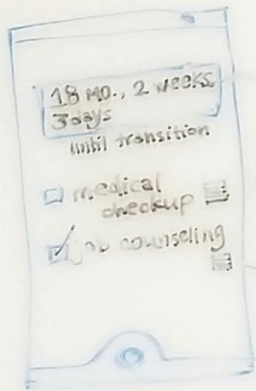
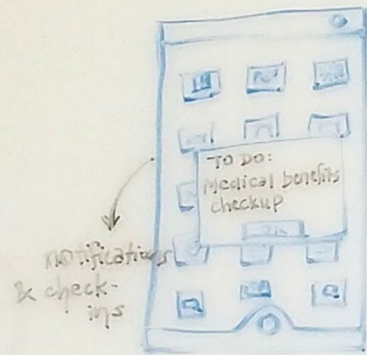


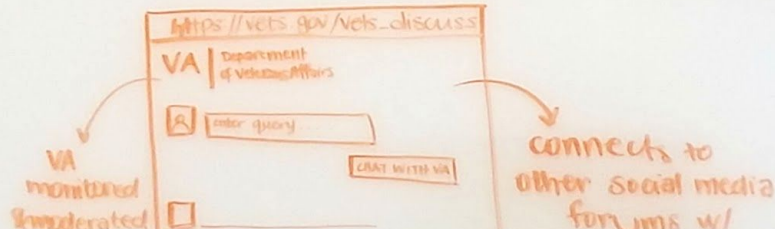
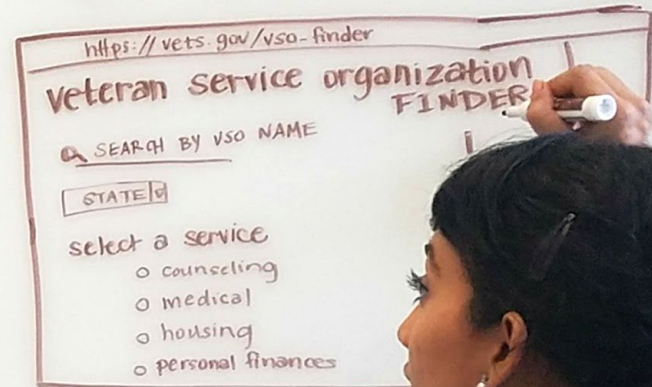
VeTransition App



Put in contact w/ other ppl transitioning that week (privacy agreement)

Links to VA doc online.

VSO FINDER



Towards a Veteran-Centered Transition



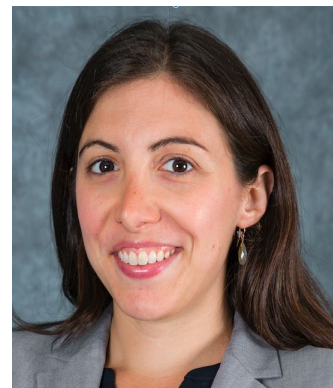
Chris Dylewski
Air Force Officer



Ifedayo Famojuro
Government &
Computer
Science



Simon Jones
British
Ministry of
Defence



Rebecca Schwartz
Behavioral
Science



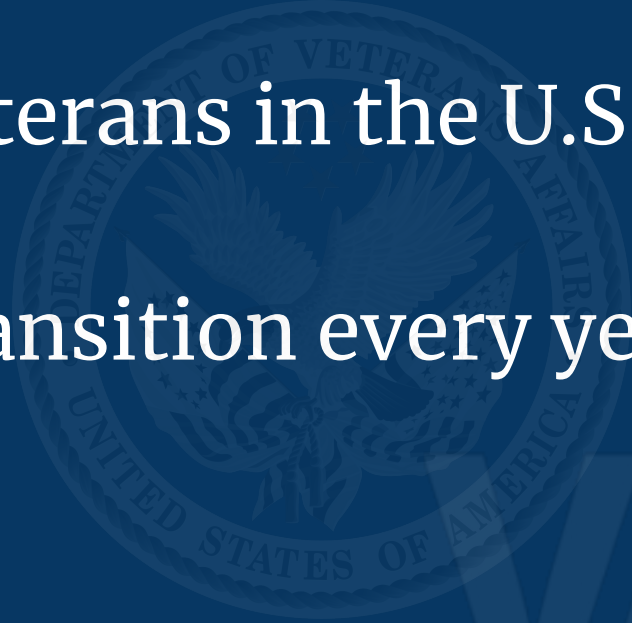
Irene Solamain
U.S. Department
of State

THE HARVARD STUDENT TEAM

THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Over 20 million Veterans in the U.S.

