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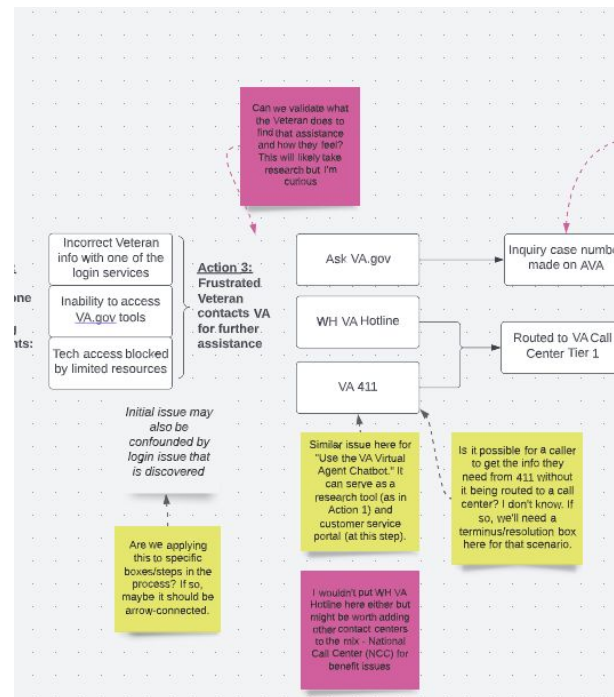
# VA.gov Caller-User Journey Support Research Readout

# Research Goals

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We wanted **to learn** the following from this research:

- Understand the pain points of VA.gov users who use Tier 1 Call Center systems for resolving VA.gov issues
- Discover insights and task blockers for VA.gov users who have their issues routed from Tier 1 to Tier 2



View from Call Center team's [User Journey map](#)



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# Hypothesis

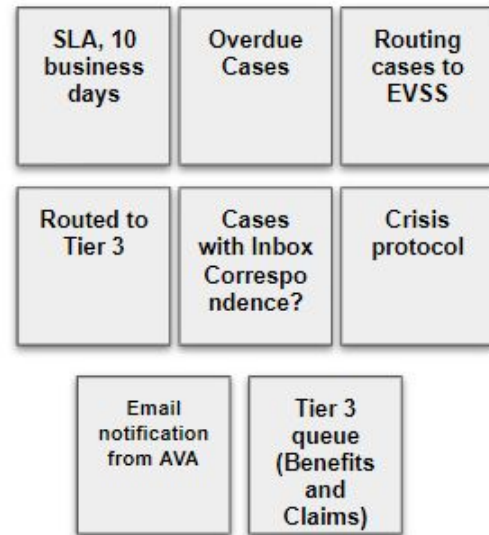
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Our hypothesis is that VA.gov users who **cannot complete an initial inquiry on VA.gov will most often call the Tier 1 Call center** in hope of finding a specific resolution.

We want to understand why they are opting to call first, rather than using VA tools such as AskVA.gov.

We also believe that **users are being given unrealistic expectations as to how long it will take for their issues to be resolved**, which leads to frustration on their part.

