# Veteran Status

## Instructions

\* Title the notes using the following format: 2023-12-day-time-P(#).md

\* Take as close to verbatim notes as you can, but also, don’t worry too much about. Unless notes are \*\*really bad\*\*, don’t recommend going back to clean up. This can be done as needed during analysis phase. Just try to get as much as possible during the session then take a breather until the next.

\* ==Indicate in bold when moderator speaks. ==

\* ==Give initials M for moderator and P for participant.==

\* ==Indicate in (\_italics\_) when you’re describing a behavior.== E.g., “umm, I think I should do this (\_clicks on sign in button\_).”

## \*\*Current VA benefits usage\*\*

**\*\*1. What kinds of devices do you use? How comfortable are you with each one?\*\***

- P1: smartphone tablet and pc for access to online. desktop and laptop.

- M: how comfortable? P: very comfortable with PCs but still learning to navigate on a smartphone because most of the sites are abbreviated. they are not the full website, so I find it difficult to get done what I need to. tablet is in between.

**\*\*2. How do you currently access VA benefits and services? What do you do digitally and what do you do in person? How do you decide what to do?\*\***

- P1: usually from laptop computer at home.

- P1: as far as what… appointments? M; how do i access this benefit, schedule this… P: almost always try on line firs tbut if i have difficulties i will try to call somebody and 9/10 calling goes nowhere (where I am located) so next time I have in-person appointment, try to get it straight.

**\*\*3. What veteran IDs do you currently have? Which have you had in the past, post - service? Tell me about how you use them.\*\***

- P1: got my retiree ID and my actual VA ID. It’s a picture ID from the VA. Got a barcode on the back, it used to be before Covid, you used to scan it and that’s how you’d check into appointments. Yes [for health services]

- Disabled vet License plate and drivers license – use them both. Not necessarily my license, but it is a handicapped plaque (placard?) so am able to park in disabled spots. Find it very useful.

\* What do they use when?

\* For what?

\* What makes them pick a specific card?

\* How do they describe each card, its purpose and use?

**\*\*4. Have you ever submitted for travel reimbursement from the VA?\*\***

- P1: Yes. At first it was at the facilities as you were checking out. You would say I have one travel compensation. Now it’s all online, it’s tough to use. They no longer do it in the facility [at least this one, don’t know how it is elsewhere]

\* How (Online? Kiosk? Mail?)

\* Why did they pick online/mail/kiosk?

## \*\*Current discount usage\*\*

**\*\*5. What retailers or retail categories would you say you shop at regularly?\*\***

- P1: In person: shop on post as much as possible, find stuff a lot cheaper there. Costco. Walmart. Online: Walmart, Amazon, and Costco.

- M: how to choose between online/in-store? P: Prefer in-store to see the product and make sure it’s what I like or want. Online: if it’s difficult to return or with Amazon Prime, you can return stuff easily and Costco has an easy return process.

**\*\*6. Historically, how have you learned about veteran specific discount programs?**

Where have you learned about them?\*\*

- P1: Mostly word of mouth through fellow veterans. Somebody found out something and mentioned it. It can be a bunch of different stuff: amusement park, certain stores have deals for veterans. Veteran specific: have it saved on my computer somewhere in the browser. Or I’ll be going through something online with the cookies and it’ll target me and show me stuff like veterans deals.

- [Example of word of mouth]: no… can’t think of one right now. There are so many too… Well, okay, on Thanksgiving… wasn’t aware of how many… take that back, Veterans day. A lot of restaurants offer free meals for veterans. The only one I knew of was Cracker Barrel. One of the people I meet with weekly said there’s Applebee’s and this and that — there’s actually a choice! Something like that. There was another one where it’s a non-profit group where they offer fishing trips. Not really into fishing but it sounded like something fun to do and it’t local where I’m at. You get a hold of them or you call them up and they set you up with a weekend trip, all paid for. Thought that was pretty cool. Learned about this through another vet. I’m in a veterans group where we meet weekly. We do a buddy check to make sure everyone’s okay. I go to a group – Wounded Warriors. Learned about the restaurant discounts through them [I think?]

**\*\*7. When was the last time you successfully used a veteran specific discount at a retailer or non-VA healthcare facility?\*\***

- P1: Two days ago at Lowe’s. They have a 10% discount for veterans. Lowe’s and Home Depot have the same deal, and I needed something for plumbing here at home. Went to the store. The veterans discount is automatic because I have a Lowe’s card. I scan the card and it automatically applies. If I didn’t have that I would just show my vet ID.

