Ask VA Business Dashboard Guide

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1  Note: All information shown in the screenshots is fictional test user data.
Overview

Ask VA (AVA) provides a web interface for Veterans, their families, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), and others to request information on the multitude of VA services and facilities. This guide is specifically for AVA users that operate in a business capacity on behalf of other veterans - School Officials, VSOs, Authorized 3rd Parties, etc. - who need to be able to separate their business inquiries from any personal inquiries they may make through AVA.

User Access

Any member of the public can access the AVA portal to submit inquiries or comments to VA. This includes those who have verified their identity through a service such as ID.me, who may access additional features in the portal. To access the business dashboard, you will first have to log into AVA.

Website: https://Ask.VA.gov

Navigation

The AVA website is available through the VA website va.gov. At the top of each VA.gov page is a Contact us hyperlink. Clicking this link takes you to the Contact us page.

On the Contact us page, you can click on the link that states Contact us online through Ask VA of the page. The Welcome to Ask VA (AVA) page appears. You will be taken to the following page:

Note: All information shown in the screenshots is fictional test user data.
To access your AVA business dashboard, you must sign-in by taking the following steps:

1. **Click Create Account/Sign-in to start your message.** You will be directed to a page where you will choose the credential type you wish (ID.me, DS Logon, or My HealtheVet).

2. Sign-in using your selected credential and follow the prompts to complete signing-in. Once complete, the My AVA Dashboard page appears. If you have created an inquiry that has been identified with one of the business relationships, then your My AVA Dashboard will have two separated tabs: one for Business inquiries, and one for Personal inquiries. If this is the case, your My AVA Dashboard will default to the Personal Tab: It will look like this:

![My AVA Dashboard](image)

The **Business** tab will be displayed only if you have submitted at least one inquiry on behalf of someone else. Click on the **Business** tab to view those inquiries.

![My AVA Dashboard](image)

You can sort the data by clicking on each column name except for the **Submitter Question** column. If you click on the hyperlink of the number in the **Inquiry Number** field, the details of that inquiry appear. This page will show any response from VA staff to the inquiry.

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**Note:** All information shown in the screenshots is fictional test user data.
If you’d like to send a message related to the inquiry, you can click **Send VA a Message**.

Application Functionality

Describing your Inquiry/Selecting Topics

The current functionality for submitting an inquiry is unchanged for any user that is NOT submitting under the GI Bill Category. When creating an inquiry, you will select a category and topic to describe the general subject matter of your inquiry. In some cases, you can further refine it by selecting a subtopic. Selecting certain categories, topics, or subtopics will cause additional fields to appear on the inquiry submittal screen.

Selection of the category, topic, and subtopic allows the system to route your inquiry to the appropriate group within VA. Additionally, a well-crafted description helps to increase the likelihood that your inquiry will be routed correctly and the sooner you will get a response.

**Note:** Some selectable categories, such as GI Bill, require you to be signed-in with a verified account to submit your inquiry. If you select such a category while not signed-in, the *Sign-in Required* message appears. If this occurs, click **OK**. Then, either select a different category or sign into your verified account prior to completing your inquiry.
Once you are at the New Inquiry page, you can use the lookup windows to select the inquiry category, topic, and subtopic by taking the following steps:

1. Click the magnifying glass icon at the right of the Category field. The Lookup records window for Category appears.
2. Select the checkbox for the category that best describes your inquiry, then click the Select button. The window closes and the selected category appears in the field.

**Lookup Window Notes:**

Clicking on a column header reverses the sort order of the items in the list.

Use the scrollbar on the right to see entries at the bottom of that page of the list. You will have to select the next page to see additional entries (using the page indicator or arrow).

The page indicator shows the number of pages of available selections. Click on the numbers or the arrows to navigate between pages.

You can also search for an entry using the Search field at the top. This field accepts asterisks (*) as a wild card at any location in the text (i.e., if you type *ben* in the field, the search results show all entries that contain the letters ben in any part of the label. After typing your search text, click the magnifying glass and the results will appear in the list.

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5 **Note:** All information shown in the screenshots is fictional test user data.
Note that when the category appears, the field also shows the delete icon. Clicking this clears the field – you will have to use the Lookup records window to select a different category.

3. Next, select a topic for your inquiry by clicking the magnifying glass icon. The Lookup records window pops up displaying the available topics. The contents of this lookup window depend on which category you selected. If you change or delete the category, the list of topics will change.
4. Select the checkmark for the topic that best describes your inquiry, then click the **Select** button. The window closes and the selected topic appears in the field.

**Note:** If, and only if, a selected topic has subtopics, a **Which subtopic best describes your question?** field appears. This is a required field – continue with Step 5. If the field does not appear, then that topic has no subtopics, and you will not be required to choose a subtopic.

5. The **Which subtopic best describes your question?** field contents depend on the Category/Topic combination. You can click the **magnifying glass** icon. The selection of some subtopics will result in additional required fields appearing.

