Goal of this research study:
Although there are thousands of programs and services available to veterans as they transition from military service to civilian life, your help is needed to identify effective program components and strategies for increasing veteran well-being!

Who is eligible?
- Penn State students/alumni who are veterans and who have separated from any U.S. military branch or component in the past four years.
- Participants must be over the age of 18 years, a U.S. resident, and English-speaking.

What is involved?
- Complete a 40-minute online survey. The survey asks demographic questions and about your reintegration experience.
- Your participation will be completely confidential; no personal information will be linked to your survey responses.

Want to learn more?
- Contact Kimberly McCarthy, Research Program Manager at the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness, at kxc255@psu.edu or 814-280-4281.

Eligible participants completing a survey will receive a $50 Amazon code.

CONTACT US TO PARTICIPATE!
Call 814-280-4281 or Email kxc255@psu.edu
Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS)

VETS Survey 1 – TVMI Wave 7

Survey Recruitment Materials

Principal Investigator: Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.

Lead Data Manager and Analyst: Nicole R. Morgan, Ph.D.
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Recruitment and Survey Reminder Schedule

The table below delineates the dates for distribution of recruitment emails and texts for the Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS) research initiative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Communication</th>
<th>Week of Implementation</th>
<th>Distribution Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email 1</td>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>11/15/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 1</td>
<td>Week 1.5</td>
<td>11/18/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email 2</td>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>11/22/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 2</td>
<td>Week 2.5</td>
<td>11/25/20 (Thanksgiving week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Text</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>11/29/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email 3</td>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>12/6/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 3</td>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>12/13/20 (informed of closing on 12/26/20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email 4</td>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>12/20/20 (informed of closing on 12/26/20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 4</td>
<td>Week 6.5</td>
<td>12/23/20 (extended closing to January 4, 2021)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey completion for each recruited participant was tracked; reminder emails and text messages were discontinued once a participant submitted a complete survey.

Recruitment efforts for the research initiative stopped when the survey closed on January 5, 2021.
Communications

On the following pages, the language for each of the scheduled email and text messages can be found.

Recruitment Email Messages

Below is the language for 4 email messages distributed at staggered points in time while the VETS Survey was open. Email 3 was revised and re-programmed during survey administration.

Email 1

Subject Line: Continue Your Participation in Veteran Transition Studies! Your Opinions Matter!

Dear [veteran name],

Thank you for your military service and your previous participation in the Transitioning Veterans Survey (TVS). We now invite you to participate in an exciting expansion of this unique veteran study!

The Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS) team at the Pennsylvania State University is continuing to survey veterans about their experiences as they transition from military to civilian life. Your input is very important and will help inform future programs, services, and policies for Service members like you!

The new survey asks similar questions to the surveys you have already completed. The survey should take approximately 40 minutes to complete, and you will receive a $50...
Amazon.com gift code upon completion. The survey will ask about your recent experiences with work, education, health, personal relationships, finances, and programs or services you have used since May of 2019. New questions have been included to assess the impact of COVID-19 on reintegration and the impact of educational pursuits on employability and debt obligations.

Your decision to participate is completely voluntary, and your contact information and participation study code will be kept completely confidential. The VA will not know if you participate in the study and participation will not affect your benefits.

Act Now to Help Other Veterans! To learn more or participate, click the link below as soon as possible! The website you will be directed to contains additional information about the study and asks for your consent to complete the VETS Survey.

Alternatively, you can indicate that you are no longer interested in being contacted for future studies. Reply to this email or click on the link below. If you elect not to participate in this study, your contact information will be destroyed.

We greatly appreciate your military service and your consideration of this important effort to support veterans. We would be most grateful for your survey participation!

CLICK HERE ON YOUR UNIQUE SURVY LINK

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
VETS Principal Investigator
Principal Scientist and Founder, Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
Professor of Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Questions? Please contact the Help Desk at VETSpsu@psu.edu.
Subject Line: Share Your Veteran Transition Experience and Earn $50 for Holiday Shopping!

Dear [veteran name],

We hope you will participate in the Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS) Survey! This survey is an expansion of The Veterans Metrics Initiative (TVMI) and represents the seventh point of data collection. The VETS Survey is similar to the Transitioning Veterans Survey (TVS) you completed in the past. We are continuing to assess veterans’ experiences as they transition from military to civilian life. Your survey participation, across multiple years, is helping us understand and identify ways to improve the transition experience and promote veteran well-being.

The voluntary survey takes 40 minutes to complete and you will receive a $50 Amazon.com gift code upon completion. The survey will ask about your recent experiences with work, education, health, personal relationships, finances, and programs or services you have used since May of 2019. New questions have been included to assess the impact of COVID-19 on reintegration and the impact of educational pursuits on employability and debt obligations.

This is not a VA study. Your contact information and participation study code will be kept completely confidential. The VA will not know if you participate in the study and participation will not affect your benefits.

Ready to participate and earn a gift code for holiday shopping? Click the link below as soon as possible! The website you will be directed to contains additional information about the study and asks for your consent to complete the survey.

If you do not wish to be contacted again for this or future studies, please reply to this email or click on the link below. If you elect not to participate in this study, your contact information will be destroyed.
We appreciate your consideration of this request and would be most grateful for your survey participation!

CLICK HERE ON YOUR UNIQUE SURVEY LINK

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
VETS Principal Investigator
Principal Scientist and Founder, Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
Professor of Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Questions? Please contact the Help Desk at VETSpsu@psu.edu.

Email 3

Subject Line: Time is Running Out! Complete the VETS Survey and Earn $50!

Dear [veteran name],

We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has altered life for many people. Help us understand how it has impacted your military to civilian transition. By completing the Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS) Survey, you will help raise awareness of the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on transitioning, as well as the many other facets at play during reintegration.

Time is running out, so please take this opportunity to share your experiences and provide valuable input! The voluntary survey takes 40 minutes to complete and you will receive a $50 Amazon.com gift code upon completion as a token of appreciation. The
survey will ask about your recent experiences with work, education, health, personal relationships, finances, and programs or services you have used since May of 2019. New questions have been included to assess the impact of COVID-19 on reintegration and the impact of educational pursuits on employability and debt obligations.

Your contact information and participation study code will be kept completely confidential. This is not a VA study. The VA will not know if you participate in the study and participation will not affect your benefits.

Want to Share Your Perspectives? Click the link below. The website you will be directed to contains additional information about the study and asks for your consent to complete the survey.

If you do not wish to be contacted again for this or future studies, please reply to this email or click on the link below. If you elect not to participate in additional studies, your contact information will be destroyed.

We thank you for your service to the country and for considering this opportunity to benefit future generations of Service members. On behalf of the VETS team, thank you in advance for your participation in the survey!

CLICK HERE ON YOUR UNIQUE SURVEY LINK

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
VETS Principal Investigator
Principal Scientist and Founder, Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
Professor of Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Questions? Please contact the Help Desk at VETSpsu@psu.edu.
Email 4 – Survey End Date

(Note: Send on December 20, 2020.)

Subject Line: Last Chance! Veteran Survey Closes This Week. We Want To Hear From You!

Dear [veteran name],

Time is running out! The survey will close this week on December 26, 2020. Respond now to have your voice heard!

We thank you for participating in previous surveys and we invite you to complete the Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS) Survey! This voluntary survey is designed to help us understand and identify ways to improve the transition experience from military to civilian life for other veterans. Your opinions matter and can make a difference!

The survey takes 40 minutes to complete and you will receive a $50 Amazon.com gift code upon completion. The survey will ask about your recent experiences with work, education, health, personal relationships, finances, and programs or services you have used since May of 2019. It also asks about the impact of COVID-19 on your reintegration and any educational pursuits and resulting debt obligations that have impacted your employability or well-being.

This is not a VA study. Your contact information and participation study code will be kept completely confidential. The VA will not know if you participate in the study and participation will not affect your benefits.

Last chance! Respond now! Click the link below. The website you will be directed to contains additional information about the study and asks for your consent to complete the survey.
If you do not wish to be contacted in the future for other studies, please reply to this email or click on the link below. If you elect not to participate in this study, your contact information will be destroyed.

We greatly appreciate your military service and value your input. Please do not delay, so your experiences can be counted and used to better supports for transitioning veterans! We would be most grateful for your survey participation!

CLICK HERE ON YOUR UNIQUE SURVEY LINK

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
VETS Principal Investigator
Principal Scientist and Founder, Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
Professor of Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Questions? Please contact the Help Desk at VETSpsu@psu.edu.
Recruitment Text Messages

Below is the language for text messages sent at staggered points while the VETS Survey was open. Two of the messages (3 and 4) were revised during survey administration. The timing of distribution was also changed to 10 a.m. EST.

The survey vendor inserted the personalized survey links at the end of each message.

Text 1

Support other veterans! Complete the Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies Survey. It takes ~40 minutes. You will get a $50 code for Amazon! (link)

Text 2

Happy Thanksgiving! We are grateful for your military service! Complete the VETS Survey. We will send you a $50 Amazon code! (link)

Additional Text

(Added for distribution on 11.29.20)

Cyber Monday is tomorrow; earn $50 to shop this holiday season! The VETS Survey is closing soon. If you started the survey, click the link to finish it today!

Text 3

It’s not too late to finish the VETS Survey before it CLOSES on December 16, 2020! Earn a $50 gift code from Amazon! (link)

Text 4

We value your input, so we are extending the VETS Survey until January 4, 2021. Please take time to complete it and help benefit future veterans! Earn a $50 gift code from Amazon! (link)
Other Correspondence

Below are two additional emails sent following survey participation.

