

Supplemental File 1. Semi-structured interview guide.

Interview Guide for Caring Letters Recipients

Hello (interview participant name). My name is FirstName LastName, and I'm a program evaluator with the VA Veterans Crisis Line. I'm calling because you indicated that you're interested in participating in an interview.

You are being asked to participate in these interviews because the Veterans Crisis Line mailed you some follow-up letters. Do you recall receiving the cards (they came in a blue envelope)?

[If NO stop the interview and thank the Veteran for his or her time.]

The interview will involve me asking questions about what you think of the cards, for instance anything you liked or didn't like about them. The interview will be audio recorded, with your permission. Your responses will be reviewed and then deleted once we have the info we need. These interviews will help us to evaluate the program and should take 20-30 mins total.

You will be compensated \$40 in the form of a check for taking part in the interview. This check will be mailed from the US Treasury Office and should arrive 6-8 weeks after the interview."

Are you still interested in talking with me?

[If YES]: Do you have about 30 minutes to talk today?

[If NO reschedule or if YES proceed with interview.]

Is there a day or time that works well for you in the upcoming weeks? What time zone are you in?

Thanks again for agreeing to participate in an interview. Your feedback is important for making the program better for other Veterans. There's no right or wrong answer. We want to understand your perspectives about receiving the cards.

Do I have your permission to audio record our conversation? The audio recording will be uploaded to a restricted access folder that only our evaluation team has access to.

CONSENT TO AUDIO-RECORD THE PHONE INTERVIEW

PARTICIPANT CONSENTED FOR AUDIO-RECORDING: YES NO

CONSENT OBTAINED BY:

Signature

Print

DATE CONSENT OBTAINED: _____ TIME _____

[If NO]: Would you like to continue the interview, and I will write down notes instead of recording you?

Feel free to ask me to clarify or repeat questions. Also, we can stop the interview any time and let me know if you would like to skip a question.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

Interview:

1. How do you feel about the number of letters you received?
 - Probe: Would you have liked more? Less?
2. Thinking back, what did it feel like to get the letters from the Veterans Crisis Line?
3. Were the letters helpful to you?
 - [If YES]: How did getting the letters help?
 - [If NO]: Why not?
4. Did you keep any of the letters?
5. What did you like about the letters?
6. Was any one letter more meaningful than the others?
 - [If YES]: How?
7. Was there anything that you didn't like?
8. Did you read each one of the letters?
 - [If NO]: Was there a particular reason why not?
 - Probes: Were you too busy? Were the letters too long? Were there too many?
 - [If YES]: What do you remember most about what you read?
9. Do you remember who sent the letters?
 - [If NO]: For example, was it a clinician? Another Veteran?
 - [If YES]: What did it feel like to get a letter from _____.
10. Do you remember seeing the VA resources provided with the letters?
 - [If YES]: Did you use any of them?
 - [If YES]: Were they helpful?
11. Did the letters affect how you feel about the VA?

[If demographic data hasn't already been collected, also ask]:

12. If it's okay with you, I'd like to ask a few demographic questions.
 - How would you describe your race or ethnicity?
 - What is your age?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Feel free to reach out if any questions or concerns come up later.

Supplemental File 2. Master template.

Participant ID: Interviewer: Analyst:	
Demographics	Gender: Age: Race/Ethnicity:
Number of letters	Recall of number received – Number read – Preference for number of letters –
General perspectives	Helpfulness – Likes – Dislikes –
Content	Recall of content – Recall of signatory – Impact of signatory – Any one more meaningful –
Impact	General – Regarding the VA –
Resources	Use of resources – Helpfulness of resources – Additional resources –
Actions taken	
Recommendations	
Other	
Observations / Analytic insights	