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VA All Employee Survey (AES):
Support for Instrument Development and Validity

General AES Overview: The VA All Employee Survey (AES) is a ‘living document’ that was originally developed in 2001 to meet VA needs in assessing workforce satisfaction and organizational climate. The instrument has been refined at several points since then in response to operational inquiries by VA leadership on organizational health relationships and VA culture. Its current 2015 status maintains 57 items, 2 open text comments, and 14 demographics.

Validity of the AES: The VA AES includes a series of multi-item scales and individual metrics, where each survey item represents a single concept. ‘Validity’ is the extent to which an instrument (or survey item) is justified in measuring the concept that it intends to measure – for example, does the measure of workgroup ‘respect’ really assess or capture employee attitudes about ‘respect’ in the workplace? Most items within the AES maintain this ‘face validity’ in being simple or straightforward in what is asked: ‘Respect’ = People treat each other with respect in my work group.

AES items come from a number of sources. Some items were adapted from published psychometric instruments, such as the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS: Gowing & Lancaster, 1996; US OPM, 2014) and the Maslach-Burnout Inventory Scale (Maslach et al., 1986), and others were developed upon review of the research literature (e.g., civility, psychological safety). Some items are included because of their organizational value to the field or leadership inquires (e.g., customer service and customer satisfaction). Over time, these AES items have been tested and refined across multi-year survey administrations, and some were validated with both employee-level job attitudes and facility-level employee and patient/organizational outcomes (Benzer & Meterko, 2010; Moore, 2009; Nagy, 2002; Warren et al. 2007).

As a ‘living document’, validating AES metrics is an ongoing process. Updated analyses and published reports are posted regularly to: http://www.va.gov/NCOD/NCOD_Research.asp.

To cite the VA AES in your work, please use this reference:

Questions? Please contact the VHA National Center for Organization Development (NCOD) at 513-247-4684 or vhancod@va.gov.