Payment Confirmation Email

Subject Line: VETS Gift Code Request Confirmation

Hello _____,

Thank you for completing the VETS Survey. Your time in providing survey responses is greatly appreciated.

Your gift code request is being processed. Please expect to receive an email/text message within 7 days. The message will include your Amazon gift code.

If you have questions, please email the VETS Help Desk at VETSpsu@psu.edu.

Thank you for your military service and for helping to inform future, effective programs and services for veterans.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
VETS Principal Investigator
Principal Scientist and Founder, Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
Professor of Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Questions? Please contact the Help Desk at VETSpsu@psu.edu.
Note: The language below was used for any participant completing the survey after 4:00 p.m. on December 24, 2020.

Payment Confirmation Email for Holiday Survey Break Submissions

Subject Line: Confirmation of Survey Completion and Payment

Hello _____.

Thank you for completing the VETS Survey. Your time in providing survey responses is greatly appreciated.

Your gift code request is being processed. Due to the holiday break, please expect to receive your gift code by the week of January 4, 2021.

If you have questions, please email the VETS Help Desk at VETSpsu@psu.edu.

Thank you for your military service and for helping to inform future, effective programs and services for veterans.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
VETS Principal Investigator
Principal Scientist and Founder, Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
Professor of Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Questions? Please contact the Help Desk at VETSpsu@psu.edu.
Incentive Email

Below is the language for the final message with the incentive details.

Subject Line: VETS Survey: Your Gift Code

Thank you for completing the Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS) Survey! Your time and effort is greatly appreciated!

Your $50 Amazon.com® gift code is below.

Amazon.com® gift code: ________________________________.

Your Amazon.com® code is unique. You may enter the code online when you are ready to make a purchase at www.amazon.com. There is no expiration date.

Thank you again for your military service and your participation in the survey.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
VETS Principal Investigator
Principal Scientist and Founder, Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
Professor of Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Questions? Please contact the Help Desk at VETSpsu@psu.edu.
Message Language

During the planning process, the study team brainstormed email and text language that would appeal to the survey participants and motivate participation. Below is a sample of other text messages brainstormed:

1. We are thankful that you share our belief that veterans' well-being matters! Show you care this season; Complete the VETS Survey!

2. Wrap up the holiday season with an extra $50! Submit the VETS Survey soon!

3. Buy that someone special something with your $50 Amazon code. It is waiting for you! Complete the VETS Survey.

4. Cyber Monday is one day only. Act fast to earn holiday spending money! Complete the VETS Survey.

5. You snooze, you lose! VETS is closing soon. Complete it now to earn a $50 Amazon code!

6. Earn Amazon money to buy holiday gifts! Complete the VETS Survey before it is too late!

7. Don't miss your chance to earn extra funds for holiday shopping. The VETS Survey ends soon. Act fast!
Dear _____________,

The VETS Survey closed in early January. We were ecstatic that over 90% of eligible veterans responded! The time you took to complete the survey is appreciated, and collectively, your voices will be heard as we communicate the data results to veteran service organizations and policymakers.

Our research team at the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State cannot thank you enough for continuing to be part of this longitudinal study! Here are a few ways in which the data findings will be used:

- In partnership with organizations like Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families, policy briefs and editorials will be disseminated to inform policymakers and federal leadership.
- Collaborators, such as The Heinz Endowments and the Create Lab at Carnegie Mellon, will help to share the findings with the media and community partners through data visualizations.
- We will continue to inform philanthropic organizations of the data findings through monthly, virtual meetings that help them to strategically fund community-based services and supports for veterans.

This year's survey included new lines of questioning that will broaden the scope of the information we can share to affect change, including questions on educational needs, student debt, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on veterans. For instance, we found that while only 4% of veterans in our survey tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, 13% had someone in their immediate family test positive. Sadly, 15% personally knew someone who passed away from COVID-19 or from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We plan to continue the survey process annually. We expect to do so in Fall 2021 as long as funds become available. We will reach out to you via email and/or cell phone at that time. We also hope to be able to develop and implement a spouse/partner survey to learn more about the impacts of the civilian transition on family members. Please keep us informed of any contact information changes by emailing us at vetspsu@psu.edu. Also, we request that you add vetspsu@psu.edu to your email address book, so future messages are not sent to your junk folder.

We do want to acknowledge that there were some survey challenges and inconveniences this year due to the change in survey vendor. We thank you for being patient and flexible as we worked to address delivery and other gift code concerns. All requested gift codes for this year's survey have been distributed. If you have any remaining concerns about your gift code compensation, please email us at vetspsu@psu.edu. We are striving to make future survey iterations more seamless.

Thank you for your military service and for your time in completing the VETS surveys. Your contributions to data-driven improvements to veteran programs and services are valued.

Respectfully,

Dr. Daniel F. Perkins and the VETS Team

Professor, Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy