

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Financial Status Report

SME & VSO discovery readout

Workshop takeaways

SMEs see many errors in the form info section whereas VSOs found it straightforward

1. Either SSN or File no. is required; SSN is preferred
2. Veterans don't know what all the debt resolution options mean and often choose multiple
3. The debt resolution options are processed in a specific order, but that order varied between folks we spoke with

OMB Approved No. 2900-0165
Respondent Burden: 1 hour

Department of Veterans Affairs		FINANCIAL STATUS REPORT
1. SOCIAL SECURITY NO.	2. FILE NO.	3. SPECIFY WHY YOU ARE COMPLETING THIS FORM (Waiver, Compromise, Payment Plan or Other)
(Type or print all entries. If more space is needed for any item, continue under Section VII, Additional Data, Item 36 or attach separate sheet)		
<p>PRIVACY ACT INFORMATION: The information you furnish on this form is almost always used to determine if you are eligible for waiver of a debt, for the acceptance of a compromise offer or for a payment plan. Disclosure is voluntary. However, if the information is not furnished, your eligibility for waiver, compromise or a payment plan may be affected. The responses you submit are confidential and protected from unauthorized disclosure by 38 U.S.C. 5701. The information may be disclosed outside the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) only when authorized by the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended. The routine uses for which VA may disclose the information can be found in VA systems of records, including 58VA21/22, Compensation, Pension, Education and Rehabilitation Records-VA, and 58VA244, Accounts Receivable Records-VA. VA systems of records and alterations to the systems are published in the Federal Register. Any information provided by you, including your Social Security Number, may be used in computer matching programs conducted in connection with any proceeding for the collection of an amount owed by virtue of your participation in any benefit program administered by VA.</p> <p>RESPONDENT BURDEN: VA may not conduct or sponsor, and respondent is not required to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB Control Number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. If you have comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, call 1-800-827-0648 for mailing information on where to send your comments.</p>		

Both SMEs and VSOs think some info in the employment section isn't necessary to process the FSR

1. Many Veterans that VSOs assist are unmarried and retired or unemployed
2. 'Family' info is mostly used to understand and rationalize income and expenses
3. SMEs stated it's most important to know the Veteran's current employment status rather than job details

Section I - Personal Data

SECTION I - PERSONAL DATA			
4. FIRST-MIDDLE-LAST NAME OF PERSON		5. ADDRESS (Number and street or rural route, City or P.O. Box, State, and ZIP Code)	
6. TELEPHONE NO. (Include Area Code)	7. DATE OF BIRTH (MM-DD-YYYY)		8. MARITAL STATUS <input type="checkbox"/> MARRIED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT MARRIED
9. NAME OF SPOUSE		10. AGE(S) OF OTHER DEPENDENTS	
COMPLETE RECORD OF EMPLOYMENT FOR YOURSELF AND SPOUSE DURING PAST 2 YEARS			
KIND OF JOB	DATES (MM-YYYY)		NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER
	FROM	TO	
11. YOUR EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE			
		PRESENT TIME	
12. YOUR SPOUSE'S EMPLOYMENT			
		PRESENT TIME	

Veterans frequently miscalculate their total net income and often can't complete all fields

1. Multiple VSOs and SMEs thought it would be easier for Veterans to include their net income without payroll deductions
2. Veterans usually know their spouse's take-home pay but not the amounts for payroll deduction
3. Most VSOs suggest the Veteran put the current VA benefit amount they're receiving if benefits are being offset

Section II - Income

SECTION II - INCOME		
AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME	SELF	SPOUSE
13. MONTHLY GROSS SALARY (Before payroll deductions)	\$	\$
14. PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS		
A. FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL INCOME TAXES		
B. RETIREMENT		
C. SOCIAL SECURITY		
D. OTHER (Specify)	Child support - \$230 Garnishment - \$320	
E. TOTAL DEDUCTIONS (Items 14A through 14D)		
15. NET TAKE HOME PAY (Subtract Item 14E from Item 13)		
16. VA BENEFITS, SOCIAL SECURITY, OR OTHER INCOME (Specify source)		
17. TOTAL MONTHLY NET INCOME (Item 15 plus Item 16)	\$	\$

There are multiple fields relating to expenses that Veterans struggle to complete

1. Veterans often include “other living expenses” that should be included in a different section, which causes duplication
2. VSOs expressed that it would be beneficial if examples of “other living expenses” were included
3. Veterans often don’t complete Line 22 because that information comes from the second page

Section III - Expenses

SECTION III - EXPENSES	
AVERAGE MONTHLY EXPENSES	AMOUNT
18. RENT OR MORTGAGE PAYMENT	\$
19. FOOD	
20. UTILITIES AND HEAT	
21. OTHER LIVING EXPENSES	
22. MONTHLY PAYMENTS ON INSTALLMENT CONTRACTS AND OTHER DEBTS <i>(Include amount from Section VI, Line 34I - Column E.)</i>	
23. TOTAL MONTHLY EXPENSES	\$

Veterans put amounts that they can pay on a monthly basis that can negatively impact their financial situation

