

**Request for Approval under the “Generic Clearance for Improving  
Customer Experience (OMB Circular A-11, Section 280  
Implementation)” (OMB Control Number: 2900-0876)**

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**TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION:** Transition Care and Management VA Liaison Survey

**PURPOSE**

The Transition Care and Management (TCM) VA Liaison Program provides complex care coordination for ill and injured Service Members and Veterans, as they transition from military to Veteran Health Administration care. The Liaison Program is designed to serve returning severely injured and/or ill combat (OEF/OIF/OND) and Post 9/11 era Veterans as they transition into the VA or through standard discharge from their respective service back into the community. VA Liaisons stationed at Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) support the transfer of severely wounded service members. They coordinate care and provide consultation about VA resources and treatment options. Liaisons will contact the service member's local VA Medical Center and Transition Care Management (TCM) Team to ensure that appointments and care plans are in place before the service member leaves the MTF. The program currently employs 42 liaisons overseeing 21 Military Treatment Facilities; each Liaison overseeing as many as 300 unique Service member cases at a time.

Providing such a critical service at a high level of demand requires additional support and a congressional mandate that must be supported by qualitative narratives and quantitative measurement.

In order to continue to provide quality services to Veterans, the Veteran Experience Office (VEO) partnered with the Transition Care and Management (TCM) team to measure the satisfaction/ experience of Veterans regarding their experience with the Liaison program and the resulting trust/confidence participants have in the care they will receive at the VA. VEO proposed to conduct a brief survey on Veterans who have recently completed the VA Liaison Program

The goal of service level measurements is three-fold:

- 1) To collect continuous customer experience data from VA Liaison Program participants to monitor improvements or service lapses in the program
- 2) To help field staff and the national office identify areas for improvement that may increase the quality of the service provided by the VA Liaison Program
- 3) To better understand the Veteran's needs and concerns in relationship to the VA Liaison Program

**DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS:**

The target population of the VA Liaison Survey is anyone that has completed the VA Liaison Program. The identification these participants through the program's FCMT database which



records the recruitment and progress of program participants. Invitees will be selected if the completion date is within one week of when the database is queried

**TYPE OF COLLECTION:** (Check one)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Comment Card/Complaint Form         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customer Satisfaction Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Usability Testing (e.g., Website or Software | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Discussion Group                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus Group                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                            |

**CERTIFICATION:**

I certify the following to be true:

1. The collection is voluntary.
2. The collection is low-burden for respondents and low-cost for the Federal Government.
3. The collection is non-controversial and does not raise issues of concern to other federal agencies.
4. Personally identifiable information (PII) is collected only to the extent necessary and is not retained.
5. Information gathered is intended to be used for general service improvement and program management purposes.
6. The collection is targeted to the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the future.
7. All or a subset of information may be released as part of A-11, Section 280 requirements on performance.gov. Additionally, summaries of the data may be released to the public in communications to Congress, the media and other releases disseminated by VEO, consistent with the Information Quality Act.

Name: Evan Albert, Director of Measurement and Data Analytics , Veterans Experience Office [Evan.Albert@va.gov](mailto:Evan.Albert@va.gov) (202) 875-478

To assist review, please provide answers to the following question:

**Personally Identifiable Information:**

1. Will this survey use individualized links, through which VA can identify particular respondents even if they do not provide their name or other personally identifiable information on the survey? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Is personally identifiable information (PII) collected? ☐ Yes ☒ No
3. If Yes, will any information that is collected be included in records that are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ [N/A]
4. If Yes, has an up-to-date System of Records Notice (SORN) been published? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ [N/A]

**Gifts or Payments:**

Is an incentive (e.g., money or reimbursement of expenses, token of appreciation) provided to participants? ☐ Yes ☒ No



## BURDEN HOURS

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time ( X minutes =)	Burden ( ÷ 60 =)
Individuals & Households	10,032 annually	4	669
<b>Totals</b>	10,032 annually	4	669

### Please answer the following questions.

1. Are you conducting a focus group, a survey that does not employ random sampling, user testing or any data collection method that does not employ statistical methods?

Yes \_\_\_\_

No X

If Yes, please answer questions 1a-1c, 2 and 3.

If No, please answer or attach supporting documentation that answers questions 2-8.

- a. Please provide a description of how you plan to identify your potential group of respondents and how you will select them.

- b. How will you collect the information? (Check all that apply)

[ ] Web-based or other forms of Social Media

[ ] Telephone

[ ] In-person

[ ] Mail

[X] Other- E-mail-based surveys

- c. Will interviewers or facilitators be used? [ ] Yes [ X ] No

2. Please provide an estimated annual cost to the Federal government to conduct this data collection: \$13,000

3. Please make sure that all instruments, instructions, and scripts are submitted with the request. This includes questionnaires, interviewer manuals (if using interviewers or facilitators), all response options for questions that require respondents to select a response from a group of options, invitations given to potential respondents, instructions for completing the data collection or additional follow-up requests for the data collection.



-Done

4. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection methods to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g., establishments, State and local government units, households, or persons) in the universe covered by the collection and in the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form for the universe as a whole and for each of the strata in the proposed sample. Indicate expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection had been conducted previously, include the actual response rate achieved during the last collection.

- Please see Statistical Sample Plan in the Appendix.

5. Describe the procedures for the collection of information, including:
  - a. Statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection.
  - b. Estimation procedure.
  - c. Degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification.
  - d. Unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures.
  - e. Any use of periodic (less frequent than annual) data collection cycles to reduce burden.

- Please see Statistical Sample Plan in the Appendix.

6. Describe methods to maximize response rates and to deal with issues of nonresponse. The accuracy and reliability of information collected must be shown to be adequate for intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided for any collection that will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.

Please see Statistical Sample Plan in the Appendix.

7. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Testing is encouraged as an effective means of refining collections of information to minimize burden and improve utility. Tests must be approved if they call for answers to identical questions from 10 or more respondents. A proposed test or set of tests may be submitted for approval separately or in combination with the main collection of information.

Please see Statistical Sample Plan in the Appendix.

8. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractors, grantees, or other person(s) who will actually collect or analyze the information for the agency.

- Statistical Aspects:
  - Mark Andrews, Statistician, Veterans Experience Office, VA. (703) 483-5305



- Collection and Analysis:
  - Evan Albert, Dir. of Measurement and Data Analytics, Veterans Experience Office, VA (202) 875-9478
  - Dawn Eggers, Assistant Chief of Operations, Veteran Experience Division, Debt Management Center, VA (612) 843-6598





# Transition Care and Management VA Liaison Survey Sampling Methodology Report

Prepared by

Veteran Experience Office

Version 1 February 2021

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## Executive Summary

The Transition Care and Management (TCM) VA Liaison Program provides complex care coordination for ill and injured Service Members and Veterans, as they transition from military to Veteran Health Administration care. The Liaison Program is designed to serve returning severely injured and/or ill combat (OEF/OIF/OND) and Post 9/11 era Veterans as they transition into the VA or through standard discharge from their respective service back into the community. VA Liaisons stationed at Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) support the transfer of severely wounded service members. They coordinate care and provide consultation about VA resources and treatment options. Liaisons will contact the service member's local VA Medical Center and Transition Care Management (TCM) Team to ensure that appointments and care plans are in place before the service member leaves the MTF. The program currently employs 42 liaisons overseeing 21 Military Treatment Facilities; each Liaison overseeing as many as 300 unique Service member cases at a time.

Providing such a critical service at a high level of demand requires additional support and a congressional mandate that must be supported by qualitative narratives and quantitative measurement.

In order to continue to provide quality services to Veterans, the Veteran Experience Office (VEO) partnered with the Transition Care and Management (TCM) team to measure the satisfaction/ experience of Veterans regarding their experience with the Liaison program and the resulting trust/confidence participants have in the care they will receive at the VA. VEO proposed to conduct a brief survey on Veterans who have recently completed the VA Liaison Program

The goal of service level measurements is three-fold:

- 4) To collect continuous customer experience data from VA Liaison Program participants to monitor improvements or service lapses in the program
- 5) To help field staff and the national office identify areas for improvement that may increase the quality of the service provided by the VA Liaison Program
- 6) To better understand the Veteran's needs and concerns in relationship to the VA Liaison Program

The purpose of this document is to define VA's sampling methodology for selecting potential survey respondents for this study. The sampling design aims to provide monthly estimates to allow relatively robust level of precision. The survey will also allow decisions makers at different levels to make inference per agency, across Veterans, Liaisons, and the types of cases being handled.





