Non-Clinical Services Research Findings

January 5th, 2022

Agenda

1 Research goals

2 Research findings

3 Recommendations & next steps

4 Appendix

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Research Goals

Goals

To align benefits and services across VAMC pages, we need to determine how Veterans expect services to be categorized. This study gathered feedback on existing services, existing categories, and for potential new actions identified in facility site audits.

Research: categories

Existing categories

- Primary care
- Mental health care
- Specialty care
- Social programs and services
- Prepare for your visit

Proposed category

- Administrative

New categories

- Participants created new categories, or did not, as appropriate.

Primary care

Emergency care Emergency room	+
Geriatrics Older adult care, senior care	+
Gynecology Reproductive and maternal health, women's health	+
Pharmacy Prescriptions, Rx, medications, pharmacist consultation	+
Primary care Family and internal medicine	+

Mental health care

Addiction and substance abuse care Drug and alcohol treatment and rehabilitation	+
Mental health care Behavioral health	+
Military sexual trauma care	+

Research: services

(The complete list of services can be found in the appendix section.)

Existing services included

- Women Veteran care
- Travel reimbursement
- Social work
- Registry exams
- My HealtheVet Coordinator

Existing Vet Center services

- Workshops and classes
- Veteran connections
- Grief and bereavement counseling

Proposed services included

- Chaplain service
- Applying for health care
- Library services
- Medical records
- Billing and insurance

Questions & Hypotheses

Questions

1. Do the existing categories accurately reflect Veteran expectations?
2. Will Veterans create additional categories for existing services?
3. Will Veterans create additional categories for new services?
4. Are there services that are confusing?
5. Do existing category names cause confusion?

Hypotheses

1. Veterans will associate most services with existing category headings.
2. Veterans will create new categories for some of the existing services.
3. Veterans will create new categories for some of the new services.
4. Some of the existing, and new, services will cause confusion, and may require plainer language.

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Research Findings

Key findings: 1-2 / 6

1. Most participants found the pre-determined categories adequate.
   - **8 of 14 participants** sorted all services into the pre-determined categories

   "I think the categories are pretty good you know...[they] are self-explanatory and represent a good group of where I would look for information for specific things." [P3]

2. All participants utilized the new "Administrative" category.
   - **14 of 14 participants** added services to the "Administrative" category.

   "It is registration paperwork, so it belongs in administrative...The distinction is that the admin group is paperwork." [P2]

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Key findings: 3-4 / 6

3. Some participants suggested new categories for existing services.
   - **6 of 14 participants** chose to add existing services to new categories
   - New categories for existing services:
     - Onboarding
     - Incoming Veterans
     - Transition
     - Post-service
4. Almost no participants suggested new categories for new actions.
   - **1 of 14 participants** chose to add new actions to two new categories
   - New categories for new actions:
     - Substance abuse
     - Post-service

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Key findings: 5 / 6

5. There were services that needed plainer description, and/or additional explanation.

- **13 of 14 participants** had questions about services
- Services requiring more than one explanation:
  - Registry exams
  - Veteran connections
  - Returning service member care
  - Whole health
  - Library services
  - Advice nurse
  - My HealtheVet Coordinator
  - Privacy office

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Key findings: 6 / 6

6. How service categorization was distributed across participants:
    - Per-service breakdown of categories based on confidence level (see appendix)
        - High confidence
        - Medium confidence
        - Unsure / need more information
    - The "Administrative" category had the most consistent alignment across participants
    - The most popular categories:
        - Administrative
        - Social programs and services
        - Specialty care
    - The least popular categories:
        - Prepare for your visit
        - Mental health care

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Recommendations

Recommendations – 1/3

1

Add the "Administrative" category to system-level and facility-level pages

- Every participant utilized the "Administrative" category, making it one of the most popular categories for new and existing services. The general sentiment was that some services seemed obviously administrative because they involved registration, paperwork, and requiring employee help for same.

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Recommendations – 2/3

2

Adding relevant patient-friendly name to services requiring explanation

- Similar services required explanation across participants, so utilizing the service patient-friendly name design pattern for new and existing services where appropriate, should help Veterans more quickly understand why a service belongs in a particular category.

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Recommendations – 3/3

3

Consider creating a category heading that calls out returning Veterans

- Of the new categories that were created, the majority were related to leaving active duty service, and returning to civilian life and/or entering the VA health care system. Even though the sample size for this study was relatively small, since multiple participants pointed out the utility this category would have for them, it makes me believe that it is worth considering exploring this additional to facility pages.

