OPA anticipates most responses to the SFIS to be completed via the web interface rather than paper. For the 2021 ADSS, 85% responded via the web and 15% respondent by paper. Selected sample members with a valid email address will receive the following communications:

- 5 letters: One letter will include a paper copy of the survey distributed to the entire sample. QR codes will be included on all letters.
- 3 emails: Email Announcement, Email Reminder #1, Email Reminder #2, and Email Reminder #3. OPA may send 4 additional emails with approval of the DoD Survey Reviewer, based on the response rate, towards the end of the survey.

The control system generating these letters will be updated to determine non-respondents. Everyone who indicates by phone, fax, postal mail, or e-mail they do not want to participate in the survey will be coded as actively refusing to participate. Information on the survey website will inform sample members (Privacy Advisory and Informed Consent Statement and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), “Once you start answering the survey, if you desire to withdraw your answers, please send an e-mail requesting this to Survey@mail.mil or leave a message any time, toll-free, at 1-800-881-5307.” Upon such notification, OPA’s operations contractor will delete associated responses and code the individual as an actively refusing to participate.

3. Use of Information Technology

Respondents may access the survey via the web on a device they select (e.g, phone, tablet, laptop). The web survey will be administered on proprietary software developed by OPA’s operations contractor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC). Digitally signed e-mails,

electronic files, and web-based technology will be used for respondent communications and for data collection. To reduce respondent burden, web-based surveys use “smart skip” technology to ensure respondents only answer questions that are applicable to them. Respondents will be able to quickly access the web survey via QR codes. To reduce respondent burden, web-based surveys use “smart skip” technology to ensure respondents only answer questions that are applicable to them. Postal notifications will also include a respondent specific QR code for respondents to quickly access the survey via mobile platforms.

4. Non-duplication

While the population of interest is the same as the Active Duty Spouse Survey and the Reserve Component Spouse Survey, the data collected is different. The focus of this survey is to collect data on suicide ideation and attempt among military spouses and their dependents. The information obtained through this collection is unique and is not already available for use or adaptation from another cleared source.

5. Burden on Small Businesses

This information collection does not impose a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small businesses or entities.

6. Less Frequent Collection

Without this survey, DoD would not have current data to guide limited resources to appropriate and effective suicide prevention programs, policies, and services supporting military spouses, their families and ultimately Service members. Less frequent collection of the data would not provide timely information, risks delaying responsiveness of policy makers based on the results, and may not capture significant trends early enough to impact outcomes. In the absence of data, policy offices and the Services may conduct their own research, increasing the potential for duplication/greater survey burden, less methodological rigor, lower response rates, and higher costs for DoD research. The SFIS ensures use of probability based samples to collect this data which accurately estimates the active duty and Reserve spouse population.

7. Paperwork Reduction Act Guidelines

This collection of information does not require collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines delineated in 5 CFR 1320.5(d)(2).

8. Consultation and Public Comments

9. Gifts or Payment

No payments or gifts are being offered to respondents as an incentive to participate in the collection.

10. Confidentiality

A Privacy Act Statement is not required for this collection because we are not requesting individuals to furnish personal information for a system of records.

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The SFIS survey website includes a Privacy Advisory webpage that respondents view before taking the survey. This page will include the instruction “Click Continue if you agree to take the survey.”

A System of Record Notice (SORN) is not required for this collection because records are not retrievable by PII. Datasets containing survey responses will never contain names, addresses, or e-mail addresses; rather, they will include only randomly generated Identification (ID) numbers. The initial file constructed by OPA during the data collection process will be the “sample file” that contains a record for each individual selected at random to be in the survey. This file will contain administrative record data that will be used to create the sampling strata and will be required for planned analyses of responses. OPA will append a randomly generated ID number to the records before sending the file to OPA’s operations contractor – this number will be the permanent link that can be used to link record data to survey response data that could be required for future analyses. The sample file will contain the OPA randomly generated ID number, names, addresses, and DoDIDs that allow OPA’s operations contractor to control the mailings and obtain additional address information as required. This file will be tightly controlled at OPA and OPA’s operations contractor behind firewalls with password-protected access on a need-to-know basis.