1. **Veterans sometimes write a higher amount in 24B than in 24A, and will need to contact DMC for an adjustment if it was a mistake**
2. **Some Veterans will put \$0 in 24B even though DMC has a minimum threshold for the amount Veterans can pay**
3. **VSOs and SMEs don't assist Veterans in determining an amount the Veteran should pay on a monthly basis**

SECTION IV - DISCRETIONARY INCOME	
24A. NET MONTHLY INCOME LESS EXPENSES <i>(Item 17 less Item 23)</i>	24B. AMOUNT YOU CAN PAY ON A MONTHLY BASIS TOWARD YOUR DEBT
\$	\$

Providing assets is a negative action for Veterans, because this information is essentially counted against them

1. Many Veterans have anxiety with the 'Automobiles' section, and are afraid they will be asked to sell their car; cars only matter when there are very expensive or excessive
2. Bonds and "other assets" aren't commonly included
3. Amounts in this section are usually estimated; cars are looked up in KBB

SECTION V - ASSETS					
25. CASH IN BANK (<i>Checking and savings accounts, building and loan accounts, etc.</i>)			\$	29. U.S. SAVINGS BONDS (<i>Current Value</i>)	\$
26. CASH ON HAND				30. STOCKS AND OTHER BONDS (<i>Current Value</i>)	
27. AUTOMOBILES (<i>Resale value</i>)				31. REAL ESTATE OWNED (<i>Resale value</i>)	
MAKE	YEAR	MODEL		32. OTHER ASSETS (<i>Specify below</i>)	
28. TRAILERS, BOATS, CAMPERS (<i>Resale value</i>)			\$	33. TOTAL ASSETS ▶	\$

It's common for expenses in 'Installment contracts and other debts' to be duplicated from Section 3

1. Month and year of debt help to determine if an irresponsible purchase was made after learning about their VA debt; it is often difficult for Veterans to get this information when debts are older
2. Addresses aren't necessary
3. Most Veterans know the amount owed or amount due monthly, but not the original amount
4. Amount past due helps determine if the Veteran is having a hard time paying other debts.

SECTION VI - INSTALLMENT CONTRACTS AND OTHER DEBTS						
NOTE: Show below ALL debts which you are required to pay in regular monthly installments, such as a car, television, washing machine, payments to dealers, banks, finance companies, repayment of money borrowed for any purpose, doctor bills, hospital bills, etc. DO NOT INCLUDE LIVING EXPENSES.						
	NAME AND ADDRESS OF CREDITOR (A)	DATE AND PURPOSE OF DEBT (B)	ORIGINAL AMOUNT OF DEBT (C)	UNPAID BALANCE (D)	AMOUNT DUE MONTHLY (E)	AMOUNT PAST DUE (If any) (F)
34A.			\$	\$	\$	\$
34B.						

Notifying VA about a bankruptcy is very important, but not common

1. If VA is notified about a bankruptcy, then it increases the form's processing time since it must be sent to the bankruptcy department
2. None of the VSOs we spoke to were aware of an additional letter explaining financial situation for waiver requests and compromise offers, instead recommended including that info in box 36.
3. VSOs suggest Veterans submit a 21-4138 if providing more information about their situation

SECTION VII - ADDITIONAL DATA		
35A. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ADJUDICATED BANKRUPT? IF SO AND VA OR A MORTGAGE COMPANY WAS INVOLVED, PLEASE SEND ALL PERTINENT DOCUMENTATION <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (If "Yes," complete Items 35B through 35D)		
35B. DATE DISCHARGED FROM BANKRUPTCY (MM-DD-YYYY)	35C. LOCATION OF COURT	35D. DOCKET NO. (If known)
36. USE THIS SPACE AND ADDITIONAL SHEETS, IF NECESSARY, TO SUPPLY ANY PERTINENT INFORMATION AND TO CONTINUE YOUR ANSWER TO PREVIOUS ITEM NUMBER(S) TO WHICH YOUR COMMENTS APPLY		

Electronic signatures are common with submissions, but the type accepted varies

1. Some SMEs stated that they'd accept signatures that were typed while others didn't think that was acceptable
2. Veterans could experience challenges getting their spouse's signature if they're estranged, incarcerated, deployed, or out of the country
3. One VSO stated that if the Veteran has to go home to get their spouse's signature they'll have them come back in rather than mail the form

SECTION VIII - APPLICANT CERTIFICATIONS - REQUIRED			
37A. YOUR SIGNATURE <i>(Required)</i>	37B. DATE SIGNED	38A. SIGNATURE OF SPOUSE <i>(Required)</i>	38B. DATE SIGNED
PENALTY: The law provides severe penalties which include fine or imprisonment, or both, for the willful submission of any statement or evidence of a material fact, knowing it to be false.			

Recommendations

Recommendations

- 1. Automatically calculate financial figures to eliminate errors**
- 2. Categorize the form's fields/sections into intuitive buckets to more easily guide Veterans through the form**
- 3. Include a list of suggestions for common living expenses that the DMC expects Veterans to include in their submission**
- 4. Provide descriptions of each debt resolution option and the impact each selection may have on the form's processing order**
- 5. Potentially pull in the Veteran's VA benefit information so they don't need to search for it themselves**