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Feedback and next steps

Recommendations

1. Add the "Administrative" category to facility pages

2. Adding relevant patient-friendly language to service accordions if not present

3. Consider a new category heading that calls out returning Veterans

Next steps notes

- Change management plan

- Communications plan

- A way to batch requests

- List of services with plain language and without

Appendix

Our participants

- **14 total participants**
- **Gender**
  - Male: 10
  - Female: 4
- **Race**
  - Black: 2
  - White: 11
  - Native, Black or African American: 1
- **Location**
  - Urban: 7
  - Rural: 5

- **Age**
  - 25 – 34: 1
  - 34 – 64: 5
  - 65+: 4
  - Unknown: 4
- **Education**
  - High school: 1
  - Some college: 3
  - BA: 4
  - MA: 4
  - Unknown: 2

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Service categorization - High confidence

Chart Key

No change ✓

Moving ✗

*"split" refers to services being divided into different categories, with low/no alignment across participants

Services	Confidence level	New or existing	Current category	Proposed category
Advice nurse	High – 10/14 in Primary care, 4/10 in Prepare for your visit	Existing	Primary care	Primary care ✓
Billing and insurance	High – 14/14 in Administrative	New	N/A	Administrative
Chaplain service	High – 10/14 in Social programs and services, split across other categories	New	N/A	Social programs and services
Employment verification	High – 12/14 in Adminstrative	New	N/A	Adminstrative
Freedom of Information Act requests	High – 13/14 in Administrative	New	N/A	Administrative
Medical records	High – 12/14 in Adminstrative	New	N/A	Adminstrative
Patient advocates	High – 10/14 in Administrative, split* across other categories	Existing	Social programs and services	Administrative ✗
Privacy office	High – 14/14 in Administrative	New	N/A	Administrative
Radiology	High – 10/14 in Specialty care, 4/10 in Primary care	Existing	Specialty care	Specialty care ✓
Travel reimbursement	High – 12/14 in Adminstrative	Existing	Other services	Adminstrative ✗
Veteran connections	High – 11/14 in Social programs and services	Existing	Referral services (Vet centers only)	Social programs and services ✗
Wheelchair and mobility	High – 12/14 in Specialty care	Existing	Specialty care	Specialty care ✓
Workshops and classes	High – 10/14 in Social programs and services	Existing	(Vet centers only)	Social programs and services ✗

Service categorization - Medium confidence

Services	Confidence level	New or existing	Current category	Proposed category
Addiction and substance abuse care	Medium - 8/14 in Specialty care, split across other categories	Existing	Mental health care	Specialty care ✕
Applying for health care	Medium - 8/14 in Administrative, 5/14 in Prepare for your visit	New	N/A	Administrative
Caregiver support	Medium - 9/14 in Social programs and services, split across a few categories	Existing	Social programs and services	Social programs and services ✓
Grief and bereavement counseling	Medium - 9/14 in Mental health care, split across Social programs and services and Specialty care	Existing	Counseling services (Vet centers only)	Mental health care ✕
Military sexual trauma care	Medium - 8/14 in Mental health care, split across a few other categories	Existing	Mental health care	Mental health care ✓
MOVE! weight management	Medium - 8/14 in Specialty care, 4/14 in Social programs and services, other categories	Existing	Specialty care	Specialty care ✓
Nutrition, food, and dietary care	Medium - 9/14 in Specialty care, split across Primary care and Social programs and services	Existing	Specialty care	Specialty care ✓
Social work	Medium - 9/14 in Social programs and services, 5/14 in Mental health care	Existing	Social programs and services	Social programs and services ✓
Vocational rehabilitation and employment programs	Medium - 9/14 in Social programs and services	Existing	Other services	Social programs and services ✕
Whole health	Medium - 8/14 in Primary care, split acros serval categories	Existing	Other services	Primary care ✕
Women Veteran care *	Medium - 8/14 in Primary care, split across serval categories	Existing	Social programs and services	Primary care ✕

* 3 / 4 female participants put Women Veteran care in the Primary care category. The 4th put it in Specialty care.

Service categorization – Low confidence / unsure

Services	Confidence level	New or existing	Current category	Proposed category
LGBTQ+ Veteran care	Unsure / need more info – split several categories	Existing	Social programs and services	Unsure / need more info
Library services	Unsure / need more info – split between Social programs and services, and Administrative	New	N/A	Unsure / need more info
Make an appointment	Low – 8/14 in Prepare for your visit, 5/15 in Primary care, 1/14 in Administrative	New	N/A	Prepare for your visit ✕
Minority Veteran care	Unsure / need more info – 7/10 in Primary care, split across a few other categories	Existing	Social programs and services	Unsure / need more info
My HealtheVet coordinator	Low – 7/14 in Administrative, split across other categories	Existing	Other services	Administrative ✕
Recreation and creative arts therapy	Unsure / need more info – split across Mental health care, Social programs and services, and Specialty care	Existing	Social programs and services	Unsure / need more info
Registry exams	Unsure / need more info – split across several categories	Existing	Social programs and services	Unsure / need more info
Returning service member care	Unsure / need more info – split across several categories	Existing	Social programs and services	Unsure / need more info
Smoking and tobacco cessation	Unsure / need more info – 6/14 in Social programs and services, 5/14 in Specialty care, split across other categories	Existing	Specialty care	Unsure / need more info