

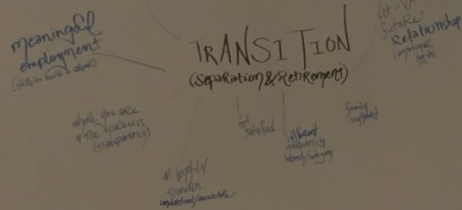
A group of people are gathered around a whiteboard in a meeting room. The whiteboard is covered with numerous sticky notes in various colors (yellow, blue, green). One person is pointing at a note on the board. The scene is dimly lit, with a dark overlay across the image.

INSIGHT PRESENTATION

VA Transition Team

THE TEAM

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Simon Jones



Q&A

THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

There are Over 20 million veterans in the US

200,000 Veterans transition every year



PROBLEM STATEMENT

A woman in a military uniform is sitting on a chair, smiling. A man is sitting next to her, petting a dog. The scene is set in a room with a window in the background.

Transition: The transition from military to civilian life presents many challenges for today's Veterans, and is an area the VA is very interested in better supporting.

'How can we ensure the VA is providing the right services and products to assist Veterans with this significant life change?' - US Digital Service

TIMELINE

Define
the
Problem

Research Synthesis

Demo
Day!

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

User Research

Prototype

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



Interviews

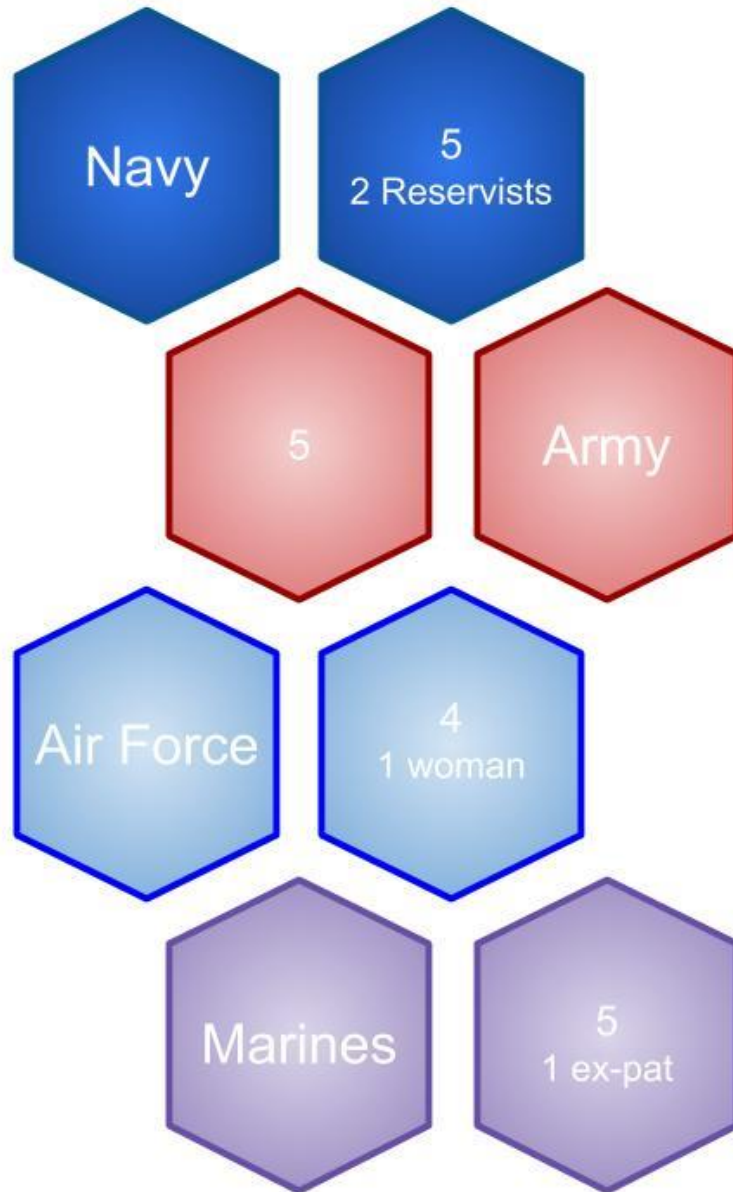
Secondary research

Online resources

Voluntary Service Organisations & NGOs

Site visits

VETERAN INTERVIEWS



SITE VISITS



- Hascom Air Force Base
- Transition Assistance Program Class
- USS Constitution
- New England Center for Homeless Veterans, Boston

