

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

DRAFT

Check-in Remote Discovery Research

Discovery Readout

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Background & Goals

Background

Our goal is to improve the Veteran check-in process for medical appointments by providing a digital option on va.gov.

This research is to understand Veterans' feelings, pain points, and value-gained by using the current ecosystem of check-in methods for medical appointments. There is a particular emphasis on understanding the current kiosk method, because it is being replaced by a digital check-in solution on va.gov. However, feedback from all check-in methods will inform the digital check-in solution.



Current kiosks

Research questions

- How do Veterans feel when interacting with each check-in method (focus heavily on kiosk workflows)?
 - How do Veterans feel about moving away from using kiosks?
 - How receptive are Veterans to utilizing other check-in methods?
- What are the Veteran-specified benefits for each method (focus heavily on kiosk workflows)?
- What are the Veteran-specified pain points for each method (focus heavily on kiosk workflows)?
 - Do any particular kiosk workflows cause more confusion or pain points for Veterans than others?
- How do non-sighted Veterans check-in?
 - What are their experiences with the current kiosk system?
 - We didn't end up talking to any non-sighted Veterans.

Hypotheses to be tested

- The VA kiosks are a familiar, simple experience for Veterans. Experience with the other methods will vary.
- Authentication could be a pain point for Veterans within the new check-in workflow due to how they currently authenticate when using a kiosk.
- The kiosks are not accessible for Veterans, who are non-sighted.

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Methodology

Method and detailed research questions

We conducted 11 remote moderated tests via Zoom using the Perigean contract. The Veterans will be asked a series of interview questions about their check-in experiences. Certain visuals will be presented in order to facilitate discussions on particular kiosk-based check-in workflows and methods.

The complete conversation guide with all the detailed research questions asked can be found on the [VA's GitHUB](#).

Who we spoke with: 11 Veterans

Gender

Male: 10

Female: 1

Education

Unknown: 2

Some college: 4

Associate's/trade/vocational: 2

Bachelor's: 3

Age

25-34: 3

45-54: 0

55-64: 1

65-74: 5

75 or older: 2

All participants must have had at least one:

- **in-person medical appointment at a VA facility within the last 6 months.**
- **in-person medical appointment at a VA facility before COVID.**

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Research Findings

Key Findings

1. Talking to VA staff members was the most preferred and used currently available check in method for in-person appointments.
2. Checking in with a VA staff member can offer valuable human interactions for Veterans, but Veterans are sometimes made to feel unimportant or insulted during these interactions.
3. Using a kiosk is quick and easy as long as the machine isn't turned off or broken.
4. When verifying their identity at the kiosk, more Veterans utilized their VHIC card than entered their SSN and date of birth.
5. More participants received their medications by mail and used the kiosk to check in for lab tests than other methods.
6. Talking to a staff member to update their contact or next of kin information was the most cited method.
7. Kiosks were the most mentioned method to file for beneficiary travel mileage.

Key Findings

8. Lab workflows vary from facility to facility. The most mentioned process was when the Veteran received a ticket, then the number on the ticket is called.
9. For lab tests, digital check-in solutions are preferred, wait time vary, and sometimes orders are missing.
10. Pharmacy workflows vary greatly from facility to facility.
11. At the pharmacy, wait times are long, digital check-in solutions are preferred, and sometimes orders are missing.
12. Most participants never updated their contact or next of kin information before. Even the participants who had experience updating this information talked about these tasks in a separate manner from check-in.
13. Veterans have multiple options when filing for beneficiary travel mileage: kiosk, travel office, online, and automatic reimbursement.

Key Findings

14. Veterans reported abandoning their attempts to file for travel mileage due to difficulties with multiple filing methods.
15. Overall, checking in for virtual appointments was described as a pleasant and very quick experience.
16. When asked about check-in experiences at other health care systems, Veterans unanimously wished those systems had check-in processes like the VA.
17. Digital (*particularly mobile phone solutions*) and in-person options are both extremely valuable to different types of Veterans.
18. Most Veterans were interested in a light-weight way of verifying their identity when checking in, such as the last 4 digits of their social security number and/or date of birth.
19. Half of the participants were interested in receiving notifications letting them know that they could now check in.

Talking to VA staff members was the most preferred and used currently available check in method for in-person appointments.

In-person

7 - preferred method
11 - have used

Kiosk

4 - preferred method
10 - have used

Text Message

0 - preferred method
0 - have used
(1 - heard about it)

11 participants total


Checking in with a VA staff member can offer valuable human interactions for Veterans, but Veterans are sometimes made to feel unimportant or insulted during these interactions.

