# Conversation Guide: Harassment Reporting Landing Page & Poster

## Warm-up Questions - 5-15 minutes (depending on whether show poster)

*NOTE how to share URL: dictate / Zoom chat / email / text*

Let’s start with a question...

I'd like you to imagine that you or a friend went to a VA medical clinic today for a doctor's appointment, and on the way in, a person said something rude and made a sexual gesture that made you or your friend feel uncomfortable. You or your friend think more about what happened and decide to report it to hopefully prevent it from happening to other people. What do you think you or your friend would do? If we were at the VA, I would probably address it with the provider or ask to speak to the hospital ombudsman.

*(don't / report it / talk with someone/police at VA / call 911 / google)*

* Can you tell me more about why? If it was a person who was part of the staff that made us feel us feel uncomfortable this is the chain, you should address it fix the issue. If you do not do it this way, you are basically going through the motion but end up with no response.
* What do you think you or your friend would do next? I would probably put in a ICE complaint. Do the VA have an ICE complaint. In the military sector if you are dissatisfied with the service provided you put in an ICE complaint to get you an apology or get the issue handled.
* If you could not do that and you were at home, how do you think you would proceed? I would go to the VA website to see if there is a place there that I could file a complaint. When I was going through the retirement process, the VA providers really did not know how to handle issues like this to be of any assistance.
* You said you were in the process of retirement right now, so are you still active duty? Yes, but I am a Veteran because I have deployed.
* You said you may check the VA website, which website are you thinking of? VA.gov comes to mind.
  + *(Google / Facebook / MHV / eBenefits / Contact center call or email / VA.gov / In person / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

### For sighted participants

Say that while you were at VA, you saw a poster about reporting harassment, but you're no longer there. How would you find information about reporting harassment now? Probably go online and look up the number or call to the VA and let them know what I am trying to do and get the information from them

I would probably go back to the VA to get the information. if not I would probably go online and Google the information to file a complaint.

*(ask someone / google it? / VA.gov? / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

### For sighted participants on desktop

Now I'd like to show you a poster and get your feedback on it. *(share my screen with poster and give mouse control to participant so they can move around)*

* What are your initial impressions? Could you scroll down please? Okay I think it is helpful it gives you a variety of resources that you can talk to. Police Officer, probably not, a building security, hmmmm. Talking to some people just do not have the knowledge of what you are trying to accomplish. So, talking to a building security would probably not help just cause more trauma. I would talk to the VA patient advocate and try to the 800 number. I also like they describe what exactly what harassment is.
* *(Note especially any sentiments/feelings they express re safety, comfort, trust, confidentiality)*
* *(Pause to allow as much time as the participant wants to read/process the poster)*
* What do you think you or your friend would do next if you wanted to report the interaction I described earlier--a person said something rude to you and made a sexual gesture that made you feel uncomfortable? I would get in contact with the patient advocate and probably after would call the 800 number.
* Why would you go with the patient advocate? I just have more confidence in the patient advocate that they would not cause more trauma without knowing what to do to help me.
* How you interacted with patient advocate before? People in similar roles.
* Which number would you call?
* If you were still at the facility, how would you decide how to report it? If I was at the VA I would either tell the police or talk to the front desk before calling the 800 number.
  + *(call 911 / call 800 # / talk to patient advocate / police / building security / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*
* What other thoughts do you have about this poster?

### For participants using a screen reader

Say that while you were at VA, someone mentioned that you could report harassment, but you're no longer there. How would you find information about reporting harassment now?

* *(ask someone / google it? / VA.gov? / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

What assistive technology are you using today?

How would you rate your level of experience with using a screen reader--beginner, intermediate, advanced, or expert?

How long have you been using a screen reader?

Are you wearing headphones today? I'm asking so I will be able to hear your screen reader during the session.

* ***(if on desktop)*** Could you please share your audio with me on Zoom?
* ***(if on mobile)*** Would it be possible for you to take them off and use your computer or mobile audio?

## Start screen sharing

Are you OK continuing with the session? We can take a break if you want to.

