Instructions to notetakers:

* 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.
* Note the time of the interview
* Title the notes using the following format: 2023-12-time-P(#)-device-gender-age.md
* 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?**

P- iPhone and a MBpro laptop. I use Apple, and accessibility tools. Voice over. I’m completely blind. And I use a cane. I’m pretty comfortable. The one I use the most is my iPhone. I do have a wireless keyboard I use when I’m out. It’s small so I can get that in my backpack. Today I’m just using my iPhone.

M - What is it about the iphone that is better than laptop?

P - It’s small and easier to take around. I also need to call and text. Its flexible and convenient.

**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?**

P - Through my iPhone. I also can access them through laptop but my iPhone is so convenient. I can refill prescriptions and check benefits or for school with my kids, its much easier on my phone through VA.gov.

M - decide what to do between online vs in person

P - I don’t care much for paper. Id rather sign digitally from my iPhone. It’s more convenient. I can do my signature with my figure or via text. It talks to me and I can change the speed. I prefer everything digitally.

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

* **What do they use when?**
* **For what?**
* **What makes them pick a specific card?**
* **How do they describe each card, its purpose and use?**

P Military ID retired. My VHIC that they can scan and verify when I go in. What’s this new ID card they want us to get now? Real ID for my state (NC)! I have one of those. It has a star on there and It specifies I’m a veteran. It may have a number on there, but it also has something on there that says when I’m at the airport, I don’t have to wait. I have another card that says I qualify for community health.

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

* **How (Online? Kiosk? Mail?)**
* **Why did they pick online/mail/kiosk?**

P - Oh yes. I do it through the VA.gov app. Or sometimes I just go to the BTSS website and I can submit my travel claim through there.

M - Tell me more about the app.

P - I can do my travel claims through there. Its just more convenient to go through there than in person or dealing with paper. I must say that, over the years, the tech with the VA health system has gotten better. Especially for the visually impaired.

**Current discount usage**

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

P - Amazon. Prime. Target ship. Instacart. I don’t go into stores as much since Covid. They have decreased quantities in store so it’s better and convenient online. Amazon already has my sizes, and have it set up that they know what brands I wear and what size shoes I need to get. Also I can get my monthly items like cleaning supplies I can just hit “buy again”. The only thing about shopping online, you have to pay membership fees to get the most out of your money, and they can be expensive. But shopping online is key for me. The only things I’d go into a store for, is to buy a car and a [inaudible] so it’s just not that often.

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

P - Through Veterans Advantage, Veteran resources services, like VFW or Blind Veterans Assoc. They send out info about places that might be giving out discounts. As someone who is blind you have the option to get the newsletter via email and it reads it to me.

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

* **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?**

P - Was it at Target on the mobile app? It was last month. They had a discount code for Veterans day. I had to scan the code. A digital code popped up. On their main page, when you first go on to the app, the first thing was a VA 25% off promo. I tapped on it and I think it might have given me a code to scan, I think they use IDme. I had to put in my branch of service, the last time I served [exited active duty], DOB and they verified it really quickly. And when I put the code in at the beginning, when I got to the cart the it verified I had been confirmed and the discount was already applied.

M - Can you think of another time?

P - At Foot Locker, just before Covid. They use IDme as well. So I had to verify that way. They gave me an iPad and my caregiver said they didn’t have their iPad set up to be accessible so they had to add my information in. I was buying a pair of sneakers. I found out about the discount through email. I had to ask the rep who was checking me out to confirm, so I handed her my retiree ID and they handed my caregiver the iPad to fill out the information. They just checked the date to make sure it wasn’t expired.

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

* **Tell me about this experience.**
* **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?**

P - Yep, in a Finish Line shoe store.

M - Tell me about that.

P - This was about 2018. I gave them my retiree ID. They use IDme but for some reason the date I left the service was incorrect, so they couldn’t apply the discount. The person who was checking me out was the one verifying my ID. At that time they didn’t hand me a keypad, she tried to enter in my info from behind the counter and the year was not clearing.

M - Did she tell you anything about what the system was looking for in the ID?

P - She just said the year wasn’t getting accepted. I left service 2015 and she was saying it was a different date. I used it at Foot Locker a year later and it was fine.

**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?**

P - I think with technology always changing and increasing, even the VA is striving to get up to date with blind and hearing impaired and even cognitive problems. I pray all the teams can accomplish the mission so things can be accessible for all.

**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.**

P - I would continue to access them digitally, and use accessibility items like my smart phone.

M - What would these tools look like?

P - A smartphone, or iPad. Possibly through their app. And making my camera accessible to make it scan a code.

M - What information would you expect to find on it?

P - The percentage of the discount you were getting, the code that got you the discount. And the way to verify your status. A lot of places like theme parks include this kind of thing on their app when you buy tickets.

M - What would it look like?

P - Another pop up screen that asked for your branch of service, DOB, your active duty end date. Those are some of the questions that IDme uses. Then another popup screen that confirms you were verified.

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

P - I would Google it. If they told me it was an app, I’d go to my phone and type or speak into my phone what app it is and it would pop up and tell me what was available.

M - What would you call this tool?

P - Something with the word Accessibility in it. Maybe possibly… I have no idea I’m sorry.

M - Why do you say “accessible?”

P - Because that term speaks to someone who has some kind of challenge that keeps them from doing things the “normal” way.

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

P - It would usually be on the front page of anything. Usually like, um, I know for ADA compliant, for most screens, you can tab over the handicap symbol. That might be a possible way to let someone like myself know there is something I can access that would help me.

M - It sounds like you would look for it where there were other accessibility tools.

P - Right.

M - If it wasn’t there, where else would you look for it.

P I would go to “help” or “search” on the website.

**Time permitting**

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

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

P - Yes.

M - How long have you had it.

P - For a while now. Ever since they created it.

M - [explains veteran status on [nametag]

P - I believe I heard that when I logged in.

M - Have you used it?

P - It sounds familiar. I go between that app and actually going on the website, VA dot gov, all of them are becoming sensitive - more proof of id being required, changing password, etc. - but I believe I have heard of it.

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

P - The only thing I don’t like, I know it has to do with security and protecting veteran identity. But changing that password is more than the norm. By the time you login and verify yourself it just takes so much time, lord have mercy, I understand the reason behind it, but by the end of the day, phew it can be tedious and take up a lot of time.

M - If you could create “one thing” to verify you were a veteran, what would it look like?

P - It would be a symbol or code word. Just something that was a simple verification process. Not the complicated password process.

M - Is having a veteran status card on your phone something you’d be interested in?

P - Absolutely.

M - How would you use something like that?

P - Some places want you to have a photo id. So instead of having to dig through your purse, that card would already be on your phone. You know, like Apple Pay. But in a secure way.

M - Where would this card live?

P - Maybe it would be encrypted somewhere. A digital card appeases me because it is convenient, you don’t have to go digging for a paper or plastic card in your purse.

M - If you look on the VA app and tap on your name it calls up a page that states your status. Knowing that, what info would you expect to find there?

P - My branch of service, my percentage, my Tricare. I think basic stuff like that.

M - Would it help if it stated that you had a disability?

P - Yes, because it would let people know that I am blind. Then they’d be aware that I may have some accessibility needs that they need to help me with.

**Other observations**