

## Summary of Research, 526 Form, PTSD Questions. February-March, 2021

### Goals and methods

With this research, we want to understand:

- Are the PTSD-related questions in Form 526 triggering for Veterans?
- What are the most common and significant usability issues and pain points?
- What prompts veterans to apply for PTSD?
- Can the form be improved & shortened?

The methods we are utilizing for part 1 of this research:

- Interview with 4 VSO's
- Interview with 2 stakeholders at the VA
- Workshop with 2 VHA doctors

### Process and insights

We individually created hypotheses after revisiting transcripts from the research and used practitioner triangulation through an affinity mapping exercise to determine what we were confident in and what would require more research. We created a feasibility vs impact matrix to prioritize design recommendations and future research efforts.

#### Selected insights:

- Lack of transparency: why are asking certain questions, and how will we use that information.
- There is a language mismatch between medical VA terms vs veterans' day-to-day terms.
- Form 526 is asking for details of the event. This can trigger trauma/PTSD symptoms.
- The current method of providing event dates is a significant pain point for Veterans.
- The current state of the online 526 Form is too long. Result: veteran fatigue and frustration.

#### Opportunities:

- Explain in plain language why VBA needs certain info (to cross-reference data to confirm their condition).
- *Event details page* and the *Additional info page*: describe what VBA needs to know at a minimum in order to support a claim, instead of just an open-ended question.
- Set clear expectations for what is coming next in the form, and in the claim process overall.
- Provide more granularity about the progress made in the form.
- *PTSD Combat award page*: explain that providing this info upfront can automatically qualify the veteran.
- *Event date*: Use only Month/year (or a date range) to avoid date discrepancies in the system.
- Provide help-information on every page as opposed to checkpoints ( we can't predict the trigger points).
- Identify gaps in the experience between VBA, VHA, and the Veteran, and remove all unnecessary questions.
- Clarify that a diagnosis is not necessary to submit a claim. The description of their symptoms is valid.
- Split apart the online 526 Form to reduce Veteran fatigue and frustration.