**Benefits Taxonomy Conversation Guide**

**Main Interview**

**Warm-Up**

1. For how long have you been out of active duty military? I got out in March of 2011 and then in the reserves until 2017.
2. Where, geographically, are you based right now? I live in a small city its bult up but its not anywhere near a city, close by stores and hospitals. It’s a nice mix.
3. Can you tell me about a time you’ve utilized a VA service? I used telehealth services on Tuesdays in in therapy for MST which is great because the closet va is in Marietta and each time I go I have a sexist comment made so I don’t need to worry about parking. I have used my GI bill to go to Georgia and then went to state to get my pharmacy technician . I had no idea how to sue it and it was effortless and I received updated for what I am charged for and not charged for then in August I have started getting disability for PTST and Tinnitus. I am considered 70 percent with that.
4. Are you familiar with VA.gov, and if so, what do you typically use it for? I am. I use it for my HealtheVet and then I use it for filing claims. I found out about the va app to so I added my dependents. I am not very tech savvy and I was able to get through it so that was nice. If I didn’t know what it was they could send me a text to get in. even if I had issues I could find a way to access what I needed to.

**Scenario 1 - Category Name Evaluation**

Va loan would be helpful

Disability claims, helpful

Ebenefits registration is helpful

IDES, I guess if you needed it. I don’t know what it is but if you needed it, it would be help but for me it is not helpful.

Education help is very helpful

Predischarge claim would be amazing. My company took forever to get discharged. I was discharged due to pregnancy. My pregnancy was considered a service connected thing. I still can’t remember the person but there was malpractice issues. So if there were records that would be great but I dint know that they were available until after I needed it.

Homeless help, I have almost had to sue it so that’s extremely helpful. Theres links where it helps women veteran so that’s really nice

Family member claims, is help0fil I helped my grandma with it and she gets benefits

Financial and insurance counseling that would be helpful if I knew about it

Education and career counseling is helpful.

Pension is helpful

Burial claim I helped my grandma and I helped walk her through it and it was very user friendly so that was helpful

Employment help I have heard of it and see what they offer and its really nice. I have thought about using this service so it is extremely helpful

Transition help I didn’t know anything about so if I knew that would be great if they knew about it. it would have been nice to have this when I was getting out.

Direct deposit it was super easy and I did it on the app. I even got a confirmation that it was updated and expected. If one number is wrong you don’t get the compensation. So that was very user friendly

Apply for benefits, I did that all online and it was very easy. I did my entire claim and its hurry up and wait now for it. It was very good.

Improve phrase in any way: No, uh. No even the homeless veterans it is very vague but then you click in and it gets more user specific even if you don’t know how to find assistance for deposit and electric bills you can go through and be like I want to talk to a women representative or just need help getting into my place. It walks you through it and a lot of it is done if you get to the main subject you can find the specific needs.

**Scenario 2 - Search Page Evaluation**

Steps you would take: not really. I have a VSO at school and they applied for all of the stuff and I got a letter in the mail that they sent this to us for this and you get this and this is what you have to pay and this is what they pay for. The VSO is terrible and wasn’t focused on the veterans but even without a good VSO I don’t know I was lucky or what. I got an instant breakdown of what I got. The deposits were easy, it wasn’t frustrating. Is tarted that during a frustrating time in my life and it was hands down. I would have done it sooner if I knew how easy it was.

How did you find them: they had her on campus and I went in and brought my paperwork in. she was more worried about helping other people, I would go in and she let her friends take the books, she was very VSO to speak but it worked effortless.

Most recent time: No the last time was in 20201 at university for evening courses for a faster route to the pharmacy tech, they broke it down and told me I couldn’t get BAH but it would still be covered. She checked up on me and made sure I knew it was covered and understood. It was really nice.

Find va locations, imagine you want to go in person for help, show me how you would use this: Yeah. Right now it would be primary care. That’s the one I actually go to. I would click on it. I would just make the appointment here and I use the pharmacy to get refills but I tend to use the app to make appointments and they call to see if I want to come in or phone appointment. unfortunately it was far out so I scheduled in November and won’t go until March. The ease of it was nice.

Let imagine it’s for education benefits: I don’t know how to do that. If I can’t find it I go to the search button. I always do that for claims because I can never find it. It’s pretty accurate when I do that. This would be for me the Post 9/11 GI bill. Then I would need to sign in. I have an ID.me and my HealtheVet , I would click it then do the second factor and I would be in.

