**Benefits Taxonomy Conversation Guide**

**Main Interview**

**Warm-Up**

1. For how long have you been out of active duty military? Sure, um. Well so I started active duty in 1993 and served 8 years then 9/11 happened and I was in reserved but I was brought back to active duty. I spent 2 years in Iraq then sent to Afghanistan 6 times. I switched from the Marines to the Navy with a commissioning program. I still cotunnite to serve the navy with public affairs with media, social media, and training. That sort of thing. I have been deployed around the world. Currently working full time with eh government as a civilian but still in the reserves.
2. Where, geographically, are you based right now? I live in San Diego County, in fall Brooke. It is fairly rural to suburban so near Camp Pendleton
3. Can you tell me about a time you’ve utilized a VA service? Yeah so I did use Montgomery GI bill from 04 to 06 before the post 9/11 GI bill. I had limited contact with that. Other than that I haven’t accessed much healthcare or medical through the va at all.
4. Are you familiar with VA.gov, and if so, what do you typically use it for?

**Scenario 1 - Category Name Evaluation**

I wouldn’t say helpful or not helpful I would have needs improvement. Like appropriately worded.

Disability claims, I would say I would in public information so I would say file disability claim so they know to click here. The word help isnt needed. Using the verb file is better. Or if you really want them to know what they are doing, file disability claim.

Help for homeless veterans, I don’t know if its for a drop down menu. Oh I see yeah. I see. I mean um.

Again under burial claim, it is assumed that it is the topic if you click on it. you might not even need file for disability because it’s a drop down. Maybe just have burials or burial claim. It is assumed you want help so you don’t need the word help. Less is more. Burial claim is enough

Ebenefits registration seems normal like I know what I am trying to do.

Voc rehab and employment, I would lose the word help because it is assumed that you will be helping. Its less wording. It pops a little more.

Same with IDES, drop the word help because you are assuming they are going to get help.

Transition from active duty to civilian I assume that’s what that means. For clarity transition out of the military. I don’t know maybe active to reserve or out all together

Direct deposit infomraiton that is pretty clear, Update, I would probably not having the ing I would have update direct deposit infomraiton.

Apply for benefits, I would have apply for benefits. Its more direct and cleaner

Education claim help is that GI bill because I know theres other programs. I like is a benefit not a claim. A claim is something different

Pre-discharge claim help, I don’t know if that’s the same as va compensation, disability rating. I don’t know what a pre-discharge claim if it is the same as a va disability claim. It could be under file disability claim, it falls under the umbrella. Is someone is still on active duty click here so don’t confuse me with I am getting out in two week. I would keep it file disability claim regardless of where they are in their transition. I would just go to file disability claim not predischarge claim help

Education and career counseling is straightforward I think.

Apply for benefits I don’t know what’s under that maybe add more clarity, like education, medical.

Family member claim help, I don’t know what the claim is. Is it a caregiver claim, is someone has a rating the caregiver which can be a family member.

Insurance and financial counseling, I don’t think help or claim is helpful it should just be insurance and financial counseling. We don’t know if it’s a claim or whatever

Va home loan help, again if its first information for it then Apply for va home loan or just VA home loan. Yeah, you know if you go there it can take me to the application.

Help for homeless veterans, It may be ambiguous. I want to help the homeless veterans or this is help for homeless veterans. I am not sure is it good new stories what the va is doing stuff for veterans or is that where I can help. I would think this would tell me what you are doing for homeless veterans

Pensions, I am not sure who that targets, is it apply for pension or is that for va workers. I am not really sure, what am I to do with that. Do you know where it leads.

Anything you want to loop back to: No I think if you were to remove the word help it would look cleaner and easier to read. That’s just me.

**Scenario 2 - Search Page Evaluation**

What is your first steps: going to the website with the va if I needed help. I mean the website from what I can see it is pretty streamline and looks pretty good. If not then I would call and talk to someone.

Has that worked in the past: it has. I felt like the past few times I called and got through and not on hold for too long. They were able to direct me to the right person easily.

Does this look familiar to you: I probably have been through here at one point. I don’t know. I mean maybe I have been here once or twice. I haven’t needed to use it.

