

APPENDIX D

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2001 NATIONAL SURVEY OF VETERANS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- **What is the purpose of this study?/What's this survey about?**

The Department of Veterans Affairs is conducting this study to learn more about veterans, what kinds of services they need most, and how these services could be improved.

- **Who do you work for?**

I work for Westat, an independent research organization that has been contracted by the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct this study. We are located in Rockville, Maryland.

- **How do I know you will keep this information confidential?/How will the results be published?**

We are required by law not to reveal any information other than to persons directly involved with the study. Survey results will be published only as statistical totals. No information which would permit the identification of any individual will be released or published.

- **Do I have to do this?/Do I have to answer your questions?**

Of course it is not mandatory that you answer our questions, but your input and opinions are very important to the success of this survey. You represent a lot of other veterans in situations similar to yours, and you are actually speaking for them, as well as for yourself.

- **How will the survey results be used?/What will you do with this information?**

The results will help VA know more about veterans and their needs. It will also help the VA learn how to improve VA benefit programs.

- **Can I get a copy of the results?**

Yes. However, the results of the study will not be available for several months. I'd be happy to take your name and address and have the results sent to you when they become available.

- **How long will this take? I'm too busy.**

The amount of time varies from person to person. I have to ask some preliminary questions that are brief and if you are selected for the interview, it averages about 35 minutes. We can conduct the interview during a time that is convenient for you.

- **I'm too busy for your survey now. Call me back next week.**

I'd be happy to call back at a time more convenient to you. How about (*suggest specific time*)? I'll look forward to talking with you then.

- **I'm not going to answer a lot of questions over the phone!**

Most people find the questions interesting. Let me start and you can see what they are like.

IF NECESSARY: If there are any questions in particular that you don't want to answer, just tell me and we will skip over them.

- **I think this whole business is stupid. The money for this study could be spent more wisely.**

Occasionally you will encounter an argumentative respondent. They tend to be persons who are really interested in the study, but want to tell what they feel before they will consent to be interviewed. Simply make short, neutral comments to let them know you are listening. When they have finished, make a comment such as, Your opinions are very interesting and your answers will be important for the survey. Let's start now.

- **Take me off your list. You cannot call me according to the "No Call" law.**

I'm not trying to sell you anything. I understand that you might think I work for a telemarketing company, however, the telephone calls we make are not prohibited or regulated by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Our aim is to have you participate in our study, not to sell you anything. The information you provide will be used exclusively for research purposes.

Questions About the Content of the Survey

- **What kind of questions will you be asking?**

[RDD SCREENER] We will ask a few questions about possible military experience of any household members who are 18 or older.

[EXTENDED] (You/People who are selected for the interview) will be asked some questions about military service, about veterans benefit programs, and about health and the use of medical services. I think you'll find these questions interesting.

- **Why do you need the names/ages of veterans who live here?**

The reason we need the names and ages is because we may be selecting some member(s) of your household to participate in this survey. Having a first name makes it much easier to identify them. Names will never be associated with information that you provide.

- **Why do you need to know the race of someone in the household/my race?**

In order to understand and interpret the results of the survey, we need to have this information, especially when comparing the results to previous surveys. The VA wants to be sure that the experience of people with different racial backgrounds is represented in this study.

- **Can you help me with a problem I'm having with VA benefits?/I don't know about that benefit you mentioned. How can I apply/how can I get information?**

Westat has been hired by the VA specifically to conduct this survey. We cannot represent the VA in any other matters. I can give you a telephone number at the VA that you can call for assistance (with your problem/to find out more information about that benefit). You can call the VA toll free at 1-800-827-1000.

Questions That May Be Asked Because You Are Contacting Veterans

- **Are you trying to sell me "veterans" insurance?/Is this a sales call?/I don't want to buy anything.**

This is a study for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, who hired Westat, a private research firm, to conduct the survey. The only purpose of this study is to provide the Department of Veterans Affairs with up-to-date information about issues pertaining to veterans.

- **Will it affect my veterans benefits/disability rating if I do/don't participate?**

Your participation in this study will in no way affect your benefits or rating. Your answers are confidential and the VA will not know whether or not you choose to participate. Westat will provide results of this study only in statistical form to the VA.

Questions About the Legitimacy of the Survey

- **What is the authority/sponsor for this study?**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the federal government agency responsible for serving the needs of U.S. veterans, has contracted with Westat to collect this information. It is authorized by Congress under Title 38, United States Code, Section 219.

- **Who can I call at the VA to verify this study?**

You may call the Department of Veterans Affairs at 1-800-827-1000. This is a toll-free call. You can ask them about the National Survey of Veterans and confirm that Westat is authorized by them to conduct telephone interviews for it.

- **How do I know the survey is legitimate?/How do I know that you are really an interviewer for this survey?**

You may call the Department of Veterans Affairs at 1-800-827-1000. This is a toll-free call. You can ask them about the National Survey of Veterans and confirm that Westat is authorized by them to conduct telephone interviews for it.

[IF RESPONDENT PREFERS TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE AT WESTAT] If you wish, you can speak to my supervisor now, or I can give you a toll-free number to call my supervisor. *(Give TRC toll-free number, 1-888-258-2194, and study name. The respondent may also call the Westat Project Director, John Helmick, at (301) 294-2010, but this is not a toll-free call.)*

- **If you're really calling for the VA, why don't you have this information already? They have my records.**

The VA has hired Westat as an independent organization to conduct this survey. To maintain your confidentiality, the VA does not provide Westat with access to your personal information. Also, the VA is asking questions in this survey about matters that are not covered by the VA's records.