200,000 Veterans transition every year



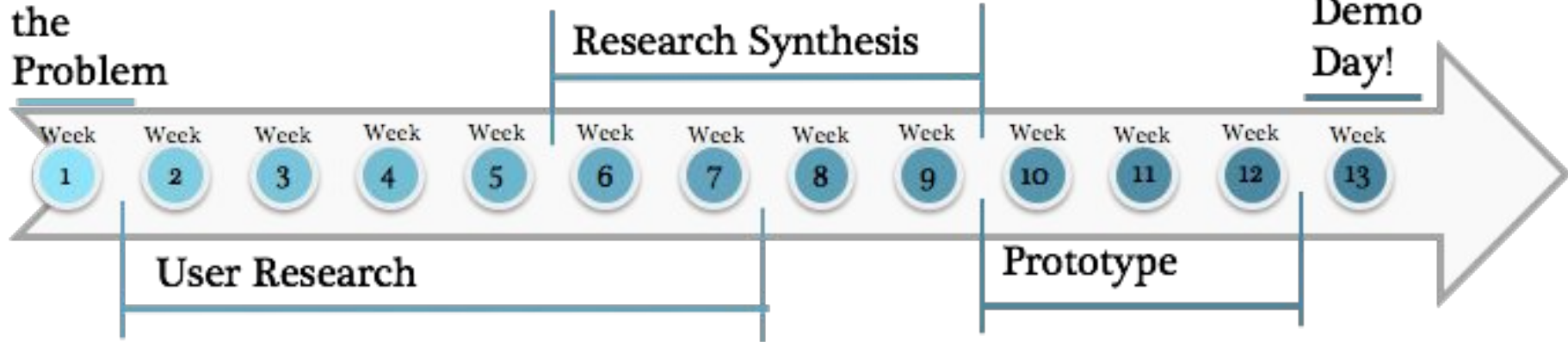
VA

PROBLEM STATEMENT

How can the VA provide the right services and products to better assist new Veterans?

PROJECT TIMELINE

Define
the
Problem



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Interviews

- **32 hours with 41 Veterans** across all branches
- **9 VA staff** spanning Benefits, Digital Services, IT, Policy and Interagency Collaboration

Site Visits

- Transition Assistance Program
- Veteran Centers
- Community Events

Supplemental Research

- Online and technological resources including websites, forums, social media, apps, and podcasts



THE TRANSITION JOURNEY



KEY VETERAN INSIGHT



“I want to feel like a person”

INSIGHT 1:

Process and Contact with the VA

- Impersonal feel
- Fragmented system: confusion about where to locate the best information
- Technical Difficulties

“Here’s where I need help. I have a problem, now what are my options”

“I started with a Google search and then I got lucky and discovered a new benefit.”

“At times, the VA will send emails – dumping all the information at once and you go and delete them all and never look at them again.”

INSIGHT 2:

Health and Psychological Challenges

Getting Care

- Tough to navigate healthcare system
- Long waits for medical appointments
- Difficult to arrange appointments at convenient times
- Doctors change frequently and you lose progress

Mental Health

- Suicidal thoughts
- Turning to drugs and alcohol
- Bias against using mental health services

INSIGHT 3: Loneliness and stigma, from service through separation

Loneliness

- Loss of brotherhood can make Vets feel worthless and alone

“Not a lot of people to answer your questions”

Stigma

- Too much focus on mental health makes Vets feel broken
- Disability rating feels inhumane

“It’s like they don’t care about you”

GABE

U.S. MARINE CORPS VETERAN, LATE THIRTIES

“As a Veteran with health issues, I valued meaningful employment.”



“I wanted clear guidance on what employment and education opportunities are available and how the VA could help.”



“My lack of connection to others led to my isolation from society.”



**OUR SOLUTION:
PERSONALIZED TRANSITION
INFORMATION TOOL**

Transition.Vets.Gov

VETTRANSITION FEEDBACK

“Pretty much all-encompassing. Those are things I would have been concerned with. Very much needed”

“Nobody feels listened to or heard when they have to do some standardized form. The more personal it is the better”

“This better organized, less overwhelming tool would be super helpful”

VETRANSITION FEATURES ROLLOUT

**Increased
Personalization**

Outputs tailor to
resources others
have found
helpful

**Timelines and
Reminders**

Advice on
completing tasks

**Partnering and
Mentorship**

Sharing of
contact details
based on
priorities

**Integration
with VA tools
and services**

Informs VA
services, from
TAP program to
further outreach

VETTRANSITION IMPLEMENTATION

Planning

- Promote as service members consider leaving

Separation processing

- Showcase during the Transition Assistance Program

Civilian Life

- Integrate with follow up call from VA Benefits Enrollment (first 30 days post-separation)

FURTHER PROTOTYPE IDEAS

Proactive case management for Vets after transition

Dedicated transition website

VA awards for companies who hire and integrate Vets

Transition Mentorship Program

Face-aging app as part of TAP (pictured)