## Part I – Introduction

### A. Background

**Enterprise Measurement and Design (EMD)** is the Analytics and Human Centered Design (HCD) division within the **Veterans Experience Office (VEO)**. The EMD team is tasked with conducting transactional surveys of the Veteran population to measure their satisfaction with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) numerous benefit services. Thus, their mission is to empower Veterans by rapidly and discreetly collecting feedback on their interactions with such VA entities as NCA, VHA, and VBA. VEO surveys generally entail *probability* samples which only contact minimal numbers of Veterans necessary to obtain reliable estimates. This information is subsequently used by internal stakeholders to monitor, evaluate, and improve beneficiary processes. Veterans are always able to decline participation and have the ability to opt out of future invitations. A *quarantine* protocol is maintained to limit the number of times a Veteran may be contacted, in order to prevent survey fatigue, across all VEO surveys.

Surveys issued by EMD are generally brief in nature and present a low amount of burden to Veterans. A few targeted questions will utilize a human centered design (HCD) methodology, revolving around concepts of Trust, Ease, Effectiveness and Emotion. Questions will focus on a specific aspect of a service process.

The Veteran Experience Office (VEO) has been commissioned by the Transition Care and Management to measure the satisfaction and experience of Veterans that have completed the VA Liaison Program. While normally a subset of the population would be selected to participate in order to reduce burden, we propose conducting a **Census** in order to be able to deliver meaningful results. Participants will be contacted through an invitation email. A link will be enclosed so the survey may be completed using an online interface, with personalized information increase response rates and focus the respondent on the specific encounter covered by the survey.



## B. Basic Definitions

Coverage	The percentage of the population of interest that is included in the sampling frame.
Measurement Error	The difference between the response coded and the true value of the characteristic being studied for a respondent.
Non-Response	Failure of some respondents in the sample to provide responses in the survey.
Transaction	A <i>transaction</i> refers to the specific time a Veteran interacts with the VA that impacts the Veteran's journey and their perception of VA's effectiveness in caring for Veterans.
Response Rate	The ratio of participating persons to the number of contacted persons. This is one of the basic indicators of survey quality.
Sample	In statistics, a data sample is a set of data collected and/or selected from a statistical population by a defined procedure.
Sampling Error	Error due to taking a particular sample instead of measuring every unit in the population.
Sampling Frame	A list of units in the population from which a sample may be selected.
Reliability	The consistency or dependability of a measure. Also referred to as <i>standard error</i> .

## C. Application to Veterans Affairs

This measurement is intended to bring insights and value to all stakeholders at VA. Front-line staff can get feedback on how well they are serving Veterans' needs, TCM leaders can resolve individual feedback from Veterans and take steps to improve the customer experience; meanwhile VA executives can receive real-time updates on systematic trends that allow them to make changes.

1. To collect continuous customer experience data from VA Liaison Program participants to monitor improvements or service lapses in the program
2. To help field staff and the national office identify areas for improvement that may increase the quality of the service provided by the VA Liaison Program
3. To better understand the Veteran's needs and concerns in relationship to the VA Liaison Program

## Part II – Methodology

### A. Target Population and Frame

The target population of the VA Liaison Survey is anyone that has completed the VA Liaison Program. The identification these participants through the program's FCMT database which records the recruitment and progress of program participants. Invitees will be selected if the completion date is within one week of when the database is queried.



## B. Sample Size Determination

For a given margin of error and confidence level, the sample size is calculated as below (Lohr, 1999). For population that is *large*, the equation below is used to yield a representative sample for proportions:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 pq}{e^2}$$

where

- $Z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$ , which is the critical Z score value under the normal distribution when using a 95% confidence level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).
- $p$  = the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population, with  $q=1-p$ .
  - Note that  $pq$  attains its maximum when value  $p=0.5$ , and this is often used for a conservative sample size (i.e., large enough for any proportion).
- $e$  = the desired level of precision; in the current case, the margin of error  $e = 0.03$ , or 3%. Also referred to as **MOE**.

