

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# Form 526 Usability Test, August 2021

## Findings

# Background

This is a usability test of the Form 526.

Several changes have been made to Form 526 in the last several months. A comprehensive usability test with veterans is therefore needed.

Veterans with a disability and who are planning to apply for a benefit for their condition(s), can use the online version of Form 526 to apply:

<https://www.va.gov/disability/file-disability-claim-form-21-526ez/introduction>.

# Research Goals

- Understand the current user experience, what pain points and usability issues exist, including confusing or unclear content/copy.
- Do participants think any necessary information is missing throughout the form?
- Can participants go through the flow by themselves, without any problems or blockers?

# Method

We conducted a remote, moderated, task-oriented usability study, using Zoom

- Participants logged into Zoom with their computer. We logged into VA.gov in Staging and handed the participant the control over our computer in order to use VA.gov in Staging, without having to provide the participants with any test user login credentials.
- The participants were given tasks to perform within VA.gov.

The structure of the study:

- 5 minutes for introduction and warm-up questions.
- Approximately 40 minutes with usability tasks and questions
- 5 min for exit questions and wrap-up

The participants in this study consisted of 6 veterans:

- 4 male and 2 female
- One was 75 years or older, two were between age 45 and 54 and three were between age 55 and 64.
- Varied educational level: from *some college* to *Master* and *doctor degree*.

# Findings Summary

1. Participants (with this particular test user account) had to answer the widget questions (*Are you on active duty?* and *Are you filing a new claim or ...*) twice. Once before and once after login.
2. Most participants don't scroll down and read about what to prepare, but click on *Start the Disability Compensation Application* right away. Two participants said they would read the instructions if they were actually filing a claim for real.
3. Users have no problem adding (multiple) (and removing) service history details, and they understand that they can also add a reserve periode here.
4. A few users were confused by the list of suggested conditions. They commented that it is not in alphabetical order, and it's not immediately clear to them if the suggestions are based on spelling or topic. However, they find the list valuable, in order to find conditions and also for correct spelling. They think 400 characters in the text box are adequate.

# Findings Summary

5. A couple of participants were not sure what “... *new evidence that VA doesn't already have*” meant and would like a drop-down more info. Overall the users value the info in the drop downs.
6. VA medical records page: the lack of a Save button is inconsistent with other pages. It's not immediately clear to all users that they can add separate VA locations for different conditions.
7. A few users found it odd that they are being asked for their contact info at the end, and not the beginning of the form. A couple of users felt that it was too early to ask for their bank info. (Or at least they feel there should be an explanation to why this info is needed at this point. Two users felt uncomfortable giving out their bank information.

# Next Steps

## **Upcoming sprint**

- Explore and implement design changes based on the findings above.

Questions?  
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