I'm going to share with you a web page. While you're looking at it, I would like you to *talk aloud* as much as possible so that you share what you're thinking, what you're doing, what you like, what you dislike, and what you're unsure about.

I would like you to share your screen with me so I can watch you use the web page in your web browser. *(refer to Screen sharing instructions above, if needed)*

What kind of device are you using today? *(Phone / Computer)* Laptop

I'm going to (spell/put into the Zoom chat) a link for you to open (<https://staging.va.gov/hrt>). *(If asked, reassure that this is a legitimate link to what I want you to test.)*

Do you see the link? Okay.

## Veteran Tasks

### Task 1: [Explore landing page] - 15 minutes

***(for everyone)*** Let's say that you found this page on VA.gov.

What are your initial impressions of this page? I like that it has a talk to a Veteran crisis right now, I like that it has the numbers, and provides a confidential chat online chat. You have the red button that draws your eye to it because if you are in destress you may not want to read. \*Scrolls page\* I like that it gives a lot of information. Maybe for some, they may say there is too much information, but the fact someone took the time to give this information shows that the VA cares. That they explain the process and the steps after you file a report. I like that. That they offer the mental health services, Military Sexual trauma, and your options. I really like the numerous resources provided. Good on the VA for creating this, but also makes you wonder if they are only providing this to cover their behinds. I remember when I had my MST, I called the VA crisis line and the individual was not able to help me.

What can give you the sense that these are real resources, and not just “cover your behind" resources? I would have to use the resources because you do not know until you have tried the resources out. I would just have to use them and judge them after the fact.

* *(Note especially any sentiments/feelings they express re safety, comfort, trust, confidentiality)*
* *(Pause to allow as much time as the participant wants to read/process the page)*

What do you think you or your friend would do next if they wanted to report the interaction I described earlier--a person said something rude and made a sexual gesture that made you or your friend feel uncomfortable? I mean it depends on what they did will determine how much energy I put into reporting it because using the military resources are not easy in my experience. If it was a major offense, I would really just try to work with the patient advocate and file a report to see where that goes.

With the information on the page, you would still use a patient advocate? Yes, and use the 800 number.

Would you do one and then the other, or would you do one over the other? If I did not get a warm and fuzzy from the patient advocate, I would call the 800 number or go to the Vet Center because those individuals are always helpful.

So you are looking for a warm and fuzzy feeling before going to another resource? Yes, and the warm and fuzzy would be like ensuring I felt as though the resource was taking my report seriously and they were going to do something. The type of situation I would report would be something I would need a follow up. The energy it takes to report to a military resource is just so much that it would really have to be extremely unacceptable.

* *(call 911 / call VA police / call 800 # / in person / call at a VA health facility / Vet Center / regional office / national cemetery / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

What do you think will happen next? Based off the website they would start the investigation, take immediate action, and maybe offer resources to help me deal with the issue, and follow up with status of report just to provide closure.

What other thoughts do you have about this page?

* Feedback on the information in it? I think the information given is valid information that individuals would want to know if they are ever in this situation. It may be set up that the results may not be what they feel is just in the situation and provide information on how to appeal. I really do think all the information provide is great. It is not a quick section with basic information. It is a good resource.
* Feedback on how the information is organized?

## Post-Task Interview - 15 minutes

*Type into #feedback-backchannel: "Any questions you want me to ask?"*

What thoughts do you have about what you've reviewed today?

* What was *helpful* about what you've reviewed today? I guess what was helpful that there are multiple resources available to you if one may not work out for you. You can always have the issue in a way you think works for you.
* What was *not* helpful about what you've reviewed today? I can’t really say there is anything that is not helpful. In a situation with harassment and assault, you need more information. When you deal with those issues you could be on a roller coaster of emotions, which this page has provided ways to take care of yourself and move forward. I do not think anything is unhelpful on this page.
* What would you like to *change* about what you've reviewed today? I think I am curious, because I am a Chaplain, why a way to get in contact with a Chaplain is not on this page? From the active-duty side of the house, Chaplains do sometimes help with situations dealing with assault and harassment. We help with dealing with the emotions and reassure you that you are worthy of the resources that are available to you. It is just because I am a Chaplain, and on the active-duty side we are one of the resources that are offered. It really is a toss up if we are helpful or not. Some will say that it was helpful to feel valid in their feelings, and some may not find it helpful.

We would like the harassment reporting resources to meet the needs of ALL Veterans who may have been harassed at a VA site. If you've ever experienced any type of harassment at VA, and are willing to share, we would like to know a little more about your experiences. I'm not asking for details, and I don't want you to re-live these difficult experiences. Your feedback today has been valuable, even if you decide to not answer the questions I'm about to ask. If you share anything about your experiences or someone else's with me, what you say will remain confidential. Are you comfortable if I ask a few more questions? Sure

* Have you or anyone you know ever been made to feel uncomfortable by someone else at VA while applying for, using, or communicating about your VA benefits or health care? This could be in person, over the phone, or in an email or text message. And it could be a range of things, like someone whistling or making sexual comments, making negative comments about gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, giving unwanted attention, or making inappropriate gestures. You don't need to share any details, you can stop at any time, or you could skip this question. *(yes / no / decline to answer)* Are you talking in gestures? Any way you may have felt uncomfortable. All my experiences where I had to talk to VA providers about my MST was always traumatizing, no empathy, and I was very disappointed. When I received my package about moving forward, they state to talk to your provider about your experience, and it really brings back all these emotions and the trauma again. You go into your appointment emotional, and they do not know what to do and they lead me somewhere else. As you are trying to tell your story they are brushing you off, and it is extremely frustrating and causes me not to trust military resources. The military are great at giving you resources, but those resources aren’t helpful at all. You try to talk to someone, to not really validate it but to get help, and they can not provide that help to you. So, your MST happened during service, but the lack of help would be coming from the VA.
* If you or your friend was harassed, was it reported? *(no / yes)* I did not report how unprofessional the provider was because I was not aware of the patient advocate. I did call the Veteran’s helpline, I did go to the Vet Center, and they were empathic, but I did not know who to talk to. I talked to my Peploi (liaison from military to VA) and filed an appeal. It was hard getting any resources to help me at all. Even the contracted provider had a lack of empathy when it came to me explaining what had to occurred to me while serving.

I do appreciate you sharing you experience with you. In the future there was another harassment that occurred at a VA site, what would you do to report it? I would just start at the patient advocate, and then go from there.

When you were dealing with the provider that was not helpful, did you ever reach out to any other resources? No I did not because I do not have faith in the resources. Was not worth my time or energy.

* If so, *how* was it reported? *(phone call / in person / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*
* If it wasn't reported, what were the barriers to reporting it?

How would you prefer to report any future harassment? *(phone call / in person / online somehow / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

*(If they share anything about a harassment experience, say...)*

* I am sorry you (or your friend) had this experience. We appreciate you sharing this with us. Your story will inform how we provide resources to help Veterans in the future.
* If you (or your friend) want to report your experience with harassment, that can be done in person at a VA site or by calling the VA Inspector General Hotline at 800-488-8244.

Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think I should know? No ma’am not to my knowledge.

## Thank You and Closing - 5 minutes

We really appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with us today. Your feedback is so helpful to us as we continue to work on providing resources for reporting harassment. We're hoping that by providing such resources, we can make VA safer for everyone.

I'm going to stop the recording now. *(STOP recording)*

*I have a question, is there anywhere that people can email a report or a database they may file a report due to it may be having a difficult time talking to people about issues like this. To tell your story multiple times can be traumatic. If you were able to just write it down one time it would be able. If you have to go the route of using resources, you may have to tell your stories multiple times before one of them could finally help you.*

*It is something we are working on, so it is nice to hear you bring that up. That is really helpful.*

Before we end this session, are there any questions or concerns that you wanted to express? No ma’am.

Thank you so much again!

*(if this session didn't appear to trigger a traumatic response)* And I hope you enjoy the rest of your day!