[IF NECESSARY] I can give you a toll-free number at the VA that you can call: 1-800-827-1000. You can ask them about the National Survey of Veterans and confirm that Westat is authorized by them to conduct telephone interviews for it.

- **Does this survey have approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)/What is the OMB number?**

Yes, the Office of Management and Budget has approved this survey by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The OMB number is 2900-0615, approved for use through January 31, 2004.

- **I need more information about the study before I'll answer any questions. Send me something in writing.**

The study is a national survey of veterans to find out about veterans and their needs. The study is being conducted for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. All of your answers will be kept confidential and participation is voluntary. Why don't we start the interview and you can see what the questions are like. *(Without pause, ask the first question.)*

[IF RESPONDENT INSISTS ON SOMETHING IN WRITING]: We will send you a copy of a letter from the VA which will explain the purpose of this study. Could you please give me your name and address? Please allow two weeks for this letter to arrive.

- **Is this call about that letter I received?**

[LIST SAMPLE] Yes, we did send out a letter to you shortly before we started interviewing the veterans selected for this study. *[IF VETERAN HAS FURTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT LETTER, YOU MAY READ APPROPRIATE PARTS OF WESTAT'S OR THE VA'S LETTER TO HIM/HER]*

- **Why don't you call someone else?**

It is important that we talk with you because the procedures used to select you do not allow us to replace you with another person. You represent a larger group of veterans in similar circumstances. Your answers cannot be replaced with someone else's, otherwise we would not get an accurate picture of all veterans and how they compare to the rest of the population.

- **Why don't you call another number?**

[RDD SAMPLE] It is important that we talk with you because the random procedures used to select your number do not allow us to replace your number with another one. You and your household represent a larger group of people in similar circumstances. Your answers cannot be replaced with someone else's.

- **Why did you choose me?/How did you get my (unlisted) phone number?**

[RDD SAMPLE:] Your telephone number was randomly selected. We do not use telephone directories to identify individual telephone numbers. (Your number is still unlisted.) It is important that you help us with this survey because, for statistical reasons, we can't replace your number with someone else's.

[LIST SAMPLE:] You were randomly selected from all the veterans who use VA facilities or receive VA payments. If the veterans list you were selected from did not have phone numbers available, we got your number using a telephone directory.

- **There are no veterans here at this number!** [*STATED BEFORE YOU CAN ADMINISTER RDD SCREENER*]

In that case, this interview should only take a few minutes. I just need to ask you a few questions about your household for statistical purposes so that the VA researchers can estimate how many veterans live in your area.

[IF NEEDED:] One of the purposes of this study is to find out about the number of veterans there are all across the United States. Even if it turns out there are no veterans in each of the households we are contacting, it is still necessary to ask a few questions about the people in the household. Your cooperation will help the Department of Veterans Affairs develop a more accurate picture of how U.S. veterans compare to the overall U.S. population.

- **I'm not a veteran, so you don't want to talk to me.** [*BEFORE EXTENDED INTERVIEW CAN START*]

[RDD SAMPLE:] In that case, this interview should only take a few minutes. I just need to ask everyone we contact a few questions to make sure we don't miss anyone who qualifies for veteran status.

[LIST SAMPLE:] (*MAKE SURE YOU HAVE VERIFIED RESPONDENT CORRECTLY.*) IF THE INFORMATION IS CORRECT, CODE THE CASE "OTHER PROBLEM."

- **I'm a veteran, go ahead and ask me your questions!** [ASKED BEFORE RDD SCREENER COMPLETED]

Before interviewing any individual, I have to ask a few questions about each person in the household. These questions will help identify all veterans, in every home we call, who might be eligible to participate in this survey. We will then conduct an individual interview with each likely veteran.

On occasion, a respondent may request that you interview someone in place of or in addition to him or her. The following are descriptions of situations in which the respondent makes such a request and appropriate responses for each sample type.

- **[RDD SAMPLE] Interview someone else in my household who is a veteran instead of me/in addition to me.**

[IF OTHER PERSON IS SELECTED FOR AN INTERVIEW] We are also going to interview/we have already interviewed {OTHER PERSON}. At this time we would also like to interview you.

[IF OTHER PERSON NOT SELECTED FOR AN INTERVIEW] *DO NOT INTERVIEW ANYONE WHO IS NOT SELECTED.*

[IF NEEDED: You were selected through a statistical process as a person who represents many other veterans in similar circumstances to yours. In order to maintain the integrity of this study we have to interview those individuals who were selected. It is not possible to replace you with another person. Your participation and cooperation are very important to the success of the study.]

- **[RDD SAMPLE] I know someone else outside my household who would like to be interviewed/whom you can interview instead of me/in addition to me.**

You were selected through a statistical process as a person who represents many other veterans in similar circumstances to yours. In order to maintain the integrity of this study we have to interview those individuals who were selected. It is not possible to replace you with another person. Your participation and cooperation are very important to the success of the study.

- **[LIST SAMPLE] Interview someone else/I know someone else who would like to be interviewed (instead of me/in addition to me) (in my household/outside my household).**

You were selected through a statistical process as a person who represents many other veterans in similar circumstances to yours. In order to maintain the integrity of this study we have to interview those individuals who were selected. It is not possible to replace you with another person. It is also not possible to interview veterans who have not already been selected. Your participation and cooperation are very important to the success of the study.