

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# VA Facility Locator, Mobile

**Summary of Usability Study, February 2021**

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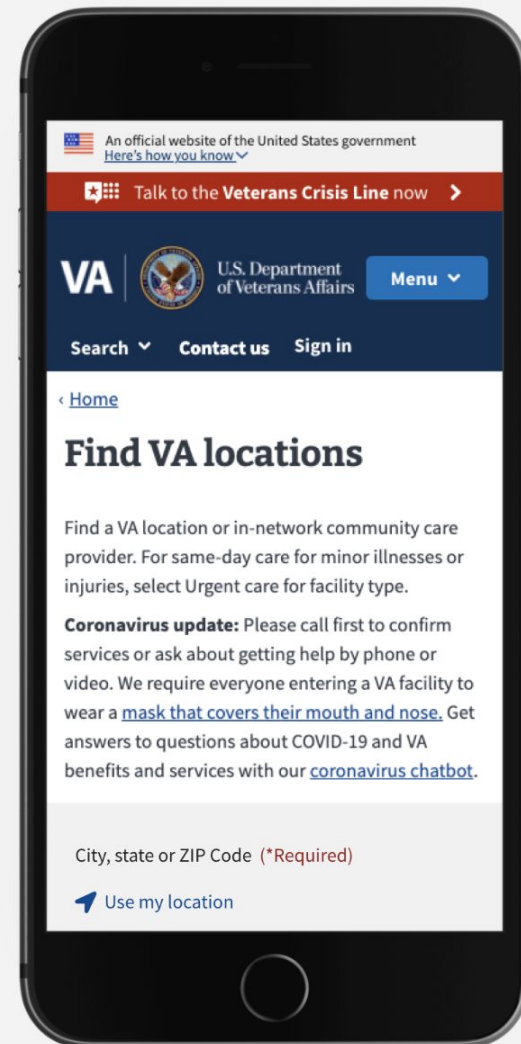
# Intro and background

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# Background

The motivation/background for this research came from the following factors:

- In a mobile month study, veterans were not interested in using the map view of facility locator #14484.
- The Facility Locator search experience has not been approached from a mobile-first perspective.
- Planned changes include the implementation of two new usability features ("use my location" and "clear field") and the resolution of accessibility defects (not addressed in this prototype).



# Goals

The main goals for this study:

- Understand how Veterans expectations for Find a VA Location search results differ for mobile vs desktop users
- Understand how industry standards impact Veteran expectations for the Facility Locator search experience
- Evaluate new designs created for geolocation, map view, and clear fields
- Validate if veterans are interested in using the map view of the Facility Locator (validate findings in the mobile month study)

# Methods and structure

The method we used:

- A remote, moderated, task-oriented usability study, using Zoom
- Participants logged into Zoom with their mobile device, shared their screen and opened up the prototype for us to observe their interaction.
- The participants had to imagine a couple of scenarios and were given tasks to perform within the prototype on their mobile phones.

The structure of the study:

- 2 minutes for introduction and helping participant to share their mobile screen on Zoom
- 2 minutes for warm-up questions
- Approximately 20-30 minutes with usability tasks and questions
- 2-4 min for exit questions and wrap-up

# Participants

The participants in this study:

- 10 veterans participated
- 5 male and 5 female
- 4 from rural area, 6 from a major metropolitan area
- Between 35 and 83 years old (8 of 10 was 55 years or older)
- A mix of educational level
- 5 used Android and 5 used Apple phone

# Summary - Key findings

- Participants **had a variety of past experiences with the VA facility locator**, from “...it was a nightmare” to “...it was pretty easy”.
- Most participants **did not utilize the “Use My Location” link**. A few did not notice it but said they might use it if they noticed it, a few do not want to use location services at all, and a few participants noticed it and thought it could be useful, but found it irrelevant to the task/scenario given to them.
- Most participants **did not use the “x” icon to clear their address** and retype a new address.
- **Choosing Facility type and Service Type was easy for most participants** when given the task to look for optometry.
- **Most participants found both the list and map view to be useful** depending on their circumstance.
- **About half the participants did not notice the map view on their own** without prompting.
- **Most participants understood that they could tap on a pin to view details in the map, however after that, they didn’t seem to understand overall how to dismiss and view other locations.** Overall there was awkwardness in the way participants interacted with the new map view designs and switched between map and list views.