Skills translator

Challenging future discounting: encourage Vets to take more ownership

Like savers, many veterans fail to accurately consider their future needs. In-line with behavioural economic research on savings, the VA could use face aging software to help make the future more tangible for vets and consider their needs more holistically.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3949005/>

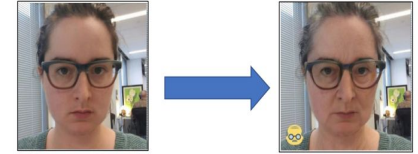
This will help to address overcome insight 1: process and contact with the VA. It will help veterans to visualise their transition and the key points they want to focus on. It bears resemblance to a pre-mortem, where project teams consider why a project might fail before it is delivered:

<https://www.riskology.co/pre-mortem-technique/>

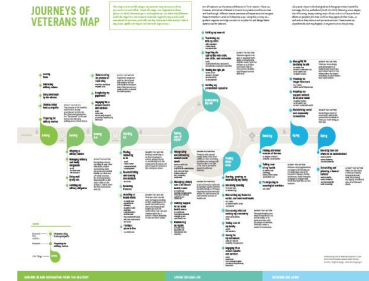
Vets don't understand the benefits of the VA and don't effectively consider future needs

Use face aging software during TAP sessions. Ask veterans to picture themselves in 50 years' time and ask what they need to do to make their future secure

VA uses this approach to talk vets through future needs and services, based around Journey Map



This is you in 50 years' time. Think about the VA Veterans' Journey Map



What are your needs from now until then?

What are your needs from then on?

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

User Insight	Recommendations
“[The web presence] looks good, but it’s difficult to find things”	Redesign websites
“The DoD and VA feel disconnected”	Develop a Public-Private Transition Strategy
“transition should be a partnership”	Proactive outreach Use behavioral ‘nudges’
Reframe the “broken veterans” stereotypes	Human engagement solutions Show the positive side of Veterans and the skills they bring to the workforce



THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

USER STORIES

ANTHONY: US MARINE CORPS ENLISTED VETERAN, LATE THIRTIES



BACKGROUND

- Two tours of Iraq, injured in combat.
- Upon leaving, mental health and physical health issues.
- Started his own Veterans' Charity.

USER STORY

'As a Veteran with health issues, I valued meaningful employment to help my integration back into civilian life. I wanted clear guidance on what employment and education opportunities are available and how the VA could help.'

MARCUS: ARMY INFANTRYMAN VETERAN, EARLY THIRTIES

BACKGROUND

- Served in Afghanistan.
- Suffered PTSD and physical injuries, turned to alcohol.
- Only decided to leave 2 months before, started process 2 weeks before.

USER STORY

'I left without a plan for my transition and I didn't understand the value of the VA. I want the VA to reach out more to Veterans to dispel the stigma around seeking help for physical and mental issues.'



RYAN: NAVY OFFICER VETERAN, LATE TWENTIES



BACKGROUND

- Served 2001 – 2005, after high school
- After leaving, went to a top private college.
- Worked in social security.

USER STORY

'I just want systems that work and clear processes. Logging into the eBenefits system is difficult and the transition experiences of my friends and I have often depended on the quality of the case managers we have been assigned.'

CAITLYN: AIR FORCE VETERAN, EARLY FORTIES

BACKGROUND

- Videographer.
- Served from 2000 – 2012.

USER STORY

'The VA could do more to treat Veterans as people and think about how to reach out to them. The skills you learn during transition are too generic and don't cater for the range of different next steps that Veterans will take. Once you leave the military it is lonely, and the communications you receive are on medical Appointments. The VA or The Military could do more.'



FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Break down VA stovepipes for digital services

Public Private Transition Strategy

Proactive outreach

Use 'Nudges'

Human engagement

Reserve Forces Transition Plan

Avoid 'broken veterans' stereotypes

The screenshot displays the top section of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website. At the top left is the VA seal and the text "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs". To the right is a search bar and a "Get help from Veterans Crisis Line" button. Below this is a navigation menu with links for Health, Benefits, Burials & Memorials, About VA, Resources, Media Room, Locations, and Contact Us. The main content area features a large blue banner for "VAantage Point", the official blog of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, with the URL "BLOGS.VA.GOV". The banner includes a collage of images and a play button icon. On the right side of the banner, there is a section titled "ARE YOU INTERESTED IN?" with links to various services like "Careers at VA", "Exploring your Benefits", "Filling a Prescription", "Schedule a VA Appointment", "Finding a VA Form", "Veterans Choice Program", "Our Providers", "Transparency", and "VA Open Data". Below this is a "STAY CONNECTED WITH VA" section with a "Sign up for email updates." prompt and a red "SUBSCRIBE" button. At the bottom of the page, there are four buttons: "Veterans Crisis Line", "Schedule a VA Appointment", "Make the Connection", and "VAantage Point".