Using this tool, how would you answer your question: start with my zip code then I would say VA health depending on what I needed then it would take me here.

Do they look familiar or what you expected: I think so I am familiar with the oceanside location and then my location. So yeah. I would say that then I would decide which one was the best if I needed to go in person.

Any other choices to go between: urgent care if I needed, I don’t know what that in network, I don’t know much about that. I didn’t know if I am eligible for urgent care, I haven’t gotten too far into my va benefits because I have employer healthcare so this wouldn’t be my first choice for urgent care because I have different insurance so I would use that as my first choice. If I needed something else like emergency care, I don’t know their partnerships I am not sure.

What if you need help with a home loan: well I have exhausted all of my GI bill so I am not eligible. VA home loan I have not needed that because I rent but if I needed that I would go somewhere on here to look around. Do you need me to find it, is that what you are asking about.

How to find help with the va home loan, how would you do that: I would just search it. It doesn’t look like it’s on the front page or I am not seeing then I would search it. then get the certificate of eligible would be my first step.

Can you click on find va location, can you use this to find va home loan help: I wouldn’t because I don’t think I need to go in person to see anyone. It would be under benefits then va home loan. Again I would just use my zip code and search. Theres nothing.

Surprising to you: no because from what I know I don’t need to go in person about that.

Going to see someone you wouldn’t do, tell me more: Um, I just think that you need the COE but if I were to go and find out my first step and they give you the instructions from there. I am not the type that I would need to go see someone for this. There may be veterans that want to go see someone for this unless they were told on the phone how to get the COE. With the application and everything being digital you can do it on the website. I wouldn’t feel the need to see anyone at the va for this service

Any service you needed or want to see someone: well medical care. Yeah. The Gi bill I don’t remember it was 15-20 years ago. I don’t remember seeing anyone in person really. It was all done by mail or email.

Baltimore reginal benefit office, if you needed help with a service what can you see form this page, could they help you: yeah I think I would be able to do, maybe if I go specifically about their special instructions for parking or something like that. Visitor information, hours, what they do there, okay. The services offered is a duplication and it has VSO under it. I don’t think that is accurate, benefits what I need to do, home loans, okay. That’s probably what I would do. But then it probably redirects back to the reginal loans center whatever that is then these are them. I guess it depends on do I really need to go in person, no. Most veterans if they don’t need to go in person they would rather not. I have avoided them at all costs to go into the va for a lot of reason. Mainly waiting and not knowing what to expect and its never a quick in and out I don’t need that. If I can do it online that is preferred.

Going to the va is like going to the DMV: yes. Over the years I have been a veteran over 20 years with my first dd214 the va has come a long way. People don’t know the history of how bad it was before 9/11 but now you can find what you need if you look around or calling the 800 number and not on hold for 3 hours so it’s a pretty good response time

What information would be helpful: I recently went to the oceanside va to get a veteran card. I was living on Guam for 4 years but I wasn’t able to get a veteran card there. I went to Oceanside and got the card but had to come back after I filled it out. I need an appointment and needing hard copy paperwork. Why couldn’t they send it by email fill it out then book the appointment. that is my limited experience with the va. I don’t know what else they do beyond the id card guy. He said I’m in the system but don’t have a medical doctor yet because I told him I use my private health insurance so I don’t know.

Not structured: yes but in Guam I think it may have been a VSO or vet center. Yeah I don’t know what that was, I was doing a VA comp claim to but now that I am in the system. Theres no sign in Oceanside that tells you what they do, I don’t think it’s a full service. Theres no ER or urgent care. I wasn’t sure what they do besides I was told by a VSO to go get my ID card. The guy was on leave and I had to go back with paperwork then come back instead of why can’t I just get it online then submit it through the website. That would have been preferred. Enrollemtn, I heard the va is automatically enrolling people into medical care but I don’t know how it works.

Frustrating to come back: I don’t know their procedures but its seems pretty outdated since I fill it out then he has to put it in.

**Closing**

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

* Did you have any questions for the team? No I appreciate your work and hopefully this helps develop the VA into being even better. I know the small changes and feedback goes into the bigger picture so thank you for making this your activity for today.