For a population that is relatively *small*, the finite population correction is used to yield a representative sample for proportions:

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{n_0}{N}}$$

Where

- $n_0$  = Representative sample for proportions when the population is large.
- $N$  = Population size.

The margin of error surrounding the baseline proportion is calculated as:

$$\text{Margin of error} = z_{\alpha/2} \sqrt{\frac{N-n}{N-1}} \sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}}$$

Where

- $Z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$ , which is the critical Z score value under the normal distribution when using a 95% confidence level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).
- $N$  = Population size.
- $n$  = Representative sample.
- $p$  = the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population, with  $q=1-p$ .

Typically sample sizes will be calibrated to ensure monthly reports have a 3% MOE at a 95% Confidence Level. This represents an industry standard for reliability widely used by survey administrators (Lohr, 1999). In this case, the population is insufficient to adequately provide the standard margin of error. As a result, a census is recommended to maximize the value of the results<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The use of margin of error for a census survey is not statistically accurate because the difference between those that respond and the population is not random but is, rather, due to non-response. To the extent, however, that non-response is random; the statistical analysis is can be used as a rough indication of the survey's accuracy. The VEO team will monitor non-response patterns to determine if there are systematic non-response patterns that may undermine this assumption.

Table 2 depicts the estimated number of VA Liaison Program participants complete the program per month. Preliminary analysis of this population indicates that approximately **57%** of qualifying participants have provided an email address to the TCM—a relative high proportion relative to other surveys. This represents the frame population for the survey (see section below for information on possible bias due to frame *under-coverage*). While our VA outpatient survey achieves a response rate of around 19%, we are using a conservative estimated response rate of 7.5%<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 2. Target Population Figures**

<b>Approximate Monthly Email Population</b>	475
<b>Expected Response Rate</b>	7.5%
<b>Estimate Monthly Respondents</b>	37
<b>Monthly MOE (Assuming random non-response/ see footnote 1)</b>	+/- 15.5%
<b>Quarterly MOE (Assuming random non-response/ see footnote 1)</b>	+/- 9.1%
<b>Sample Rate</b>	100%

### C. Stratification

Stratification will not be required since this is a census survey.

### D. Data Collection Methods

At the beginning of every measurement period (once per week), VEO data analysts will access the FCMT database, which contains the data for the VA Liaison Program. The target population will be extracted and recorded with each new iteration. Those completing the program in the week prior that have a valid email address on record will be recruited to participate. Emails are immediately delivered to all selected patients. Selected respondents will be contacted within 8 days of their completion of the VA Liaison Program. They will have 14 days to complete the survey. Free text and quantitative results will be accessible to data users instantly on the VSignals platform.

<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to estimate the response rate in advance, but we anticipate a response rate lower than outpatient survey due the relative youth of this population that is transitioning to Veteran status. Experience has shown that young veterans have sharply lower response rates than older Veterans.

**Table 3. Survey Mode**

Mode of Data Collection	Recruitment Method	Time After Transaction	Recruitment Period	Collection Days
Online Survey	Email Recruitment	Within 8 days after completion of program	14 Days (Reminder after 7 Days)	Tuesday

## E. Reporting

Analysts and researchers will be able to use the VSignals platform for interactive reporting and data visualization. On this platform, users can view both quantitative and free text data using a variety of filters. Users can also examine trends and view cross-tabulations of results. The VEO will work to They are also depicted within time series plots to investigate trends. Finally, filter options are available to assess scores at varying time periods and within the context of other collected variable information.

Recruitment is continuous (weekly) but the results from several weeks may be combined longer period (e.g. monthly, quarterly, semiannual) depending on the needs of the analysis. Due to the small sample, the short-term data will be used to examine and identify cases for service recovery and to analyze free text comments. Monthly estimates will have larger sample sizes and, therefore, higher reliability but will still have a fairly large margin of error. Quarterly result will have additional stability for examining trends but all but the most basic segmentation analysis will require a half-year's data or more to assure reliability.

## F. Quality Control

To ensure the prevention of errors and inconsistencies in the data and the analysis, quality control procedures will be instituted in several steps of the survey process. Records will undergo a cleaning during the population file creation. The quality control steps are as follows.

1. Records will be reviewed for missing data.
2. Any duplicate records will be removed from the population file to both maintain the probabilities of selection and prevent the double sampling of the same veteran.
3. Invalid emails will be removed.