Benefits	Pain Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Human interaction<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>“I like the human interaction, because I don’t get it elsewhere.”</i>● Friendly, familiar faces can help reduce anxiety<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>“If there is someone I know there, it helps bring my anxiety down, because I know them and they know me.” - Veteran with PTSD</i>● Can be short and to the point with only a few questions to answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bad customer service experiences (4 Veterans)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>“They act like we are imposing...it is insulting and demeaning.”</i>○ <i>“They seem to be on the phone all the time, so you stand and wait to ask questions.”</i>○ <i>“Once in awhile they look around and see someone standing there, but they don’t do anything.”</i>○ <i>“How they speak to people is condescending.”</i>● Lines/wait time to check-in

Using a kiosk is quick and easy as long as the machine isn't turned off or broken.

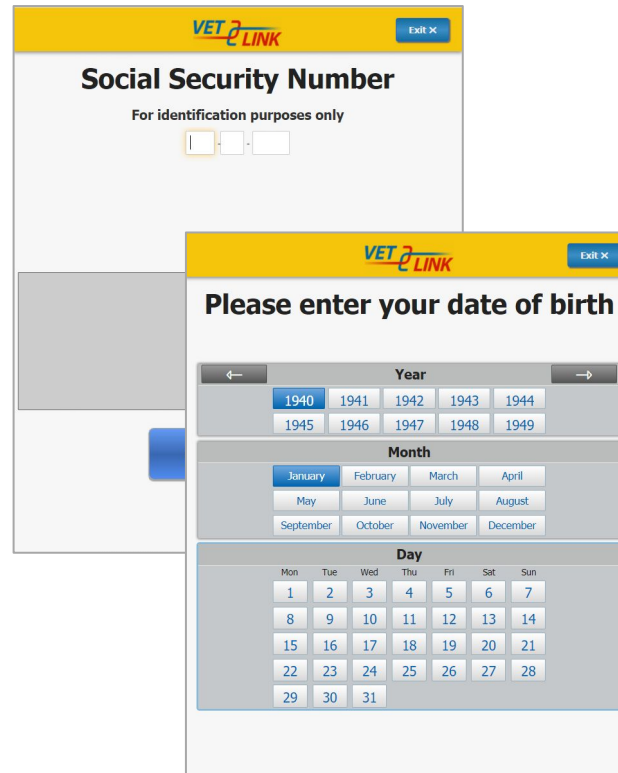
Benefits	Pain Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Quick and easy<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>"I don't think it could be any easier."</i>○ <i>"It is quicker than standing in line."</i>○ <i>"It is idiot proof."</i>● Don't have to talk to someone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Are turned off or broken (4 Veterans)● Directs the Veteran to talk to a staff member at the end after completing most of the screens (3 Veterans)● Concern that the staff/providers don't know they are waiting after checking-in● Worried about entering personal information in a public area

When verifying their identity at the kiosk, more Veterans utilized their VHIC card than entered their SSN and date of birth.

The image shows the 'Welcome to VetLink' screen. At the top, there is a yellow header with the 'VET LINK' logo and a 'Back' button. Below the header, the text reads 'Welcome to VetLink' and 'Please swipe or scan your VHIC to check in'. In the center, there is an illustration of a hand holding a card over a scanner. Below this, there is a blue button that says 'I do not have my VHIC'. At the bottom, there is a grey box with the text 'By using this kiosk you agree to the Terms of Use of this Government system'.

Used VHIC card: 6

- It's easy.
- *"I have it on me; its the only time I have ever used it."*

The image shows two overlapping screens from the VetLink kiosk. The top screen is titled 'Social Security Number' and has the subtitle 'For identification purposes only'. It features three input boxes for the SSN. The bottom screen is titled 'Please enter your date of birth' and contains three selection grids: 'Year' (1940-1949), 'Month' (January-December), and 'Day' (1-31). Each grid has a 'Back' button on the left and an 'Exit X' button on the right.

Entered SSN/DOB: 3

- *"I don't have a card."*

9 participants total

More participants received their medications by mail and used the kiosk to check in for lab tests than other methods

Task	Method Used	# of participants
Lab tests	Kiosk	5
	Staff member	3
	Ticket machine, then staff member	1
	Computer	1
Pharmacy	Mail (<i>2 use MyHealthVet to request refills</i>)	7
		2
	Kiosk	2
	Staff member	2
	Ticket machine	

Talking to a staff member to update their contact or next of kin information was the most cited method.

Task	Method Used	# of participants
Contact information	Staff member	3
	MyHealtheVet	2
	Phone call	1
Next of kin	Staff member	1
	Kiosk	1
	MyHealtheVet	1

Kiosks were the most mentioned method to file for beneficiary travel mileage.

Task	Method Used	# of participants
Beneficiary travel mileage	Kiosk	4
	Paper at the travel office	2
	Website	1
	Filed automatically	1

Lab workflows vary from facility to facility. The most mentioned process was when the Veteran receives a ticket, then the number on the ticket is called.