# Findings

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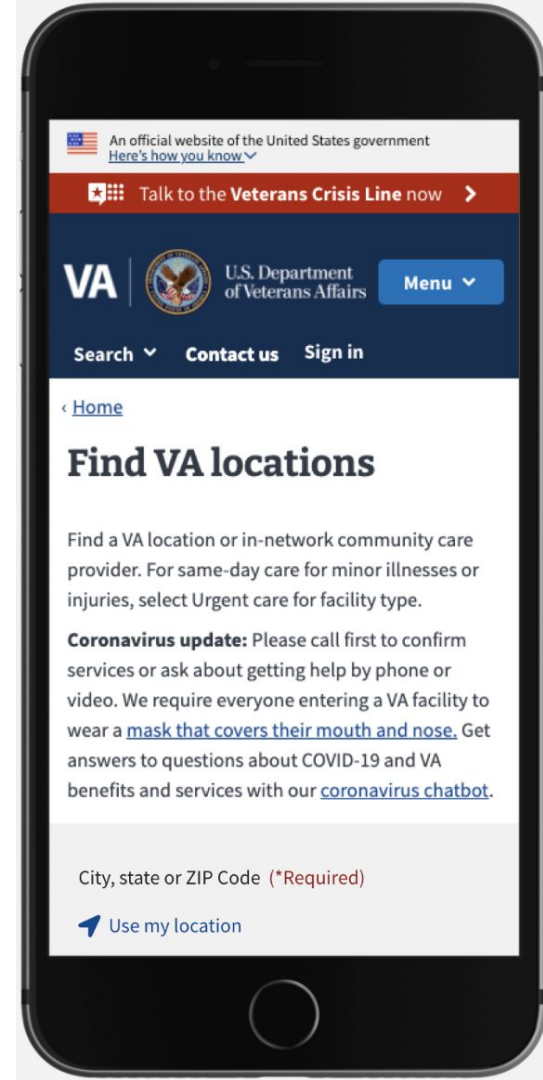


# Previous experience with VA.gov

## Findings

Participants have highly different (previous) experiences with the VA facility locator.

- All participants had used VA.gov at one point.
- 6 of 10 had tried to find a VA facility on VA.gov (mobile or computer). The experience ranged from “...it was a nightmare” to “...it was pretty easy”.



# Use my location feature

## Findings

- Most users (8 of 10) did not click on the *Use My Location* link. They wanted to type in a Zip code or an address. (3 of 10 are hesitant to using the location feature on their phone in general).
  - 3 participants said they saw the *Use my location* feature, but they did not think to use it, as the scenario was about a different location (Washington).
  - 7 of 10 would be comfortable using the location service on VA.gov, but not on all types of websites.
- Needs research: will participants discover and use the location feature in a real life situation? Our task/scenario might have directed their behavior.

Find a VA location or in-network community care provider. For same-day care for minor illnesses or injuries, select Urgent care for facility type.

**Coronavirus update:** Please call first to confirm services or ask about getting help by phone or video. We require everyone entering a VA facility to wear a [mask that covers their mouth and nose](#). Get answers to questions about COVID-19 and VA benefits and services with our [coronavirus chatbot](#).

City, state or ZIP Code (\*Required)

 Use my location

Facility type (\*Required)

Choose a facility type ▼

Service type (\*Required)

Search

# Facility type and Service type

## Findings

- Most participants (8 of 10) had no problems tapping *Facility type* and choosing *VA Health*. 2 of 10 participants choose *Community Care Providers*, thinking this option would give them more local facilities.
- They have no problems tapping on *Service type* and choosing *Optometry*.
- One participant suggested to ask for *Service type* first and then provide all the *Facility types* that had this service.

## Opportunities

- Consider if presenting *Service Type* before *Facility Type* has value. (It is consistent with changes done within the Facilities team.)

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface for finding facilities. At the top, there is a text input field for "City, state or ZIP Code" with a red asterisk and the word "Required" in parentheses. Below this is a blue button with a location pin icon and the text "Use my location". Underneath is a text box containing "82 I St SE, Washington, DC 20003" and a red 'x' icon to clear the text. Below the text box is a dropdown menu for "Facility type" with a red asterisk and "Required" in parentheses; the selected option is "VA health". Below that is another dropdown menu for "Service type" with a red asterisk and "Required" in parentheses; the selected option is "All VA Health Services". A large blue button labeled "Search" is positioned below the dropdowns. At the bottom of the form, there are two tabs: "View List" (which is active) and "View Map". Below the tabs, a text prompt reads: "Please enter a location (street, city, state, or postal code) and facility type, then click search above to find facilities." At the very bottom, there is a dark blue bar with the text "Contact us" and a white plus icon.

City, state or ZIP Code (\*Required)

Use my location

82 I St SE, Washington, DC 20003

Facility type (\*Required)

VA health

Service type (\*Required)

All VA Health Services

Search

View List View Map

Please enter a location (street, city, state, or postal code) and facility type, then click search above to find facilities.

Contact us

# Facility type and Service type 2

## Findings

- 3 of 10 participants used the “x” icon to clear the address field. The rest deleted the previous address manually.
- A few commented that the *Facility* and *Service types* were not alphabetized.

## Opportunities

- Consider making the “x” icon more prominent.
- Consider presenting search results alphabetized.

City, state or ZIP Code (\*Required)

📍 Use my location

82 I St SE, Washington, DC 20003 ✕

Facility type (\*Required)

Choose a facility type ▼

Service type (\*Required)

Search

✓ Choose a facility type

- VA health
- Urgent care
- Community care providers
- Community care pharmacies
- VA benefits
- VA cemeteries
- Vet Centers

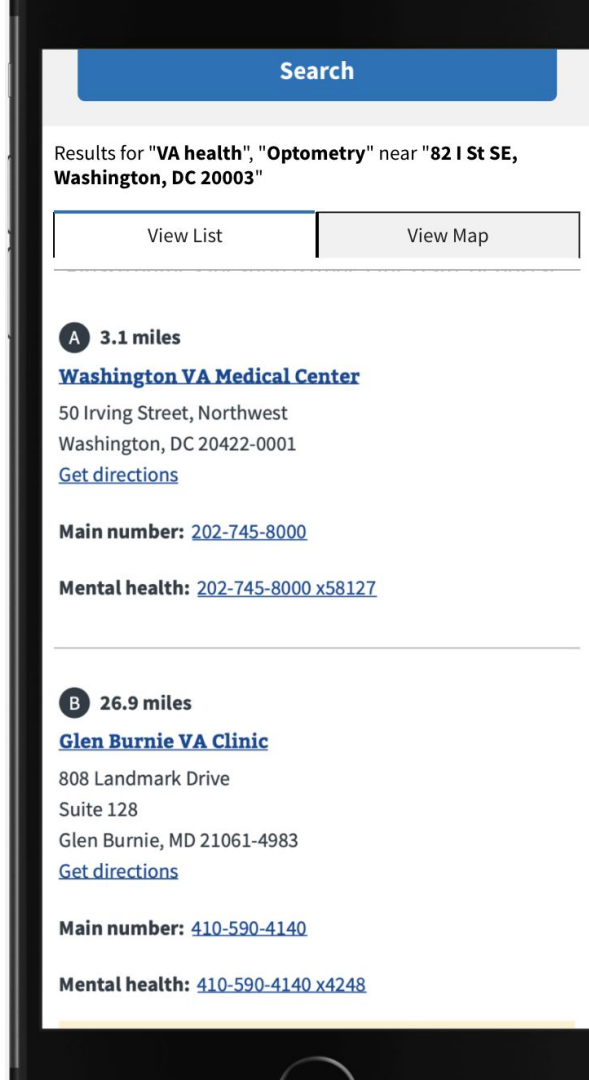
Contact us +

# List View

## Findings

Overall users found the list view to be quick and easy to understand.

- 7 of 10 prefer (or at least prefer to start with) the *List view*. Participants find it to be a quicker, simpler solution.
- Only one participant prefer the *Map view* over the *List view*.
- 5 would potentially use both, especially if they are in an unfamiliar area.
- Three participants value *both* a *List View* and a *Map View*. *List View* - a quick overview of info on facilities and distance. *Map View* - good when in a unfamiliar area, or to see more details about locations and directions.



## List View 2

### Findings

- Two participants did not see that they could scroll down for more results. They suggested a visual clue for scrolling down to see more content.
- A few of the participants wanted to see the hours of operation and the services available right on the info card.

### Opportunities

- Consider if scrolling down to see more facilities is self-evident, or if there is value in adding a visual cue.
- Consider adding hours of operation and services provided should be present on each info card (in *list view* and *map view*).

**C** 34.9 miles

**Baltimore VA Medical Center**

10 North Greene Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201-1524  
[Get directions](#)

**Main number:** [410-605-7000](#)

**Mental health:** [410-605-7000 x57360](#)

**⚠ Limited services and hours**

**D** 38.3 miles

**Loch Raven VA Medical Center**

3901 The Alameda  
Baltimore, MD 21218-2100  
[Get directions](#)

**Main number:** [410-605-7000](#)

**Mental health:** [410-605-7000 x53978](#)

**⚠ Limited services and hours**

Can't find what you're looking for?  
[Try using our other tools to search.](#)

# Map View

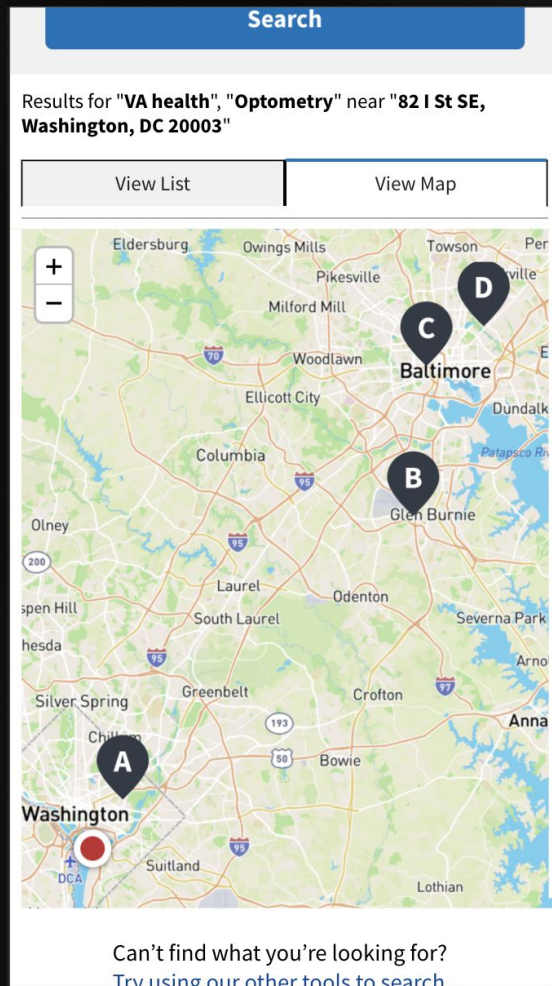
## Findings

Overall participants found the map somewhat confusing to use.

- 4 of 10 users clicked on the map on their own accord.
- 6 out of 10 reported to actually see the *Map View*, but two participants said that they decided against tapping it due to our (Washington) scenario.
- 6 of 10 understood that they could zoom (either by pinching or using the zoom buttons).
- 8 of 10 participants tapped the letters on their own. Two needed a prompt.

## Opportunities

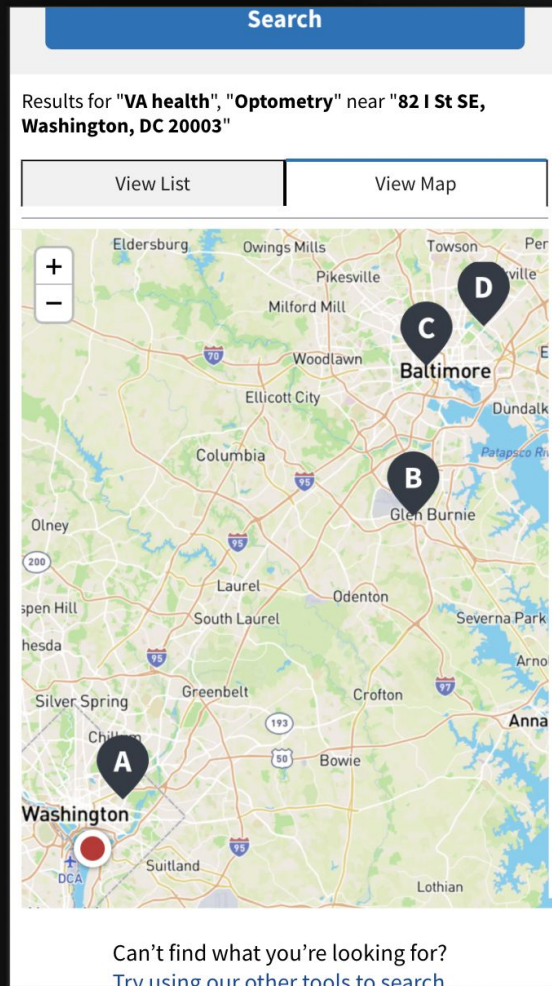
- Consider making tabs for *Map view* and *List view* more prominent.



# Map View 2

## Findings

- Most participants would travel 25-50 miles to a facility.
- A couple of participants would travel up to 100 miles if the appointment was important enough.
- People in rural areas willing to travel further than people in a major city.
- Most participants think the map should show facilities between 20-75 miles from their location.
  - Participants in rural areas prefer a higher number (up to 100 miles).





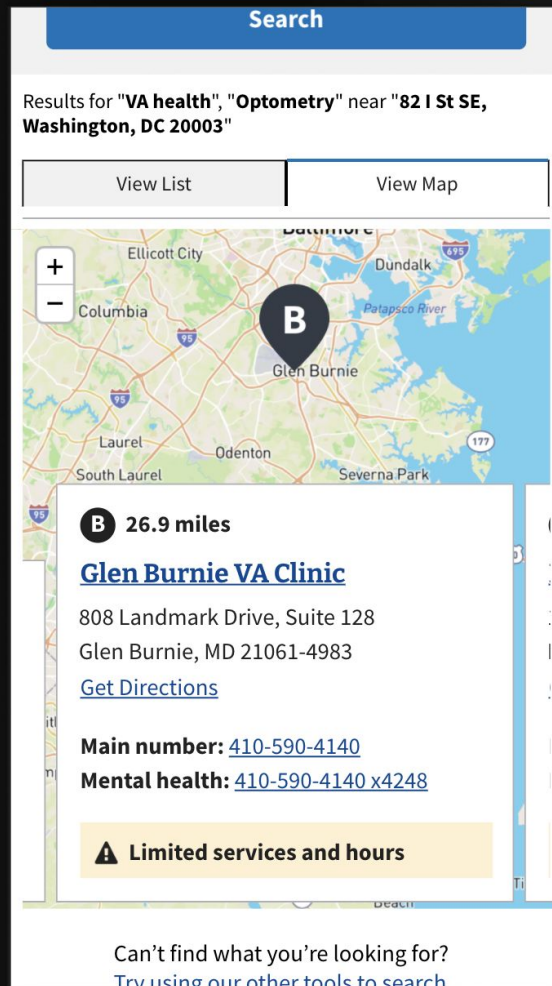
# Map View 3

## Findings

- Most participants (7 of 10) did not understand they could swipe right or left for the next facility. A couple of users suggested a visual clue for swiping.
- A few participants would like to see the hours of operation on the infocard, and perhaps also services provided (or at least click to see this info).
- 6 of 10 participants click outside the info card to close it. One closed it by clicking on *View Map* tab. Two closed it in s more or less random fashion.
- One participant suggested an “x” icon on the info cards for closing them.

## Opportunities

- Make swiping feature as well as “close the card” action more discoverable.
- Integrate info cards and map better. (See Google Maps and AirBnB).



# Research: Next Steps

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## Next steps:

- Additional research and design thinking needed:
  - Is the *Use my location* link prominent enough?
    - If users do not want to use it, what is the reasoning for this?
  - How can *Map View* be redesigned to be more intuitive?
    - How can the info cards in the View Map page be integrated better?
  - How can the *List View* and the *Map View* better support one another/work together?

# End

Questions? Email: [Laurel.Lawrence@adhocteam.us](mailto:Laurel.Lawrence@adhocteam.us), [shawna@adhocteam.us](mailto:shawna@adhocteam.us), [cvalla@governmentcio.com](mailto:cvalla@governmentcio.com)

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