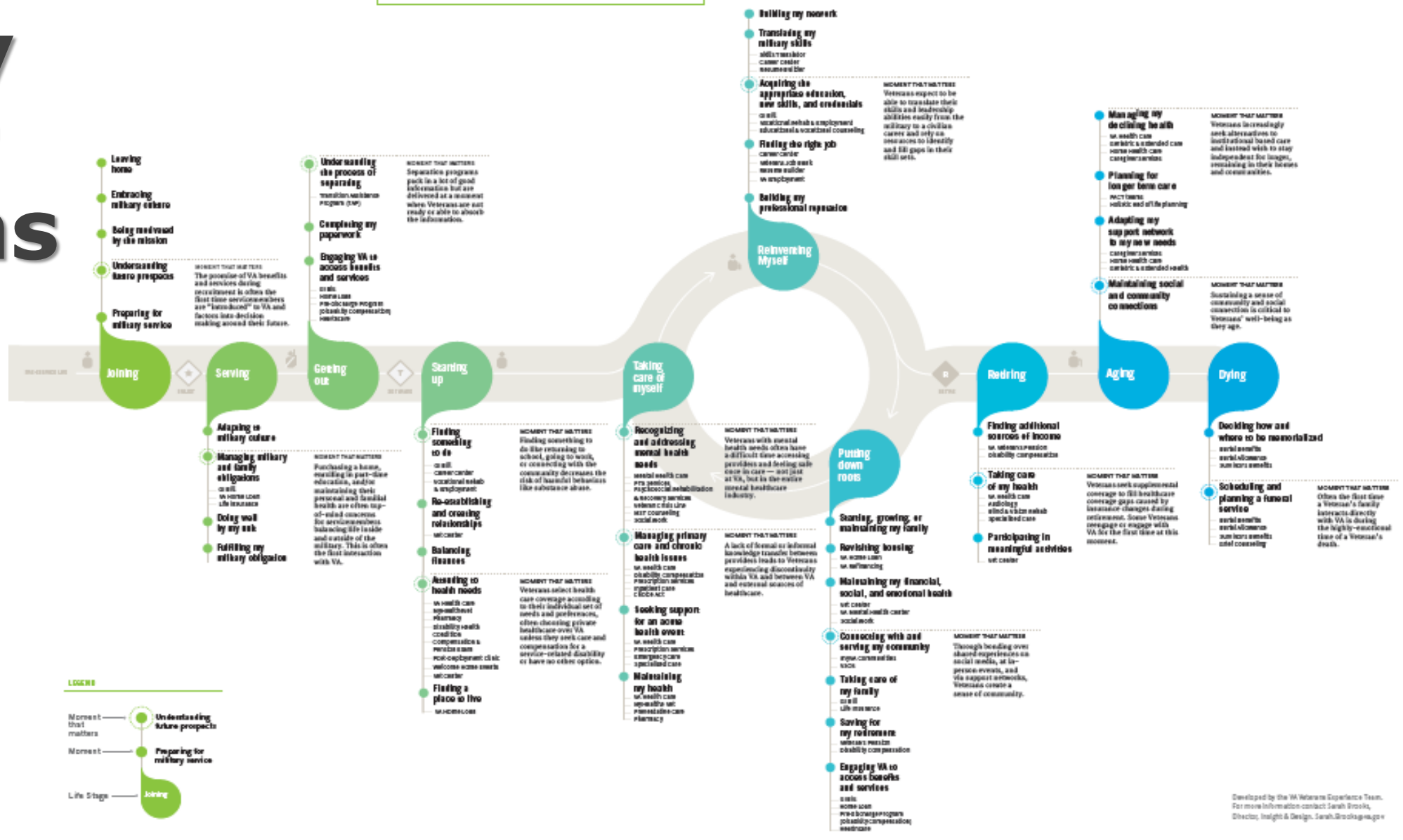
The VA's Journey Map for Veterans

JOURNEYS OF VETERANS MAP

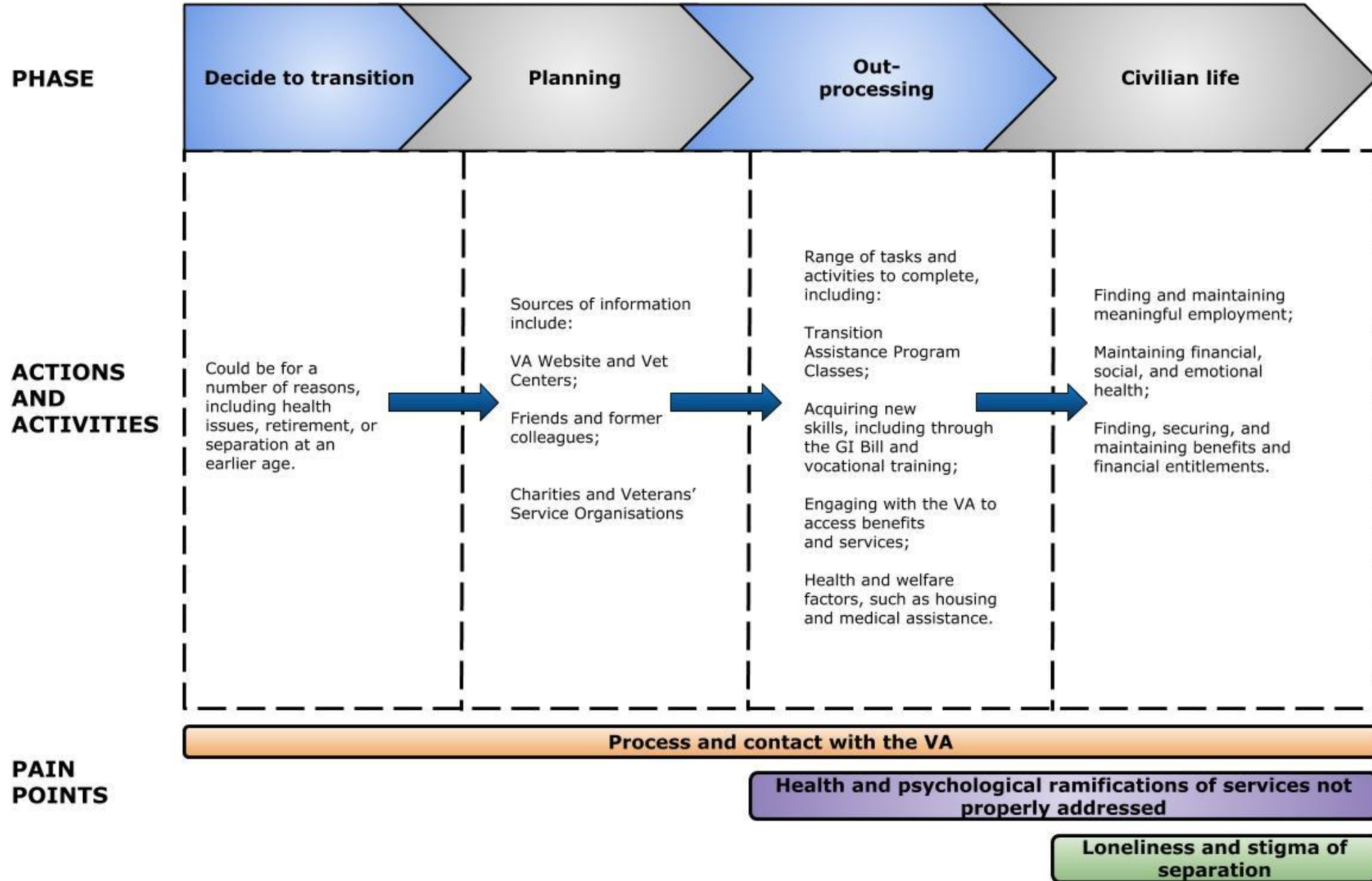
This map covers ten life stages as Veterans may encounter, from pre-service to end of life. These life stages are organized in three phases to which Veterans' goals and aspirations are distinctly different. Each life stage lists out moments Veterans typically experience and associated VA services, and calls out key "moments that matter" which may have significant impact on Veterans' experiences.

Not all Veterans are the same and there is no "one" veteran. There are, however, a broad set of shared moments many Veterans will encounter and live through. Different Veteran personas will experience and navigate these moments in varied and disparate ways. Using this Journey as a guide to organize and align around, VA can plan for and design better experiences for Veterans.

