**Understanding Impact of VHA’s New Suicidal Ideation**

**Screening Initiative: Veteran’s Perspective**

**Information Sheet**

**What is this project about?**

We are asking you to take part in a research study that is being funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VA has begun to screen Veterans for suicidal thoughts as part of routine care. This study is being done to improve VA’s new screening process by understanding Veterans’ experiences and perspectives on being screened. This study is being conducted for research purposes only, not treatment or VA benefits. Dr. Steven Dobscha at VA Portland Health Care System in Portland, Oregon is leading this research.

**Why do you want to study me? How did you get my name?**

We are contacting Veterans who have received care at the VA in primary care, mental health, or the emergency department. We would like to learn directly from Veterans about their experience and impressions so that we can improve the screening process.

**What will happen if I decide to participate?**

There are two parts to this study. Some people will only participate in one part. **Part 1 of the study** involves completing a survey (approximately 30 minutes) that will ask you about your experiences receiving care at a recent visit to the VA (this might have been a telephone or video visit, or in person), your experiences being asked about thoughts of suicide, and some general information about you and your health. You have the option to complete the survey on paper, or to complete it online, which uses a secure database called REDCap. If you complete the survey on paper, please use the pre-paid return envelope to mail your completed survey to us. The REDCap database is password protected and maintained by Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU). If you complete the survey online, the database will save your answers to the questions but will not contain any identifiable information about you. You can choose to answer or skip any question. **Part 2 of the study** involves participating in an optional telephone interview (up to one hour). Participants who engage in this part of the study will be asked for their views about a new suicidal thoughts screening process at the VA, and their experiences being screened. You can choose to answer or skip any question. If you participate in both study activities your participation would involve 2 study contacts spaced approximately 1 year apart. Approximately 6,000 people will participate in Part 1 of this research study across the United States; up to 80 Veterans may participate in Part 2.

**Do I have to participate?**

You can choose to take part or not to take part in this study. Whatever choice you make, you will not lose access to your VA health care or give up any legal rights or benefits. By filling out the survey and returning it to us, you are agreeing to participate in the study. If you choose not to participate, please check the appropriate box and return your letter in the enclosed prepaid envelope. You can decide to stop taking part in the study at any time. If we have imminent concerns about your physical or mental health and safety, we may elect to end the interview and your participation will be terminated so we can help you connect to necessary medical or emergency services.

**What are the benefits and risks/possible discomforts of participating in this study?**

Participation in this study will not benefit you directly. However, by serving as a participant you may help us learn how to improve mental health screening in different care settings, which will benefit other Veterans in the future. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. First, some of the survey and/or interview questions may seem personal or embarrassing. If some questions feel too upsetting, it’s okay to skip questions you don’t want to answer. If you express thoughts of currently wishing to harm yourself or others, we may consult with your clinician or follow up with you, or we may call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline and/or the Veterans Crisis Line and transfer you to someone working at one of those call centers. Please also make use of the list of helpful phone numbers below, if needed. Second, there is a risk of loss of privacy by participating in this study. However, as explained below, we have taken multiple steps to protect your privacy.

**How will my confidentiality and privacy be protected?**

Your information used for this study will be kept confidential as required by law.

All information from the survey will be kept private. To help us keep your information private, we ask that you do not write your name or other identifying information (e.g. address) on the survey. Your personally identifiable information will not be used in any reports or scientific publications created from this project, and the information you provide us will not be entered into your health record at the VA.

Only Dr. Steven Dobscha and his study team at VA Portland Health Care System will have access to your personal information. Your individually identifiable health information used for this VA study includes: (1) Healthcare use information available in VA systems such as diagnoses, progress notes, medications, lab or radiology findings; (2) Specific information concerning alcohol or drug abuse; (3) Demographic information such as name, age, and race; and (4) Survey and interview responses.

If you participate in the interview (Part 2), we will use a digital recorder to record interviews. Interviews will be typed up by approved staff from the VA Salt Lake City (VASLC) Health Care System. The VASLC has a Professional Transcription Service available to VA sites. Anything that might identify you will be removed from the transcript. The digital recording and any other information about you will be kept in a secure folder on the VA network, behind the VA firewall.

If you participate in the survey, or if you participate in both the survey and the interview your answers will be stored (“banked”) in the Center to Improve Veterans Involvement in Care repository (#3565) located at VA Portland Health Care System in Portland, Oregon. If you participate, your study data will be saved as part of the data repository and will be *de-identified (no link will remain between you and your data)*. The de-identified data included in the repository will include your responses to the survey items, responses to the interview questions (if applicable), and your healthcare utilization data. Future research may use this data to improve care for Veterans. The results of those studies involving the use of your information cannot be linked back to you; therefore, you will not be able to withdraw from the repository and no results will be shared with you from these future studies.

You may withdraw from this study at any time by informing study staff of your wish to withdraw.

You will not be contacted to receive any results from this study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will be paid $35 after completing the questionnaire, and an additional $40 if you complete an interview (not everyone will be invited to participate in an interview). If you complete the survey and interview, you will have received a total of $75. Check payments will be mailed to you after the completion of each completed study activity.

An Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 1099 may be generated, which will use your Social Security Number. This payment is considered taxable income. If you owe money to the government, this payment may be garnished to satisfy the debt.

**Who can I talk to if I still have questions?**

* If you have questions about this project or your participation, please call the Principal Investigator, Steven Dobscha, MD at 503-220-8262 x52207, or call our Study Coordinator, Victoria Elliott, at 503-721-1033.
* If you become sick or injured or if you feel your privacy or confidentiality may have been violated (e.g., someone without authorization has received personal information about you), call Steven Dobscha, MD at 503-220-8262 x52207.
* To speak with someone not connected with this research study about your rights, discuss problems, concerns and questions, or to obtain information and/or offer input, please call the VA Portland Health Care System Research Office at (503) 273-5125, or the VA Regional Counsel at (503) 412-4580.

**Other helpful phone numbers (you can use these even if you don’t take part in the study):**

* If you need emergency care because you took part in this study, the VA will provide care to you. Be sure to tell the VA that you are in a research study. Please **call 911** **or go to the Emergency Department** if you have a life-threatening emergency.
* If you are thinking about hurting yourself or others, please call the **Veteran’s Crisis Line** at **1-800-273-8255** and **press 1**, or **call 911**
* Find your **local VA**: Dial 1-844-698-2311
* **Vet Center**: 1-877-WAR-VETS (927-8387) or [www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov)