# Conversation Guide: Veteran Top Tasks MODERATED Interviews

## Warm-up Questions - 5 minutes

Let’s start with a few questions...

* I will be sharing a web page link with you during the session. How would you prefer to receive the URL? *Zoom chat*
* What kind of device are you using today? *Computer*
* Are you currently involved with the VA? If so, how? Yes, there are a lot of things. I am the fiduciary for my father. Financially I have to be on top of transfers, paying for stuff. All kinds of stuff. Then on a medical point we had something recently get messaged up. We were supposed to do telehealth but I need to fix that. He is 91, we don’t use the VA for the main doctor because it is further from us. We use it for hearing aids and wound care. We recently got hearing aids and in order to get the stockings we needed the telehealth but that didn’t work out (arrived late for appointment, and the person wasn’t there). He has wound care issues so we get compression socks and incontinence supplies. I deal with the pharmacy ordering supplies. It was the last two weeks. I ordered supplies and he just got them
* Enrolled in va healthcare: Yes, he can still go in person. It is just hard for him to get there; we go to the doctors a few times a month. It’s hard for him to walk. I would love for him to go but its not easy to get there. He is always falling, he’s a falling risk. We go to the specialist and we saw the main doctor for the referral.
* Last two weeks: I mean we saw the hearing aid lady last month but I was supposed to change something and I didn’t have a chance. I was just at his apartment this week to fix the hearing aids and I ordered his supplies last week and he just got them. I was engaging with the pharmacy. He was supposed to have telehealth but they were late and it didn’t work out.
* Telehealth for: both hearing aids and supplies. It is not easy moving my dad so I give him the choice of in person or telehealth.
* Last time dealing with va for fiduciary: it was a few months ago because they needed statements. I need to apply because we have more expenses. When I was filling out the forms I spoke with a specialist out west and they were great. He was very helpful and gave me pointers I never would have known how to fill out the order.
* Benefits not used before: you don’t know what you don’t know. Its so overwhelming that you don’t know what you don’t know not even to ask. recently I got my father prepaid burial and there’s a thing where they do the flag and that’s something his spirt would love. He was a foster child so when he serviced he always talked about it. I don’t know if it wants a marker and he won’t talk about it because it’s hard. I wish someone would sit me down and tell me everything available . Education is great but he’s 91 so I don’t need that. No one did this, I wish someone would have done a real intake and told us the services he was eligible for and what do you think. You don’t know unless you ask. when I first registered my father it was strange, a guy said that they mean well and they are vets. I know they are there to help and the va wants it. He started to stay you can get more money if he has psychological issues. If he had trauma in the war. In the middle he said I was a paratrooper and the guy in front of me blew up. I was like oh my god, I was like he’s 91 the correlation. He said he could get more money, I just skipped it. later on my father lives with my mother with Alzheimer’s. It is very hard with her; his world is his iPad. He is really into that. He is so sad with her and he has hearing issues. I went to a conference before COVID and they said that he could go to their therapy. Is that something I could get? I pay for private home care, like can I get that for him. It is those things that would be nice, even getting money for it or just directly. They need a lot of that kind of help right now and I don’t even know if it exists.
* Needs and don’t know if Va can help: I am appreciative of what they have. I took a while form getting aid and attendance. There are more things that I just don’t know if they offer, it is possible they could.
* Finds out when someone mentions it not systematic: yes. No one did a full intake and told me what they were eligible for. No one did that here. I am most knowledgeable than most I have a graduate degree and speak English well. I like to participate in this and have a sense in how these system should work but they don’t because they are so huge.
* Don’t know other services: Exactly I would be curious for end of life/past life, psychology, aid and attendance. I think they need to do age appropriate check lists. They give you so much information. I got something about fraud in the mail. You get all of these emails and it is not appropriate, not all is applicable to him because he is 91. They would help themselves if they can see how old you are you get this kind of information so you are not getting inappropriate data. Then again I don’t want to complain because you are appreciative but when you get an email with 20 things you don’t have time to go through it
* Information buried you may not have seen it: yes, exactly.

## Do the survey

I'd like you to do this survey and talk with me about it as you do it. I especially want to hear about anything that seems confusing or unclear to you. For code, enter P#.

* *RECORD survey start time: 723pm*

#### How do you typically interact with the VA? I visit the va, I call them a lot, another thing there are a ton of numbers I call the local one but I think it would be cool to have my home page and let me put my numbers on it for me. I deal with a lot of different numbers and its such a huge organization. I do need to register for ebenefits. That’s it.

#### Please check the VA-related tasks that are most important to YOU personally right now, no matter how you do them (in person, on the phone, or online).

* *RECORD feedback on this question*

| **Task** | **Participant Comments (NOT whether they checked the box because that will be saved online)** |
| --- | --- |
| Learn about or file for disability compensation | *I think my father gets pension and aid/attendance. I think compensation is if they ere injured.* |
| Check the current disability compensation rates | I don’t think he gets it technically. I forget the term. I think it is pension. I always get confused about their terms. |
| Upload evidence to support disability claim | I don’t need that. |
| Check your claim or appeal status | I know that. I am past these things. |
| Request a decision review (appeal) on a claim |  |
| File for a VA disability increase | I will need an increase but its more for aid and attendance |
| View my disability rating | I think the disability relates to a service disability. |
| Learn about or apply for education benefits | Again this would be younger. |
| Compare VA education benefits and rates by school | no |
| Check or update your current education benefits | no |
| Verify your monthly school enrollment | no |
| View your payment history | no |
| Pay your VA copay bill or other VA debt | no |
| Get help with your VA debt | no |
| Review or update direct deposit | no |
| Learn about or apply for VA health care | That would have been interesting. |
| Update your VA health care information | Maybe , I don’t know if they are updated. |
| Check your lab or test results | I would want to know that. |
| Message my doctor or get a health care message | Okay, I think they do this |
| Refill or track a prescription | he can’t do that because of Medicaid. We are in New York has an interesting and a robust Medicaid program that’s why we moved. They live in Medicaid assistive living, prescriptions are covered, I pay the co-pay it’s not a lot but they don’t get a lot. When I spoke to the prescription person about his supplies. I would want to know about that, no one told me how it worked. Like how does it work |
| Schedule or manage health appointments | Yea that is important. |
| Find a mental health counselor or therapist | I know nothing about that |
| Learn about or order hearing aid batteries | They were great. |
| Get your VA medical records | I always like to know I can get it. |
| Learn about or file for travel reimbursement | I don’t put in for it but I drive him because it is easier. |
| Apply for a home loan Certificate of Eligibility (COE) | N/A |
| Get help with your housing, rent, or utilities | I moved them in 2013, it would have been helpful when they lived on their own. They were living in a house that was falling apart. This could have helped; it doesn’t matter now but I am saying this would have been great. |
| Update my contact information with VA |  |
| Review or update your dependents | Dependents are my mother. |
| Learn about or apply for a Veteran ID card | He has it but I would like to know |
| Get your VA benefit letters | He also have life insurance like 10K. |
| Request your military records (DD214) |  |
| Find a hospital, clinic, pharmacy, or Vet Center | I don’t know anything about that. |
| Find a VA form | They are good on the phone, when you call them you could get someone that knows nothing and then the ones that are beyond fantastic. It is so crazy |
| Apply for the VA caregiver assistance program | I don’t know what that is but that’s us |
| Find Veterans events near me | I keep asking him but it can’t walk and constantly peeing. He just wants to sit and play on the iPad. A few years ago he could have volunteered, this would have been nice. There was someone that use to volunteer at the same va. it would have been nice for my dad |
| Get help with your VA claim/application from a VSO or an accredited representative | I did it on my own but it was not easy getting help. I went in person in Manhattan. |
| Learn about job and training support available from VA |  |
| Learn about or apply for a Veterans Pension | Again that would have been good |
| Learn about or apply for life insurance | It would have been helpful |
| Learn if eligible for burial in a VA cemetery (pre-need determination) | This would have been good. The only thing I would say is that this is overwhelming. I speak English well, my mom doesn’t because she is a holocaust survivor. To make this much more comprehensive or easier to comprehend I would have moved this into age specific lists then a general. He is 91 so he wouldn’t be going to education/employment but would have been nice. If my father would be filling this out he wouldn’t have had the energy. It is a very long list. Some of this again, I know more than the average bear but there should be an explanation for some of these. I am not sure about disability because they use different terms . he is disabled because he’s 91 but he didn’t get his leg shot off. You could be eligible for one of these but not known. |

#### Are there any VA-related tasks that are important to YOU right now that you didn't see in the previous list?

Not sure about: VA healthcare information I don’t even know what mean about that.

Did he need to sign up for the va before getting supplies: Yes when we first started a few years ago. I didn’t get incontinence supplies until recently. I used to spend hundreds at Walgreens. It came up in passing and they told me they did it and its delivered to the house. I told them how much I spent in Walgreens it’s like $20 and go through 3 a day. For years I have been buying this stuff. It’s only been the last year we have gotten it thru VA. mostly I paid privately, I didn’t know it exists at VA.

Do get that or the hearing aids: that’s why we started. To get hearing aids I needed to register him but that was the only thing we did. Then very recently we did the stockings, i didn’t know they did it. we go to Glenview Long island where he gets wound care. He has been hospitalized so many times. Finally they recommend the hoses, the custom ones that are 200-300 dollars and the nurse told me that they have sent people to the va. the ones that you get from the va aren’t as good but they are still great.

Definitions: : disability, health care information is the board. Some of this is just obvious. I don’t know what they mean by benefit letters so an explanation for that. Like care giver assistance program I don’t know what it entails but I would want more information about it. these are terms like veterans pension, if I were looking at this for the first time I would not know the difference. I would not know if my father wanted the pension or disability. I don’t know how I would have checked it, the va has this entire system. I wouldn’t have known this if it were my first sign on. I think veteran pension should be moved to the top. I would have placed the elderly part together. Life insurance, pension, burial would be together. Then theres the disability then theres the general information. I would do columns; it could be repetitive but I would post it in both places.

Most interesting seeing together: Life insurance, pension, burial, hearing aids, dependents, caregiver program, vet center/va hospital, and mental health.

Anything important that you didn’t see: VA Rehab/nursing home

DME(Durable medical equipment) like walkers.

I don’t know if they offer this but I wish when you spoke to someone like my parents are in a place with Medicare, I wish they could explain how it interconnects. Many need guidance so counseling in insurance options (Medicare, Medicaid, Hospice) is theres a difference for hospice, just to understand.

Parents with Medicare: yes.

#### What VA-related tasks do YOU do most frequently? va fiduciary, va pharmacy for incontinence supplies. Va website for hearing aides and wound care (Compression hose for wounds). Life insurance, not to frequent but it comes up. With Medicaid you have to sent it in each year, I spend a lot of time maintaining it

* *RECORD feedback on this question, and anything the participant says but doesn't type into the survey*

#### What VA benefits (if any) do you have experience with? Check all that apply.

* *RECORD feedback on this question, and anything the participant says but doesn't type into the survey*

| **Option** | **Participant Comments (NOT whether they checked the box because that will be saved online)** |
| --- | --- |
| Health care (including clinic appointments, prescription refills, messaging) | *These are great* |
| Education (including GI Bill, Yellow Ribbon) |  |
| Career services (including Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment, small business certification) |  |
| Disability (including claims and appeals) |  |
| Housing (including adaptive housing, home loans, homelessness services) | No but could have used this |
| Pension | I deal with that |
| Life insurance | I dealt with that |
| Burial benefits or memorial items | I don’t know much about it but I would love to. |

* *RECORD survey end time: 747*

## Post-Task Interview - 5 minutes

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

I'm interested in hearing your thoughts on the survey you just did.

* What did you *like* about the survey? It seems comprehensive, I saw the list I never knew but I do think there should be explanations. I am more educated on it then most but if it were my first time I wouldn’t have known about it. Even pension, the way the va defines it and the way a person does can be very different.
* What did you *dislike* about the survey? I don’t think it was as user friendly as it could have been. Dividing it up and making it judicable and age appropriate. I don’t think a 35 years old wants to hear about elderly things as well and be like what is that.
* What would you like to *change* about the survey? Is this what they will be using. My profession head talking is that there needs to be an introduction when coming onto this. It depends on the age and status of the person like caregiver. When doing with a caregiver you can get right to it but if this is my first point of contact with this type it is a different experience. When dealing with my mom my father was like as long as she knows my name it’s fine. I knew where this was going and he is living with her. It’s like you don’t know what you don’t know. I knew where this was going with him, he is very different now then in 2011 when it first started [her mother’s Alzeimer’s]. If you spoke to him now he’s very different. I don’t know how user friendly it is. I touch a lot of the psychosocial and if you have someone look at this it could be a spouse, parent, veteran and very disabled. I could be crying right now, like what if I know someone with agent orange cancer, it can be very triggering. Its great the va does this but they did this to them and now they are burying them. There’s not a thank you for your service. There’s no warm and fuzzy, there’s nothing that smoothes the edges if something could be triggering.
* Do you think it would have been triggering if we put certain conditions: that’s not us but I thought like that, maybe if it were more broken down. Look they served so they got it there and know that, knowing that the va is stepping up. It kills me that they don’t know the services, but if they say here are the services. Either if they are service related or not just a list. It could also be done by the time of the conflict like Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan. Then the younger ones coming out now that would be about way to do it. I think people are coming back broken and it’s very businesslike. I would be crying if I were a spouse. My dad said something to me and I was upset they never took advantage of it. he said he went to the va and the guy said something that offended him so he never went back. He had a lot going on that was not typical so being sensitive to the fact of who are people that are filling it out for service, they either got hurt, looking to better themselves, or retired. There are people that aren’t guided in life and the va becomes like a family and you need a little more guidance. We are in New York and a guy came up to my father and there was a guy from Korea who gave him an orange and said thank you for saving our country. People don’t realize the power
* Did it have it on your dad: yes and my dad was crying and just kept asking what we could get them and my father isn’t that type of person.

## Thank You and Closing - 1 minute

Well 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 learn about Veterans so we can improve the online tools that we provide.

Thank you so much again, and I hope that you enjoy the rest of your day!