Life events impact individual goals and change priorities. Events like marriage, divorce, widowhood, birth of a child, obtaining a new degree, loss of housing, empty nesting, major illness and so on have profound effects on people's priorities and how they approach their lives—as well as how they interact and perceive services. These events are unpredictable and may happen at any point across this journey.



OUR JOURNEY MAP



PAIN POINTS

Process and Contact with the VA

Confusion (I don't know who to call/where I am in the process)

Tech issues/tech difficulties/process and contact problems (No digital documents, Password requirements, Records were lost, etc.)

Flawed private sector engagement (job opportunities unclear, skills tough to transfer, no networking experience)

Health and Psychological ramifications

Family stress (families, who add extra stress to transition, aren't adequately supported)

Mindset-related challenges (Disability rating system flawed, Stigma against using mental health services, etc.)

Loneliness and stigma, from service through separation

Personal connections during/post transition (separation can be a lonely process)

Specific Pain Points (via KJ)
Education benefits (Education institutions abuse GI bill and other worthless causes, TAP doesn't help people enrolling college, etc)

stigma & sentiment
Mental Health issues

VSO's not meeting

Confusion

General

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

more accessible

Technical issues

Vets are individuals who are being treated as a group

TAP can be "death by a thousand cuts"

Need to understand who handles what

Health Care System has service members

Disability rating system

Psychological

Psychological

Confusing! Don't know who you are

What are the options?

Understanding who you qualify for

Difficult to arrange medical appointments at VA

Confused

Family stress

Personal connections

Stigma

Records were lost

Password requirements

No digital documents

Engagement

Disability rating system

Stigma against using mental health services

Education benefits

Flawed private sector engagement

Job opportunities unclear

Skills tough to transfer

Family stress

Personal connections

Stigma

Education benefits

Records were lost

Password requirements

No digital documents

Engagement

Disability rating system

Stigma against using mental health services

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Flawed private sector engagement

Job opportunities unclear

Skills tough to transfer

Family stress

Personal connections

Stigma

Education benefits

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.'



INSIGHT 1: Process and Contact with the VA

Solutions needed to tackle:

Impersonal feel – *“I want to feel like a person”*

Unresponsiveness – *“here’s where I need help. I have a problem, now what are my options”*

Confusion

Technical Difficulties

INSIGHT 2: Health and Psychological Ramifications



Getting Care

- Challenging “perverse” healthcare system
- Long waits for medical office
- Difficult to arrange appointments at convenient times
- Doctors change frequently and you lose progress

Mental Health

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

INSIGHT 3: Loneliness and stigma, from service through separation

Loneliness:

- Loss of brotherhood can make vets feel worthless
- You go through transition alone
- “Not a lot of people to answer your questions”
- “It’s like they don’t care about you”
- Vets are individuals with agency: how much should we have our hands held?

Stigma:

- Too much focus on mental health makes vets feel broken
- Disability rating feels inhumane
- Veterans are adults with agency and solutions must consider how much guidance they want or need

NEXT STEPS

PROCEDURAL PAIN POINTS

Further Research might involve working to pinpoint recurring mishaps and understand their root causes. This might involve:
Further interviews with administrators at the VA/USDS
Understanding of Relevant Digital Security protocols
Logins to eBenefits, etc.
Further exploration of VA's digital service offerings

UNDERSTAND TRANSITION COMMUNITIES

Further research may explore the merit of greater incorporating these communities/social aspects into the Transition Process as a whole:
Matching people at the beginning of the process with people at the end process

ADVANCES IN GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT

Further research might explore how the VA can streamline the connection of Transitioning Veterans with employment opportunities, including:
Identifying best practices for Veteran Recruitment as utilized in the Private Sector
Investigation of current Veteran Job Training Schemas, and examination of ways to supplement existing structures
Development of Personalized of Job/Industry Training tools such as Resume/CV help

QUANTIFY VA ENGAGEMENT

Further Research might be directed toward further understanding the metrics and attitudes surrounding engagement with VA benefits
Cataloguing all VA services and offerings, as well as eligibility requirements
Using this list to understand which benefits are utilized the most, and which ones are the least
Creation of a simple, yet encapsulating Transition Journey Map