

The American Legion to launch women veterans' survey

WASHINGTON (Jan. 3, 2011) – As more women serve in the armed forces, the number of women veterans – currently about 2 million – will also grow. Yet only about 25 percent of that population is using the VA health-care system.

The American Legion is launching a two-month, worldwide online survey Jan. 5 to find out why.

“Conducting this kind of survey is very important to us,” said Jimmie Foster, national commander of The American Legion. “After analyzing the data we’ve collected, the Legion will be better qualified to make specific recommendations for congressional appropriations, VA programs and facilities, and to increase public awareness of issues facing women veterans.”

Verna Jones, director of the Legion’s division of veterans affairs and rehabilitation, added, “In order to strengthen our advocacy role, we need to conduct a comprehensive survey of women veterans about their experiences and attitudes concerning health care provided by VA, private practitioners, and other health-care providers.”

Jones said that results from the survey will be used to refine The American Legion’s outreach methods, enhance its written and oral testimony to Congress and federal agencies, and to ultimately improve the delivery of women veterans’ benefits, programs and services.

“The survey will also help to identify unmet needs among women veterans, and guide the Legion’s development of specific remedies and recommendations,” said Denise Williams, the organization’s assistant director of health policy. “Then we can offer them to VA as specific actions to eliminate specific health-care problems faced by women veterans.”

The survey will be conducted by ProSidian Consulting in Charlotte, N.C., which specializes in strategic business issues. Its list of clients includes the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and other federal agencies.

Survey questions will cover ten aspects of health-care service quality: reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, tangibles and understanding the customer.

The survey was developed by American Legion specialists on women veterans' issues. "We understand the sacrifices of women and their role in serving America," Jones said. "We recognize that women, like their male counterparts, are returning home with illness, disease, injuries and the invisible wounds of war."

Jones said The American Legion believes the survey's results "will be a major component in being able to understand the needs of women veterans, and allow us to assist in providing the services needed."

Women veterans are encouraged to participate in the survey by visiting www.legion.org. It becomes active on Jan. 5 and will remain online until early March, after which analysis of the results will begin.