To protect the privacy of research subjects, OPA will conduct a disclosure and confidentiality analysis with multiple combinations of demographic characteristics to ensure there are at least ten (10) respondents in any cell for any report. If there are less than ten (10) respondents in any cell, variables will be grouped until the threshold of ten (10) per cell is met.

The current approved disposition authority for all survey records is DAA-0330-2021-0008 that has a temporary retention of 30 years for confidential data, permanent retention of 30 years for public use data, and permanent retention of 30 years for reports.

11. Sensitive Questions

The SFIS includes questions regarding experiences with suicide and self-harm, suicidal ideation, plans, and attempts. The SFIS also asks respondents to voluntarily self-identify race and ethnicity. This data are collected for the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) for program evaluation and OSD metrics. The Informed Consent information will inform sample members that the survey is voluntary, that they may decline or skip questions they do not wish to answer, and identify any potential risks and benefits of participation.

Sensitive questions are asked on the SFIS because the experiences of military spouses in this area directly relate to the mission and purpose of the DSPO office, which serves military members, spouses and their families in the area of suicide prevention. There is no way to measure, report, or respond on this sensitive topic without asking such questions. The survey will take into account the potential need for support among the response population and will provide notification of the types of questions asked, and will offer links to confidential support services.

12. Respondent Burden and its Labor Costs

Part A: ESTIMATION OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1) Collection Instrument(s)

SFIS

- a) Number of Respondents: 23,000
- b) Number of Responses Per Respondent: 1
- c) Number of Total Annual Responses: 23,000
- d) Response Time: .25 hour
- e) Respondent Burden Hours: 5750 hours

2) Total Submission Burden

- a) Total Number of Respondents: 23,000
- b) Total Number of Annual Responses: 23,000
- c) Total Respondent Burden Hours: 5,750 hours

Part B: LABOR COST OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

1) Collection Instrument: SFIS

- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 23,000
- b) Response Time: .25 hours
- c) Respondent Hourly Wage: \$28.00
- d) Labor Burden per Response: \$7.00
- e) Total Labor Burden: \$161,000

2) Overall Labor Burden

- a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 23,000
- b) Total Labor Burden: \$161,000

13. Respondent Costs Other Than Burden Hour Costs

There are no annualized costs to respondents other than the labor burden costs addressed in Section 12 of this document to complete this collection.

14. Cost to the Federal Government

Part A: LABOR COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- 1) Collection Instrument(s) CONTRACTOR
SFIS
 - a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 23,000
 - b) Processing Time per Response: .2550 hours
 - c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses: \$106.28
 - d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$27.10
 - e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$623,300

Collection Instrument(s) GOVERNMENT
SFIS

- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 23,000
 - b) Processing Time per Response: .0834 hours
 - c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses: \$69.16
 - d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$5.77
 - e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$132,710
- 2) Overall Labor Burden to the Federal Government
 - a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 23,000
 - b) Total Labor Burden \$756,010

Part B: OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

- 1) Cost Categories
 - a) Equipment: \$
 - b) Printing: \$
 - c) Postage: \$253,500
 - d) Software Purchases: \$
 - e) Licensing Costs: See f
 - f) Other: \$126,000 for printing, paper and misc. costs

- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Cost: \$379,500

Part C: TOTAL COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- 1) Total Labor Cost to the Federal Government: \$756,010
- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Costs: \$379,500
- 3) Total Cost to the Federal Government: \$1,135,510

15. Reasons for Change in Burden

This is a new collection with a new associated burden.

16. Publication of Results (1 sentence/ 1 paragraph)

The results will be provided to DSPO who may use it in their reporting to DoD leadership and Congress. Some results may also be included by DSPO in the DoD Annual Suicide Report.

17. Non-Display of OMB Expiration Date

We are not seeking approval to omit the display of the expiration date of the OMB approval on the collection instrument.

18. Exceptions to “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Submissions”

We are not requesting any exemptions to the provisions stated in 5 CFR 1320.9.