### Creating a New Inquiry

After signing-in and landing on the **New Inquiry** page, take the following steps:

1. Select a category describing your question in the first field by clicking the **magnifying glass** icon. The **Lookup records** window pops up displaying the available categories.

2. Select the checkbox for the category that best describes your inquiry, then click the **Select** button. The window closes and the selected category appears in the field. In addition, the **Which topic best describes your question?** and **What is your question?** fields appear.

3. Select a topic for your inquiry by clicking the **magnifying glass** icon. The **Lookup records** window pops up displaying the available topics. The contents of this lookup window depend on what category you selected. If you change the category (or delete it), the list of topics will change.

4. Select the checkmark for the topic that best describes your inquiry, then click the **Select** button. The window closes and the selected topic appears in the field.

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**Note:** All information shown in the screenshots is fictional test user data.
Note: Depending on the Category/Topic combination selected, additional fields may appear. These additional fields displaying (*Required) must be completed for the successful submission of your inquiry.

5. The Which subtopic best describes your question? field contents depend on the Category/Topic combination. If it appears (should not appear if the list is empty), click the magnifying glass icon. The selection of some subtopics will result in additional required fields appearing.

6. Use the drop-down arrow in the My inquiry is field to select I am a: as the reason for the inquiry. The I am a: field (among others) appears.

7. Use the drop-down list in the I am a field to enter your relationship to the Veteran. Note: for GI Bill Inquiries you may select School Certifying Official, Work Study Site Supervisor, and OJT/Apprenticeship Supervisor.

8. Type your subject in the Subject field. This is a free text field and should be a brief summary of the nature of your question.

9. Type your question in the What is your Question? field. This is a free text field. Include as much detail as possible to describe your question.
10. Click **Next**. The *Tell us about yourself* page will appear. This page should already contain information because you signed-in to create the inquiry. Please review and make sure the information is correct and all required fields are completed.

![Tell us about yourself screenshot]

11. Click **Next**. The system indicates that it is processing, then the *Review your information* page appears.

![Review your information screenshot]
Attaching Supporting Documents

In some cases, you can upload files that might help explain your inquiry. Not all topics allow attachments. If your inquiry category allows attachments, and you wish to upload a file, the **Add Attachment** button will appear at the bottom of the *Review Your Inquiry* page (the final page prior to submitting your inquiry).

To attach a file:

1. Click **Add Attachment**. The *Add Attachment* window appears.

2. Click **Choose File**. A file explorer window appears.

3. Navigate to the file you want to upload, then select the file.

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**Note:** All information shown in the screenshots is fictional test user data.
4. Click **Open**. The file window closes, and the selected file name appears in the **Add Note** window.

![Add Attachment]

- **File attachments** below must not exceed 25 megabytes and are limited to files of type: jpeg, jpg, .pdf (unlocked), .gif, .bmp.

- **Attach a file** Choose File No file chosen

- **Upload Attachment** [Cancel]

5. Click **Upload Attachment**. The window closes and the file appears on the inquiry page.  

**Note:** The file will be submitted/uploaded when you submit the inquiry. If you do not submit the inquiry, the file will not be uploaded.

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## Important Differences to Note Prior to Submittal

Depending on your category/topic selection, you may have the option to upload an attachment. If the option is available, the **Attachments** section will appear, and you can upload a file. If the section does not appear, you cannot upload an attachment.

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## Checking Inquiry Status

To check the status of your inquiry:

1. Navigate to the **Welcome to Ask VA (AVA)** page and click **Create Account/Sign in** to start your message.

2. Follow the sign-in process. When completed, the **My AVA Dashboard** page appears displaying any inquiries you have submitted. It will look like this:

![My AVA Dashboard]

You have not submitted any inquiries yet.

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**Note:** All information shown in the screenshots is fictional test user data.
Note: If the Personal tab displays any inquiry that should be a Business inquiry, send an inquiry under the same category/topic to have the inquiries updated. Include the inquiry number in your description/question.

3. Click on the Business tab to display your business inquiries. This page lists the identification number, topic, and question for each inquiry submitted. It also indicates the last date on which the inquiry was modified and the status.

4. Click on the hyperlinked number in the Inquiry Num column. The Response Inbox page appears with details of any messages sent by VA staff.

Note: You can also reach this page by clicking the drop-down arrow at the end of the row and selecting View details.

5. Click the Response from VA to read the response. The View Details message appears.

Note: All information shown in the screenshots is fictional test user data.
Note that if the VA included an attachment, it would appear at the bottom of the page.

6. Once you have finished reading the message, click the X in the top right corner of the message. The message closes and you return to the Response Inbox page.

7. If you want to provide additional details or other response to the message, click **Send VA a Message**. The Create Reply window appears.

8. Type your information in the Message box, then click **Submit**. The window closes and your response now appears on the Response Inbox page for the inquiry.

9. Once you have finished, you can click **My Dashboard** at the top of the page to return to the My AVA Dashboard page. You can also close your browser or navigate to another page.

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