Questions for Veterans

Background

- Could you tell us about your background and military service? I was in for 8 years. I am currently going through separation now for medical reasons. What else. Yeah I was 38B stationed in Connecticut.

- What has been your experience with using VA benefits?

- What VA benefits have you used and why?

Transition Experience

Experience- it has been frustrating because I don’t have access to my military id now and it was hard to get a new one. I don’t have access to my military email so it has to be forward to my personal email and it contains sensitive information and time sensitive information so the military doesn’t want to send it. I had to find a work around

Who sends the email, military, VA, different: It is coming form my Sargent, medical board the people dealing with the packet.

Process: well first there’s a medical event that happens and triggers the separation. Then you get evaluated, than you get a form and you can contest the evaluation and if you agree or disagree you appeal. Then they tell you how much you get and if you get benefits or what they are. so yeah. My head is all over the place.

Resources: my Sargent.

Helped you navigate things: yes he walked me through the whole process. Its not often people go through medical evaluations so eh walked me through the whole thing. It was daunting and I fell behind on deadlines because I wasn’t aware.

What other questions or things are you preparing for: Just seeing if I get benefits and make sure the medical separation doesn’t hinder my ability to go to the va and know what my veteran status will be.

- What was the hardest part of your transition? The wait. Waiting and paperwork. It doesn’t seem like tis a direct channel to me, I am supposed to do something but then all of a sudden no one tells me than I have to file an extension to get my evaluations redone and get benefits.

- Is there support that you wish you had when you separated from the military?

- If so, what type of support?

Learning about VA Benefits

- Where did you learn about VA benefits? I hear that there’s mental health services so that’s something I recently learned about. Other than that I am still new to it and don’t know the other resources they have.

What to learn about other benefits: Yes

- How was your experience with learning about benefits?

- What would encourage you to learn more about other VA benefits (that you may not be using)?

- If you could wave a magic wand, what you do to make the whole benefits process easier? If they had a centralized area, the thing about the military websites is that they are not the best organization and outdated. You go through a lot of hoops to get where you need. Using AI and having an AI assisted website that talks in plain language it will help you navigate and find the appropriate link.

Helpful to have a check list: Yes. Kind of like the exit packet. Yes.

Helpful to have a status indicator: yes, right now I am dealing with that I haven’t received my bonus. I am waiting to hear about it, you have to call. There is not centralized system to see the status.

Anything else that would be helpful: Let’s see. Not really. Not that I can think of.

Do you ever talk to other veterans or use other website for benefits: Yes. I speak to my other soldiers, I use reddit. And there’s a forum where you can ask questions but are to scared to ask in person so you wont be reprimanded for asking a stupid questions.

Sargent supportive, have they been your Sargent a long time: no its fairly new.

Observer questions

- preparing for separations, are you aware of housing and education that va provides: yes. One issue I am having. I have my GI bill which I don’t know how to access, housing I know there’s a veterans loan. So yeah. I ama ware of some of those things.

- Are you thinking about using those benefits: Yes I am actually applying to be a cyber security expert. I am taking classes on Coursera. I do want to continue on with education.

- Example of AI, how would you utilize it: I don’t know exactly what I would ask. Of course I would feed it the regs so the AI has it all stored. How would I appeal a med board decisions, how to file for extension, here’s my situation it happened on this date. Having AI fill out the form that is used to document any time of injury. So having AI where you type in this and this happened and it has your information and it fills it in for you when you take it to the doctor or sergeant to get signed.

-Participated in transition programs: I am still waiting.

-familiar with the programs you can attend: it is a little tricky because I was a reserve. It even changes the type of veteran status you receive. Figuring out which on I fall under. If I was in the reserve for 8 years can I still go to VA.

- Mentioned the hardest part is waiting, would you like a tool that would allow you to understand when you are waiting other things you could be doing or when you can apply for a benefit that you didn’t know about. What would be an ideal way to let you know: Yes a centralized system because right now I am learning about va benefits by Instagram and word of mouth. It is fragmented. I think it is done on purpose. Tis a thing that they need to update the system but at the same time it makes it harder. It’s harder to make people get those benefits so they don’t use it up. If there’s one stop shop to fill out the forms and do what you need to do. If there’s official information already stored have it automatically transferred over. I think yes definitely.

- Mentioned when talking about reddit and another website: It is reddit and there’s another but I forget the name of it. It is specifically for military people but its not internal.

- Is it structed like reddit: Yupp.