- Online, it was a part for my motorcycle. They had a veterans discount and it was moto-horn and that was 33% discount for veterans. I do look around and ask if they have a veterans discount. Some do, some don’t. If you don’t ask, you don’t get it. A lot of restaurants/retail stores, especially near a military installation will have veterans discounts (5-10%, basically whatever the tax is is what it turns out to be). You ask, and if they do, you show your card and they apply it.

- M: [missed something around validation, sorry!]

- P1: they have ID.me, scanned a copy of my DD214 honorable discharge.

- M: when at Lowe’s who did you you validate with? P: cashier. Didn’t say what they were looking for. Because of where I am (so close to a military installation)… they just looked at the photo and the expiration.

\* Why did you want to use it?

\* Where were you? What was it for?

\* How did you access the discount?

\* Probe for:

\* Did they have to validate?

\* Who was validating their status?

\* Did that person say what they were looking for?

\* What did they use to validate?

\* Did you plan to use the discount before you went shopping?\*\*

**\*\*8. Have you ever tried to use a veteran specific discount at a retailer but been denied??\*\***

- P1: Not that I can recall. Not if thad one. If they didn’t have one, it didn’t exist anyway.

\* Where were you? What discount were you trying to access?

\* Who denied the discount? Cashier, manager, etc.

\* What reason were you given for the denial?

**\*\*9. Have you ever wanted to use a veteran specific discount but NOT been able to do so? Any experience in line with what we have discussed that we have not covered?\*\***

- P1: I served for 26 years so it’s kind of nice to get a payback.

## \*\*Desired usage\*\*

**\*\*10. We have talked about how you currently use and access veteran discounts, but if it were up to you, how would you like to access veteran specific discounts? Tell me how you would use and access these discounts.\*\***

- P1: Like the way Lowe’s does it, it’s automatically applied. That’d be optimal for me, it’s known and established, so I don’t have to go through the rigamarole each time.

- M: what do you enjoy specifically? P: they already have it in the system, it’s automatically part of the exchange. It makes it easier. It’s sometimes, especially if you are in long lines, I have a hard time talking to people to begin with. [Have a hard time talking with people] If my wife is with me, she will ask. Otherwise I won’t ask, I’ll just buy it and leave. It’s like a hand-out for me. My wife is the money-cruncher.

- M: [missed question] P: Just to know they exist, because otherwise it’s word of mouth, but I know there are a lot out there. I there is a way… like a website… to find out what exists would be beneficial.

**\*\*11. Where would you expect to find these tools? Where would you like to access them? What would you call them?\*\***

- P1: I don’t know. I would imagine some website that caters to veterans benefits but benefits for veterans. Benefits I get from the VA vs [things he gets from other people for being a veteran]. Website [missed a few words] – and in store, a display that says we offer discounts to veterans. Usually the mom and pop stores downtown by the post. Unless it’s spread word of mouth, I wouldn’t get knowledge of it. [missed a bit more here]. You either ask the people, or you hear about it from other veterans.

- M: once you’ve learned about it, are you able to access the discounts? P: Yes, the only tool I need is my ID card. My retiree card. Never tried to use the VA card, it’s a picture ID, it shows I am a veteran, but I never thought about using it. The military ID is my ID card, issued by DoD.

**\*\*12. What would you expect to find around or associated with these tools?\*\***

- M: What else would be with these tools, like the website. P1: A description about the store, because names can be misleading, and what the discount is maybe. A link to it.

- M: anything else related to my VA experience? P: Not necessarily.

- M: anything else we haven’t covered you want to share? P: Not really.

\*\*<span style="text-decoration:underline;">Time permitting</span>\*\*

**\*\*13. Do you have the VA Health and Benefits mobile app?\*\***

- P1: Never used it, but do have it on my phone. Anything with the VA is hard to navigate. Difficult to get where you want to go. For me, personally, it’s even harder on a mobile. Shy away from anything. Even MHV. I will wait and do it on my PC than try to do it on my mobile. TO hard to figure out how to get where I need to be. Hard enough on a PC, impossible on a smartphone. Websites are not friendly and apps are even less user friendly.

\* If yes: When did you notice it? Have you used it? What has your experience been with it been like?

**\*\*14. Anything else you would like to share about your experience accessing veteran specific discounts that we have not covered?\*\***

- P1: Ecstatic that they are out there and they exist. It’s good to be able to get what you can.

## \*\*Other observations\*\*