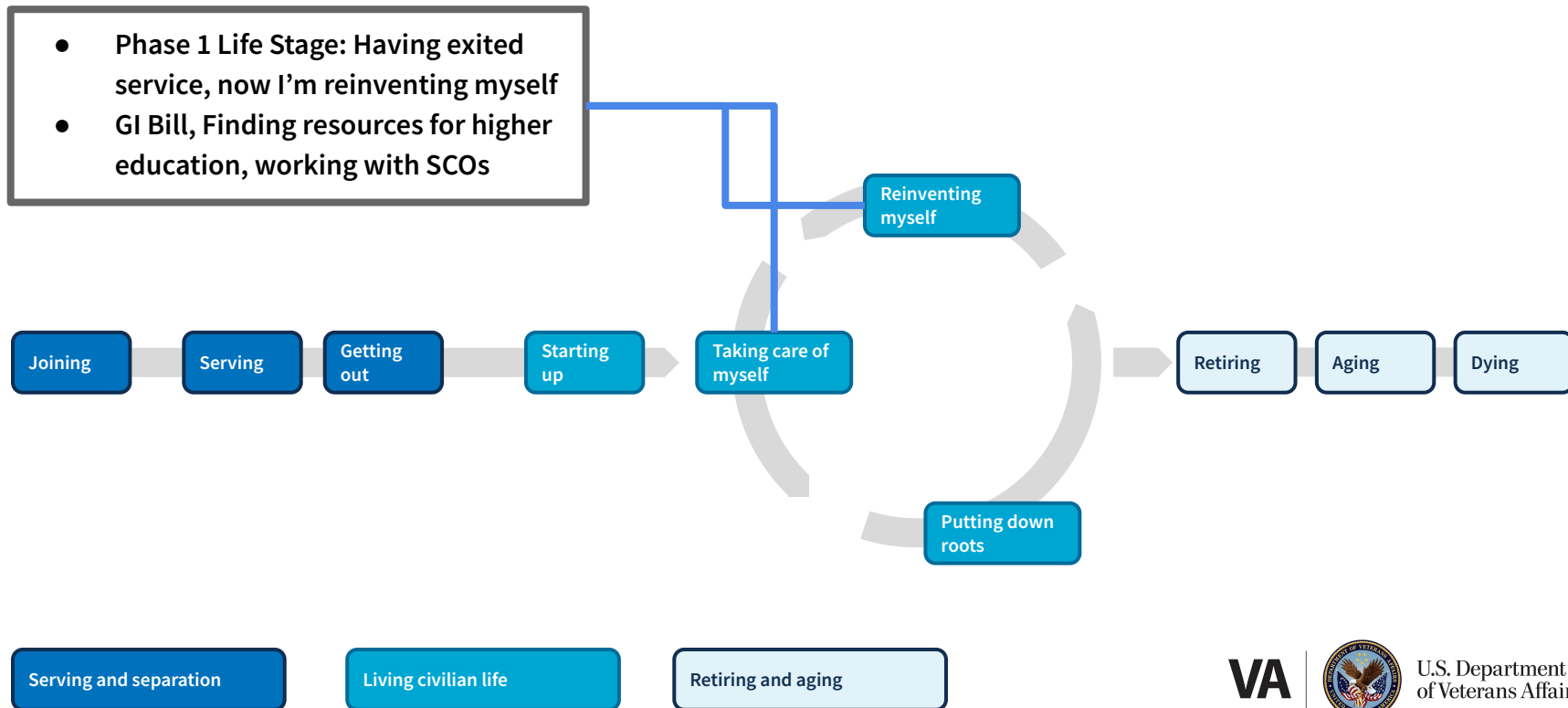
## Tracking and Service



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# How This Research Maps to the Veteran Journey

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# OCTO-DE Goals That This Research Supports

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Supported

Not supported

Veterans and their families can apply for all benefits online

Veterans and their families can find a single, authoritative source of information

Veterans and their families trust the security, accuracy, and relevancy of VA.gov

Veterans can manage their health services online

VFS teams can build and deploy high-quality products for Veterans on the Platform

Logged-in users have a personalized experience, with relevant and time-saving features

Logged-in users can update their personal information easily and instantly

Logged-in users can easily track applications, claims, or appeals online

Measures to increase

Completion rate of online transactions

Percent of applications submitted online (versus paper)

Veteran satisfaction with VA.gov benefit use and enrollment across all business lines

Benefit value (in \$) delivered from online applications or transactions

Number of VA.gov users as a function of total Veteran population

Usage of digital, self-service tools

Measures to decrease

Time to successful completion and submission of online transactions

Time to process online applications (versus paper)

Call center call volume, wait time, and time to resolution

Time from online benefit discovery to benefit delivery

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# Participant Demographics

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VA.gov users who used Tier 1 call center services -  
Recruitment plan (with Perigean):

Request for 10 participants

- At least 1 Assistive Tech (AT) users
- At least 2 or 3 Rural location based
- At least 2 or 3 women, non-Caucasian
- At least 1 or 2 non-binary, non-cisgender
- At least 3 or 4 mobile users of VA.gov

Example 1, Needs more research															
# of participants	7	# of no shows						1	# of AT users						0
Category	Target	Study	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
General	Based on current VA statistics														
<a href="#">Age 55-64+</a>	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1					
<a href="#">Cognitive Disability</a>	4	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0					
<a href="#">Mobile user</a>	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0	0				
<a href="#">Rural</a>	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
<a href="#">No degree</a>	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
<a href="#">Immigrant origin</a>	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0	0				
<a href="#">Women</a>	1	5	1	1	1	1	0	0	N	1	0				
<a href="#">Expat (living abroad)</a>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Race	Targets based on VA's projected statistics														
Black	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	1	0				
Latinx	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Biracial	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Asian	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Native	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
LGBTQ+	LGBTQ+ Veterans are 5 times as likely to have PTSD														
Gay, lesbian, or bisexual	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Transgender	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Nonbinary, gender fluid, ge	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				

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# User Interviews Method: Zoom

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All user tests were conducted on Zoom. There was 1 pilot, then 8 sessions of 30 to 45 minutes each.

