

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
AIRBORNE HAZARDS AND OPEN BURN PIT REGISTRY

FOCUS GROUPS
2019-2020 RECRUITMENT SCREENER

SCHEDULE

Date	Location	Venue	Type of Group	Local Time
TBD	Washington, District of Columbia	TBD	Engagers with the Registry	TBD
	Washington, District of Columbia		Engagers with the Registry	
	Washington, District of Columbia		Eligible but not engaged with the Registry	
	Oceanside, California		Engagers with the Registry	
	Oceanside, California		Engagers with the Registry	
	Oceanside, California		Eligible but not engaged with the Registry	
	Fayetteville, North Carolina		Engagers with the Registry	
	Fayetteville, North Carolina		Engagers with the Registry	
	Fayetteville, North Carolina		Eligible but not engaged with the Registry	
	San Antonio, Texas		Engagers with the Registry	
	San Antonio, Texas		Engagers with the Registry	
	San Antonio, Texas		Eligible but not engaged with the Registry	
	Norfolk, Virginia		Engagers with the Registry	
	Norfolk, Virginia		Engagers with the Registry	
	Norfolk, Virginia		Eligible but not engaged with the Registry	
	Tacoma, Washington		Engagers with the Registry	
	Tacoma, Washington		Engagers with the Registry	
	Tacoma, Washington		Eligible but not engaged with the Registry	

ELIGIBILITY

Approximately 12 Veterans and service members will be recruited per session to ensure that at least eight participate in each focus group, allowing for no-shows and last-minute cancellations.

SCREENING CRITERIA

VETERANS and ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS who deployed to contingency operations in the Southwest Asia theater of operations¹ at any time on or after **August 2, 1990, or Afghanistan or Djibouti on or after September 11, 2001.**

- 1-2 Officers per group
- 2 Active Duty or current Reservists per group maximum

Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry

ENGAGERS:

- **100%** must have at least begun the process and determined **ELIGIBLE** for the Registry.
- At least 3-4 should have at least begun the questionnaire.
- At least 1-2 per group should have completed the questionnaire.
- At least 1-2 per group, where possible, should have completed the medical exam.

ELIGIBLE (Not Engaged):

- 3-4 per group should be unfamiliar with the Registry.
- 3-4 per group should have at least heard of the Registry.
- 1-2 per group- determined ineligible after completing automated DoD service record check, but potentially in error if self-reported service record suggests they are eligible for Registry.
- 1-2 determined eligible after completing service record check (but not yet begun the questionnaire after at least 3 months of notification) or have not received an eligibility response.

VA Employment

- VA employees and contractors are **EXCLUDED**.
- Anyone who primarily works in market research, communications or public affairs are **EXCLUDED**.

Gender

- At least one female per group (preferably, recruit two per group).

Ages

- 18-70

Loosely Representative of Military Branches (overall, not per session)

- Army (≈48%)
- Navy (≈20%)
- Air Force (≈19%)
- Marine Corps (≈13%)

¹ These regions include the following countries, bodies of water, and the airspace above these locations: Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Djibouti, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and waters of the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, and Red Sea.

FOCUS GROUP SCREENER SCRIPT

RECRUITER NAME: _____

DATE AND TIME OF SCREENING CALL: _____

INTRO A (Person has expressed interest in participating in the focus group via e-mail): Hello, my name is [_____] and I work for The District Communications Group, a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business that conducts research on various topics. You recently expressed interest in providing feedback on topics related to your experiences as a U.S. Veteran or service member with the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. I am not trying to sell you anything. If you are invited to participate in the focus group, you'll receive a one-time payment of \$90 for sharing your opinions. May I continue?

INTRO B (cold call): Hello, my name is [_____] and I work for The District Communications Group, a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business that conducts research on various topics. We're gathering feedback on topics related to the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry and would like to include your views. I can assure you that we are not trying to sell you anything. If you are invited to participate in the focus group, you'll receive a one-time payment of \$90 for sharing your opinions. May I continue?

[If asked] This research is being conducted on behalf of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. However, your identity will not be shared with them and everything you say in a focus group will be confidential.

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself.

GENDER (*Observe, don't ask*)

- a. Male
- b. Female

NOTE TO RECRUITER: RECRUIT AT LEAST ONE WOMAN PER GROUP.

S1. Have you ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces? This includes serving in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces as well as activation from the Reserves or National Guard and applies to combat experience as well as peacetime service.

- a) Yes
- b) No → **THANK & POLITELY TERMINATE INTERVIEW**

[SCRIPT FOR POLITE TERMINATION OF INTERVIEW: Thank you very much. We have already filled the group you would be eligible for, so I cannot offer you an invitation to the session at this time. I appreciate your time and interest and we may be in touch in the near future for another opportunity to share your opinions. If you're interested in learning more about the Registry, please visit publichealth.va.gov or discuss it with your health care provider. Take care.]

S2. What is your primary occupation? _____

[IF MARKET RESEARCH, PUBLIC AFFAIRS, JOURNALISM OR COMMUNICATIONS, THANK & TERMINATE]

S3. Are you currently employed with or working on contract with the Department of Veterans Affairs?

- a) No
- b) Yes -- **THANK & TERMINATE**

S4. And are you currently an Active Duty service member or Reservist?

- a) No
- b) Yes → **IF THERE ARE STILL SPACES FOR ACTIVE DUTY/RESERVIST, SKIP TO QUESTION S6. IF NO SPACE LEFT → THANK & TERMINATE**

NOTE TO RECRUITER: RECRUIT MAXIMUM TWO ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY OR RESERVISTS (COMBINED) PER GROUP.

S5. When you left service, did you do so:

- a) Under Honorable Discharge
- b) Under general discharge
- c) Under dishonorable discharge → **THANK & TERMINATE**
- d) Through another means (SPECIFY _____) → **THANK & TERMINATE IF ANOTHER MEANS INCLUDES DISHONORABLE DISCHARGE**

S6. *[If service records exist within the Registry for this individual, confirm records. If no service records exist:]* In which branch or branches have you served on active duty? [ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES]

- a. Army
- b. Navy
- c. Air Force
- d. Marine Corps
- e. Army National Guard (If **ONLY** branch in which they've served— **THANK & TERMINATE**)
- f. Coast Guard (If **ONLY** branch in which they've served— **THANK & TERMINATE**)

NOTE TO RECRUITER: RECRUIT REPRESENTATIVES FROM VARIOUS SERVICE BRANCHES: ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE AND MARINE CORPS.

S7. What is your age? _____ (Record Age)

Under 18 → **THANK & TERMINATE**

Over 70 → **THANK & TERMINATE**

S8. *[If deployment records exist within the Registry for this individual, confirm the deployment records. If no deployment records exist or for non-engagers:]* We would like to know when you served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces and where you were deployed. If there are different time periods—just tell me.

[DO NOT READ. RECORD TIME PERIOD AND VERIFY BELOW]

Time Period	Conflict	Yes, Served [CHECK BOX]	Yes, Combat [CHECK BOX]

1	September 2001 – Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) • Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq) • Operation New Dawn (Iraq) 		
2	August 1990 to present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Persian Gulf War • Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Djibouti, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and waters of the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, and Red Sea 		
3	1975 to 1990			
4	1962 to 1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vietnam 		

NOTE TO RECRUITER: ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES. IF THEY HAVE NOT SERVED IN ROWS 1 OR 2 ABOVE (REGARDLESS OF OTHER PERIODS) – **THANK & TERMINATE.**

S9. What is the highest rank that you have attained? (Read Choices)

- E1 to E4
- E5 to E8
- W1 to W5
- O1 to O5
- O5 or above
- Other _____

S10. **[If the individual was not recruited from the Registry list]** Before hearing of this study or on today's call, had you ever heard of the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

S11. **[If the individual was not recruited from the Registry list and answered "Yes" to question S10 above]** Have you taken any action to Register with the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry and if so, how far did you make it in the process? **[Do not read]**

- No action taken yet (only heard of it)
- Entered name and basic info for eligibility check but haven't heard back yet
- I filled in my personal information and was **NOT ELIGIBLE** for the Registry. -- **If space available (1-2 per group) continue. Otherwise, THANK & TERMINATE.**
- I was determined eligible but have not begun the questionnaire. **If space available (1-2 per group) continue. Otherwise, THANK & TERMINATE.**
- Has begun the questionnaire- **THANK & TERMINATE**