Workflows

01

- Check-in at kiosk or with staff member, then receive a ticket with a number on it
- Number called complete the actual lab tests

02

- Check-in at kiosk or with staff member
- Name called to tell them why you are there
- Name called again to complete the actual lab tests

03

- Check-in at kiosk or with staff member
- Name called complete the actual lab tests

04

- Check-in at a computer
- Name called complete the actual lab tests

For lab tests, digital check in solutions are preferred, wait times vary, and sometimes orders are missing.

Benefits	Pain Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The ticketing system was deemed easy and appropriate by most participants.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>“The number was big and the type was large.”</i>● Kiosks work well when there is a line at in-person check in.● Fast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 3 participants mentioned that the orders never transferred from their provider’s office to the lab.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The Veterans would wait for the lab to contact the provider’s office to get the orders.○ On a positive note, this seemed to be a quick process.● Long wait time

Pharmacy workflows vary greatly from facility to facility.

Workflows

01

- Took a number from a ticketing machine (non-kiosk)
- Called up to tell the staff member what they needed filled
- Called up again when the medication was ready

02

- Called in prescription ahead of time
- Took a number
- Picked up the script when called

03

- Wait in line to talk to a staff member
- Called up by name or notified via a monitor in the waiting area when medications were ready

04

- The private room to talk to the pharmacist had an indicator on the door. Red meant the room was occupied.
- Veterans just enter the room when the indicator is green.

At the pharmacy, wait times are long, digital check-in solutions are preferred, and sometimes orders are missing.

Benefits	Pain Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The ticketing system was deemed easy and appropriate by most participants.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>“It keeps it orderly.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Long wait time● Sometimes orders were never transferred from the provider’s office to the pharmacy.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The Veterans would wait for the pharmacy to contact the provider’s office to get the orders.○ On a positive note, this seemed to be a quick process.

Most participants never updated their contact or next of kin information before. Even the participants who had experience updating this information talked about these tasks in a separate manner from check in.

- Quote that summarizes a lot of the feedback:
“My next of kin hasn’t changed in forever.”
- Contact information was updated more often than next of kin.
- If needed, many participants stating that updating this information via digital methods would be convenient.
 - They were mostly talking about updating online, but a few participants meant via a kiosk.
 - Other participants saw this as too many clicks to do on a kiosk.

Veterans have multiple options when filing for beneficiary travel mileage: kiosk, travel office, online, and automatic reimbursement.

Different workflows

01

- Used the kiosk
- Sometimes told to see a staff member at the end.

02

- Goes to the travel office
- Fills out the paper form

03

- Fills out online.

04

- Told that reimbursement was automatically filed following the appointment.

Veterans reported abandoning their attempts to file for travel mileage due to difficulties with multiple filing methods.

- Questions on the online form were confusing or instructions weren't clear.
 - *"I wondered if I provided the right information."*
- 2 Veterans mentioned abandoning the kiosk workflow when it told them that they needed to speak with a staff member.
- Other Veterans said they won't go to the travel office to file, because it can be in a different building.
- While the kiosk workflow was considered fast and convenient, the kiosk were often not working.

Overall, checking in for virtual appointments was described as a pleasant and very quick experience.

- For video appointments, Veterans mostly “checked in” by clicking a link in an email.
- For phone call appointments, Veterans mostly stated that they providers called them.
- For 4 Veterans, a staff member, such as a nurse, called them right before their appointment to ask them questions about pain level, suicidal thoughts, and more.

When asked about check in experiences at other health care systems, Veterans unanimously wished those systems had check in processes like the VA.

- Veterans with experience at other health systems explained that their check in processes were much more complicated than the VAs.
 - They took longer, asked more questions, and involved more paperwork.
 - These differences were the reason one Veteran stated *“I choose to use the VA.”*
- Veterans liked the variety of check in methods available at the VA.
- Multiple Veterans did think checking for other insurance policies and answering COVID questions should be a part of the pre-check in workflow.

Digital (*particularly mobile phone solutions*) and in-person options are both extremely valuable to different types of Veterans.

Preferred check in method	# of participants
Mobile phone (general)	5
● App or website	4
● Text message	1
Kiosk	4
Staff member	3

- Three Veterans wanted the ability to complete as many tasks as possible ahead of time from home on their computers.
- Two Veterans, who were interested in a mobile phone solution, were worried about the cell reception and WiFi, in order to check-in via a mobile phone.

Most Veterans were interested in a light-weight way of verifying their identity when checking in, such as the last 4 digits of their social security number and/or date of birth.

Preferred authentication method	# of participants
Last 4 digits of their social security number and/or date of birth*	5
MyHealthVet log in	3
Fingerprint	1
VHIC	1

*One Veteran suggested name instead of date of birth.

Half of the participants were interested in receiving notifications letting them know that they could now check in.

- The number of Veterans interested in different notification types varied.
 - Text: 3
 - Email: 2
 - Push notification: 2

Recommendations and Next Steps

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- ????