The survey sample loading and administration processes will have quality control measures built into them.

1. The extracted sample will be reviewed for representativeness. A secondary review will be applied to the final respondent sample.
2. The survey load process will be rigorously tested prior to the induction of the survey to ensure that a participant is not inadvertently dropped or sent multiple emails.
3. The email delivery process is monitored to ensure that bounce-back records will not hold up the email delivery process.

## G. Coverage Bias and Non-Response Bias

A final respondent sample should closely resemble the true population, in terms of the demographic distributions (e.g. age groups). One problem that arises in the survey collection process is **nonresponse**, which is defined as failure of selected persons in the sample to provide responses. This occurs in various degrees to *all* surveys, but the resulting estimates can be distorted when some groups are actually more or less prone to complete the survey. In many applications, younger people are less likely to participate than older persons. Another problem is **under-coverage**, which is the event that certain groups of interest in the population are not even included in the sampling frame. They cannot participate because they cannot be contacted: those without an email address will be excluded from sample frame. These two phenomena may cause some groups to be over- or under-represented. In such cases, when the respondent population does not match the true population, conclusions drawn from the survey data may not be reliable and are said to be **biased**.

The primary tool of survey practitioners to combat these potential biases is the use of sampling weighting to improve inference on the population. Due to low expected number of respondents, however, the application of weights will be impractical in the short term and would likely produce more bias than it can correct for and result in lower reliability in estimates. For the longer term, VEO will assess the level of distortion. If a clear need for weights is identified, VEO will do a thorough evaluative weighting to assure that weights are applied with minimal distortion.

## H. Quarantine Rules

VEO seeks to limit contact with Veterans as much as possible, and only as needed to achieve measurement goals. These rules are enacted to prevent excessive recruitment attempts upon all Veterans. VEO, therefore, monitors Veteran participation across our portfolio of surveys, to ensure veterans do not experience excess burden and survey fatigue. In addition, all VEO surveys offer options for respondents to opt out. VEO ensure that Veterans who do opt out are no longer contacted for any additional VEO surveys. Since, a respondent can only complete the VA Liaison Program once, they will only be asked once to take this specific survey.

**Table 4. Quarantine Protocol**

Quarantine Rule	Description	Elapsed Time
<b>Repeated Recruitment for VA Liaison Survey</b>	Number of days between receiving invitation to the VA Liaison Survey, prior to receiving another invitation for a separate another VA Liaison Survey	N/A
<b>Repeated Sampling for Any VEO Survey</b>	Number of days between receiving/completing online survey, prior to receiving email invitation for a separate No-Show experience	30 Days
<b>Opt Outs</b>	Persons indicating their wish to opt out of either phone or online survey will no longer be contacted.	N/A

## Part III – Assumptions and Limitations

### A. Coverage Bias

Since the VEO the VA Liaison Survey is email only, there is substantial population that cannot be reached by the survey. Veterans that lack access to the internet or do not use email may have different levels of Trust and satisfaction with their service. However, the majority of Veterans that do not share their email addresses do so because they did not have an opportunity to provide the information, or they elected not to share their email address. As such, it is thought that Veterans in this latter category do not harbor any tangible differences to other Veterans who do share their information. In order to verify this, VEO plans to execute a coverage bias study to assess the amount of coverage bias and derive adjustment factors in the presence of non-negligible bias.

### B. Small Sample Size

The small population and expectation of a relatively low response rate limits the number of respondents that will be obtained. This limits the ability to achieve the reliability typically sought for a VEO survey. To address this, VEO will work with the TCM staff so that they are aware of this limitation and advise them, so they do not use the data inappropriately



## Appendix 1. References

- Choi, N.G. & Dinitto, D.M. (2013). Internet Use Among Older Adults: Association with Health Needs, Psychological Capital, and Social Capital. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 15(5), e97
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- Kolenikov, S. (2014). Calibrating Survey Data Using Iterative Proportional Fitting (Raking). *The Stata Journal*, 14(1): 22–59.
- Lohr, S. (1999). *Sampling: Design and Analysis* (Ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
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- Wong, D.W.S. (1992) The Reliability of Using the Iterative Proportional Fitting Procedure. *The Professional Geographer*, 44 (3), 1992, pp. 340-348