S12. **[For Engagers/those recruited from the Registry only]** As mentioned, this study has to do with the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. Can you please tell me how far you have made it through the Registry sign-up? **[Confirm by referencing Registry records, if possible.]**

- I filled in my personal information but haven't heard back about eligibility yet. -- **If space available in non-engager group (1-2 per group) continue, if not- THANK & TERMINATE**

- b) I filled in my personal information and was **NOT ELIGIBLE** for the Registry. - **If space available in non-engager group (1-2 per group) continue, if not- THANK & TERMINATE**
- c) I was determined eligible but have not begun the questionnaire. - **If space available in non-engager group (1-2 per group) continue, if not- THANK & TERMINATE**
- d) I have begun but not completed the questionnaire.
- e) I have completed the questionnaire but have not taken the optional medical exam.
- f) I both completed the questionnaire and the medical exam.

I have just a few more questions, which are just for our background information and don't have to do with your eligibility to join the focus group.

S13. Which of the following income groups reflects your TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME last year before taxes? (Just stop me when I read the correct category.)

- a) Less than \$25,000
- b) \$25,000 to less than \$50,000
- c) \$50,000 to less than \$75,000
- d) \$75,000 to less than \$100,000
- e) \$100,000 to less than \$150,000
- f) \$150,000 to less than \$200,000
- g) \$250,000 or more
- h) Prefer not to respond

S14. What is your highest level of education completed?

- a) High school/GED
- b) Some college
- c) Associate's or Vocational (2-year) degree
- d) Bachelor's degree (4 year)
- e) Graduate degree
- f) Currently studying _____

S15. How would you represent your race or ethnic background? **[DO NOT READ OPTIONS]**

- a) White/Caucasian
- b) African American/Black
- c) Hispanic or Latino
- d) Asian/Pacific Islander
- e) Native American
- f) *Mixed Race*
- g) Other _____
- h) Prefer not to respond

S16. Finish this sentence: My dream vacation is...

NOTE FOR RECRUITER: IN ANSWERING THE ABOVE, RESPONDENTS MUST BE ABLE TO EASILY AND CLEARLY EXPRESS THEIR THOUGHTS.

This concludes the questionnaire, thank you for your participation. You have been selected to participate in our focus group.

For ENGAGERS with the Registry:

- We are holding two focus groups in [CITY, STATE] on [DATE]. You will participate in only one session.
- You will need to be able to arrange your travel to and from the focus group location at [VENUE].
- There will be \$90 compensation for participation in one session.
- The focus group will last approximately 90 minutes.

For Eligible NON-ENGAGERS:

- We are holding one focus group in [CITY, STATE] on [DATE].
- You will need to be able to arrange your travel to and from the focus group location at [VENUE].
- There will be \$90 compensation for participation in the session.
- The focus group will last approximately 90 minutes.

Are you interested in and available to join a group?

- **NO** → Thank and end call.
- **YES** → Continue collecting availability and contact information below.

(ENGAGERS) For the focus group meeting, what time works best for you on [DATE]?

(ALL) I will mark that date and time as your preference and confirm with you via email shortly. Can you please also confirm your full name, phone number, email address and mailing address?

NOTE FOR RECRUITER: Ensure these details and all screening question answers are recorded in the Participant Recruitment Tracker.

NOTE FOR RECRUITER: ENSURE ALL TIMES ARE LOCAL.

We're almost finished. Now I'll share some logistical information about the session.

Next, I will email you a consent form for you to read, print and sign. Please scan or take a high-quality photo of it and send it back to us for our records.

I will also send a calendar invitation for the focus group to the email address you confirmed. Please RSVP to the invitation to confirm your attendance, even if you do not typically manage your appointments via an online calendar.

Please plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the focus group to be sure that you can get in without any problems. We'll have light refreshments there for you as well.

I will text or call you a day or two before the focus group to remind you of the date, time and location. Just one last thing and that is that we would ask you to **please** not go to or return to the Burn Pit Registry before the focus group to study up or complete any more of it than you may have already. We're hoping to get a range of opinions from people with different experiences with the Registry.

Do you have any additional questions for me at this time? If any questions come up, you can email or call me at any time.

Thank you very much and we look forward to seeing you at the discussion.