Why did Veterans use the call center and what causes Veterans' frustrations when calling into a call center. How did this affect service from Tier 2 and Tier 3 teams?

- For VA.gov users, what were the most prominent pain points in their journey from not finding their answer on VA.gov to calling the Tier 1 Call Centers?
- Are the current expectations for VA.gov users to have their issues resolved or reviewed set correctly by the Tier 1 Call Center agent?

## Warm-up Questions (Optional) - 5 minutes

Before we look at the website, let's start with a few warm-up questions.

- What is your first name?
- When was the last time you called our VA Call Center?
- Can you give an estimate of time for that engagement with the call center?

## Main Questions 30 -40 minutes

- Tell me about a time when you last encountered a problem on VA.gov? Follow up: And what steps do you take to contact the VA call center about your issue?
- How long did you expect for your most recent issue or question to be resolved, when you made your first call about it? How many calls with the Call Center has taken place for this issue?
- Can you describe in a few sentences the issue? Were you in mobile or on a desktop? Follow up: Can you recreate the issue that you had on VA.gov?
- Did you understand the timeframe in which you will receive an overall resolution to your issue?
- Which kind of communication do you rely on the most (phone, email, SMS, assistance with aide, or other)?
- As of this interview, what is the current status of your this issue being handled by the T1 Call Center (In-progress, Rerouted or Resolved)?
- Have there been any blockers/ difficulties in getting services through your VA call center in your past experience?
- Have you received a resolution for your issue and did you feel you ended up with a satisfactory answer? Yes, No? Please explain.
- Please describe your overall experience when communicating with a VA call center of your issue?

## Post-Task Interview - 5-10 minutes

- Is there anything about your past experience with VA Call center services, that we didn't cover, but you would like to share?
- Do you have any questions for me or any other feedback you would like to share?



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# Initial Findings

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1. Total of 8 sessions (4 women, 4 men).
2. Two participants stated that they *use assistive technology for accessing VA.gov*. Older participants (60-plus) reported **general satisfaction** with resolutions provided by their Tier 1 call rep.
3. Five of 8 had their issues updated by the Tier 1 rep as resolved. Two participants stated they did **not receive status updates.**
4. One participant stated that they had multiple status updates and was told that they would receive an official VA mail regarding their case but had not received it by the time of the interview.
5. At the end of the interviews, some participants praised services previous Tier 1 Call Center reps provided, noting that there was direct follow up (i.e., urgent care and facility appointments). Some also mentioned the VA Android app and Videoconnect service as being “extremely helpful.”



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# Key Findings

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1. Seven participants had call sessions that required rerouting as prescribed by the Tier 1 rep, and described those sessions as taking 10 minutes or more.
2. Five of the 8 participants stated they experienced blockers or frustration with the Tier 1 call rep. Most stated they believe this was due to the rep's "inability to handle their case or (to provide a) comparable level of service from their assigned facility."
3. All participants stated, for previous issues, that they relied heavily on call center services or SMS communication.
4. Unless a caller's issue was related to sign in or 2FA (Two-Factor Authentication), participants noted that an estimated time of issue resolution was almost never given.

# Recommendations and Next Steps

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1. Nearly all participants stated they relied heavily on SMS/calling to escalate their issues. This seems to establish more trust than seeing status updates on VA.gov. Direct SMS messaging could be a useful engagement tool to resolve certain categories (2FA, VA.gov profile errors, etc).
2. The Platform Call Center team handles a variety of Tier 2 escalated cases where callers have been frustrated about being rerouted. Research on SMS messaging for Tier 2 cases should be done to see if it can address trust blockers (bad experience on VA.gov, unable to search, no details on VA.gov status updates).

## NEXT STEPS:

- Revision of VA.gov Caller-User Journey map
- Propose follow-up research plan with Tier 1 Call Center

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**Thank you for your time.**

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