**Benefits Taxonomy Conversation Guide**

**Main Interview**

**Warm-Up**

1. For how long have you been out of active duty military? I was active duty for a little over 7 years. I got out in 72 and started a banking career then.
2. Where, geographically, are you based right now? I am in SC at Hilton Head Island. Uh, probably rural. I mean we don’t have a lot of facilities that you’d have in an urban area for sure.
3. Can you tell me about a time you’ve utilized a VA service? Yes. Some were a while back and some recently. I have used the education portion of it when I was in AZ. Presently use dental, healthcare. I get all of my hospitalization and consultations out of Charleston VA. That’s about it. also I have gotten the VA disability program and I am 100 percent disabled.
4. Are you familiar with VA.gov, and if so, what do you typically use it for?

**Scenario 1 - Category Name Evaluation**

*Take participants through a simple card sorting exercise.*

**Research Questions to Address**

1. Do existing category names cause confusion, or do they need to be described with more clear language?
2. How can the benefits services be best presented to Veterans?

Disability claim help, I guess that is good like it is. Well if you have an injury or disability that you think would be covered. Ill tell you, you might want to put down, do we need to clarify if these need to be service connected or not. If so then it might be good to indicate up there that it is service connect or not depending on the case. I am sure there are claim helps they will help with if they aren’t service connected but the ones I have are service connected. I cant answer that directly.

Direct deposit, that is self-explanatory and it is probably fine.

Voc rehab, I guess it would be okay. You might want to indicate that it would help when someone clicks it that they will find out locations and um services available at the location. Just because if someone wants to know where they will need to go it would be a good idea where they will find it at. I realize there was a map associated with it on the other screen but I don’t know if someone would correlate that with pinpoint locations.

VA home loan that is pretty good. I would just leave that. Yeah.

Transition help, I don’t know what it entails because I haven’t used it but I assume it is going form military to civilian life. I assume it would be sufficient.

Homeless veterans: same thing, I would hope that would give someone the information that they would need for that situation. I guess you might need to remember that folks that need that may not have access to computers or that sort of thing.

Insurance, That is probably good. I would think it would be, I haven’t used that one.

Brail, same thing.

Ebenefits registration, I am not sure what that is but would that be where you get your ID. I am not sure what that is because I have not used it. Maybe that needs to be clarified that is specifically for claims and those things that are covered under it.

IDES, I think this is the process of getting your degree of disability. I think that is probably adequate.

Applying for benefits, I would leave it. I don’t know what else you could add without getting into many details

Education and career counseling, I guess that ones okay.

Education claim would that also have financial aid. It might be good because I think that would be a big factor for many. I think it should be education and financial claim help.

Family member claim help, that is probably okay but can I use an example for myself. We found out that my wife would qualify as a caregiver if her total time is spent doing that which she does for me. So it would trigger something for me if it said something about assistance.

Something that hinted it was possible: exactly. I don’t want to get into to much detail but that would prompt someone to think about what else they can consider.

Pre-discharge, which is good as is.

Pensions, that one you might say pension and disability unless they only want to address pensions there. I get a uh set amount based on my degree of disability so it’s not a pension but its substances really.

More than pensions that can help folks: I mean it goes along with disability. I would put pension and substance or something along those lines.

**Scenario 2 - Search Page Evaluation**

What steps did you take while doing it: I guess I started working on getting into the VA about 1998. I had not really heard much about it until that point. I had a serious case of sorosis I picked up in Vietnam as agent orange exposure. I lived in a rural county in NC and had no access to any assistance programs to work me through the program so I did it on my own. In doing so I pretty much learned the ins and outs of who I needed to see or talk to and what I needed to gather for the application. So I don’t really have any more recently, if I need something I would go to my local VFW which has a group that helps the newcomers. They can answer questions if needed but other than that I did it on my own. I did not have access to help in 98 that could help me.

Anything else to find infomration: Well now I know theres websites I can go to for infomration. I wasn’t aware of it and I don’t think the websites were available back then.

Would you use the website first or go to the vfw: I would use the website first. Uh, for these guys just now coming into the position of needed VA assistance most of them are much more computer literate then I am but they would certainly use the websites or emails much more readily then I would have. I think it is great that nowadays everything is available on a website somewhere.