What if you needed to go in to see them: I would just go to the Atlanta VA and theres a help desk up front and they can tell you where to go. Most of the time I get asked where my husband is or where’s my dad or asked if I am a veteran. They are pretty knowledgeable at the front desk though and can tell me where to go. I had to do a name change and I had an appointment for an unrelated issues and they told me where to do and who to see. it took me two years to get it changed after submitting it multiple times. It was super frustrating, it turned out to where to keep the documents like divorce decree, driver’s license. I actually faxed it back in and would put first second third fourth submission. My therapist finally took a step and got it done. I don’t know what she did but it worked and it was nice. My marriage was very abusive and I asked them not to do that. It was super stressful and for her to help was very relieving. My care has been taken care of, like mental health walk in was great, I have used the Er a few times and I didn’t know what was wrong, they sent me home and a week later I went in and couldn’t walk and they checked me in. they were very open about what they needed to do so yeah the wait line in typical but I felt like they knew what they were doing. The second I felt I wasn’t being informed after 18 days I didn’t know my plan to go home and I mentions speaking to a patient advocate and they were in my room and my doctor reassured me about the plan. It was really taken care of which is nice when you are stressed and need the help.

Find va location: It would be that. That’s weird it doesn’t show anything.

Expected or surprising : I have always called or done paper routes on that so this is what I expected. Having issues with this is expected. There we go, I would open it and call to see if what I needed was available there. Theres their number. Then I would go from there.

What jumps out and could they help: Probably because applying for benefits is there and the GI bill is a benefit and updating the direct deposit so you can get the housing allowance. I like that it has the website and number. Then if you have done it you can check it here. Then the toll free number is always nice.

Tempted to choose other options: I have never seen this page before today. I just go to the main page to see if theres something there or use the search it works 9/10 times for me. sometimes you get odd stuff that doesn’t pertain but it is very non-tech savvy.

Why do you enjoy the main page and search functions that way: I guess because I didn’t know the other one was there. This is a good start to find what you need. I don’t have a veteran id card and it tells you want you need and how to obtain so you don’t drive to the va without it because you don’t have it. even if you need to go in it lets you know what you need before you go in and I have found that it breaks it down then tells you what you need.

Anywhere you want to loop back to: Nope

**Closing**

Thank you so much for your time and for your help today!

* Did you have any questions for the team? It was good, its nice.
* Anything you want to share about how in person can be better: Atlanta va is doing a lot of construction, both areas theres no way to know how to get in. I park in employee parking because I don’t know here to park. Theres 5 places that aren’t handicap and that’s fine but I’ve drove around for 10 minutes and have no idea where to park. If I were to ideal in my car they can break my car due to overheating. Getting services is pretty easy but getting to the actual place and where to go like mental health it took me 30 minutes to find it. I actually had someone walk me, you play the duck game but once you find the duck you’re fine. It’s like calling into services and it’s like in person to. At times you feel like you are going here so you’re not my problem and so on. Or I go for my appointment and have to ask the front desk, when you make an appointment they don’t give the doctors name and they can’t tell me where to go because I don’t know. The other center is easy. I have had appointments I can’t make because I don’t know where to go. Now I see signs where it tells you that if you been sitting for 10 minutes to tell them. I try to just sit there and not be that person. Any time I have meds it is clear where to go and get the number and the process to be seen waiting an hour then waiting 2 hours for med. It is distinctive where to go it is very easy to understand, not quick but understanding. You have to watch the scrolling of name. you’re not supposed to stand in line for the name. you have people that cheat the system. It could be done more efficiently but it is easy to understand which is half the battle.
* Tell me more about services: the ER I had to wait 6 plus hours. I have a high pain tolerance. I could not get dressed, and to be carried to my car. It was within hours of rupturing. Since I was a SI or hostile patient maybe that’s a bit of it. the prioritizing it more of who makes the biggest issues. I had to take my ex husband up there before and wanted to go back with him and then theres officers taking him somewhere else. That personal updating and infomraiton is lacking. Being updating of where you are at is they wont tell you unless you ask but when you ask you get an attitude well its been 6 hours. When I did go it was awhile, they did offer me food and was taken care of. When they did testing they sent a patient advocate and I still remember her, she was so nice. So when you have an issue you are taken care of it just isnt obvious but if you come in not knowing then no not really. Just trying to sue a mental health walk in service or ER services it should be more black and white. The in processing or directions on who to see or where you are going. I am trying to see the doctor but have no idea what its for. I have C&P exams but never knew who I was seeing. Not being prepared is extremely lacking. If you know what you are doing or what you need to do you’re good. If you don’t then no one else does either.
* Was there anything you wanted to tell us about Benefits and services that we didn't get to cover today? Pretty good like I said when I didn’t know I could claim my issues for compensation. Even when my therapist did the in processing and they sent a confusing packet and I didn’t understand it but used the online claim status it gave the topic and told me how to understand it. with mental health you could start then pause it but as long as you finished it, it took me weeks because of writing about sexual assault. Go in a few days later and it was there, the online services have came a long way. Trying to explain to 20 people explaining MST but being able to find it online and walked through it is extremely helpful.