Have you seen this page before(facility locator): yes but I haven’t used it

How would you use this page for help: I guess this is it.

What were you thinking as you went through: Um. Well I was trying to get to the closest facility. I had that in mind because I thought I would need to go see someone that’s why I started with my zip code; can’t get any closer other than putting an address in. I picked va benefits and then Voc Rehab.

Are these location familiar: I really expected that they would be the VFW because I understood. Maybe that is what , well no that’s the hospital. They might have a staff member that works over there, now that I think of it I think I have seen a VFW stand there when I go in. That is exactly right. Oh facility closed. Well that also makes sense because I think they are on certain fays. Savannah makes sense because that’s the major clinic, they don’t have specialist but they provide a degree of medical care larger than the branch VA at the naval hospital.

Went to either: I do go through the naval hospital in Beaufort because it is the va clinic and where my PMC is. Most of them end up being a referral to Charleston hospital and I have used Savannah most recently for a Covid booster shot. Yeah I have used both.

Familiar with Voc Rehab: I did use the service, they sent me down to Savannah to talk to someone down there. I had two bad falls and lost the use of my arms because I fell on them. So the people down there gave me ideas on what I can do to help myself in those situations when it would help me. You get old and that’s what happens.

Before Voc Rehab, would these places be able to help: I would feel pretty comfortable. Well the one in Beaufort is a Naval hospital and limited. All they do up there is occupying space within the active duty hospital. They don’t have any specialists. They don’t even have an ER or critical care facility/capability. I know when I need major assistance I go straight to Charleston.

Click service type list, anything stand out or surprise you: No it really didn’t. It looks like from top to bottom anything anyone would be looking for; I see family assistance and burial claims. The only thing that might be helpful in there would be, maybe it’s a subgroup, financial assistance.

Tell me more: well if someone is looking at education and career counseling, not everyone will have all of the fund to go through the entire thing so it might be helpful to have something in there even if it is a duplication of a major item here. Just something to help people direct themselves to the proper source to talk to someone about financial assistance either for schooling or any benefit like the VA home loan. Even the insurance side of it might have something in there to.

Can you click on a close location for me, how confident are you that they could help: Um okay. I think the reason they are closed is due to the Covid problem right now. I know that the VFW and one other organization up there that provides staffing assistance or man the booth at the hospital now and from what I understand they are good at getting things done and helping people through the system. Helping them get a degree of disability properly. They do a good job moving people through the system as new criteria or approval of disability.

How did you hear about it: through the VFW. I decided to go to one of their meetings up there and talking to some of the people that have been there. Not the ones that were actually responsibility for the processing but people in general that have used those individuals for their entry into the program and they were very complimentary of the folks. You have to remember in the south people are much more open and welcoming is the best way to say it then some folks that have used facilities in the north. They seem to not be very pleased at the facilities up north whereas down here they feel like family when they walk in the door. I think it depends on location.

Looking at the services section, does this feel like enough information: Um, I don’t know. You talk about disability and we know that pertains to the health and wellbeing to the individual. It doesn’t specifically address medical, dental, individual aspects of what the care my entail. It may be a good idea to maybe as a sub heading under there applying for benefits to say medical/dental. Just to identity the areas because if you look at this you don’t really know and I didn’t realize to begin with that I qualified for dental. that’s the key thing that sticks out for me.

How did you find out about dental: I think I was in Charleston and at the time the dental facility was right inside the front door so it looked like they had access to dental. At the time I was only 60 percent because I was still in the process of working on it but when I found out at 100 I could get dental care completely I just jumped right on it. It turns out I don’t need to go back up there because I live more than 100 miles away they matched me with a local provider. If someone lives in a rural area and you have to go some disbalance to get to the people that you are going to be working with to eb qualified for va those folks need to know is the things that they can get for being so far away like outside providers. It’s not just dental. I have had to go to acupuncture, massage therapy or back issues. If you don’t know then you don’t know to ask. I know you want to keep information as brief as possible but maybe have apply for benefits including outside provider care. Something to trip the thought process for the individual.

**Closing**

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

* Did you have any questions for the team? No I cant think of anything. I always enjoy helping you guys out because in the long run its helping my brothers out that are coming home.