

ARMY EMERGENCY RELIEF



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ASSISTANCE BULLETIN NUMBER: 02-2021

SUBJECT: CAREER SKILLS PROGRAM (CSP) ASSISTANCE GUIDANCE

1. REFERENCES.

- a. Army Regulation 930-4, dated 5 May 2019
- b. Army Emergency Relief Section Reference Manual (SRM), Chapter 2, dated 15 October 2019

2. APPLICABILITY.

These instructions apply to the Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord AER Sections.

3. BACKGROUND.

The Department of Defense (DOD) SkillBridge Program assist service members in obtaining degrees or certificates that are applicable to the civilian workforce. The Army's version of the SkillBridge Program is called the Army Career Skills Program (CSP). The CSP affords transitioning Soldiers the opportunity to participate in "first class" apprenticeships, on-the-job training (OJT), employment skills training (EST), and internships up to 180 days prior to separation from the Army with a high probability of employment in high-demand and highly-skilled jobs. Given the CSP flexibility and Soldiers' unique interests and ambitions, the program has helped countless transitioning Soldiers successfully prepare for life after the Army in the civilian workforce. The Program's flexibility and wide range of options allow Soldiers of all interests, ambitions, and background to develop the skills, credentials, and knowledge to successfully find employment and continue serving their country as private citizens.

4. PURPOSE.

This AER Bulletin provides guidance for providing AER assistance to eligible Soldiers who have been approved for participation in the Army Career Skills Program. Eligible Army personnel may be provided financial assistance for select expenses as described in paragraph 6 below to relieve and/or soften the financial burden for Soldiers approved for participation in the CSP at Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

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5. ELIGIBILITY.

Active Duty Soldiers are eligible for AER CSP assistance when the criteria below are met:

- a. Must be transitioning from Active Duty service with an honorable discharge
- b. Must be within 180 days of separation or retirement
- c. Must have completed SFL TAP Career Readiness Standards requirements (**5 Day mandatory workshops**)
- d. Must have Field Grade Officer approval; minimum Battalion / O5 level concurrence
- e. Must complete CSP Soldier Participation Memorandum
- f. Must have a CSP Program Coordinator Memorandum that identifies valid financial needs (Lease Agreements and estimates should accompany this memo)

6. GENERAL GUIDELINES.

- a. Assistance will be provided not earlier than 180 days prior to the scheduled discharge date.
- b. Assistance may be considered for the following expenses:
 - (1) Travel costs to training location (i.e., airfare, fuel)
 - (2) Uniforms and business attire
 - (3) Tools and supplies
 - (4) Temporary lodging when barracks space is unavailable
 - (5) Initial Rent and Deposit at new job location
 - (6) Utility Deposits (Electricity, Gas, Internet, Water, Trash and Sewer) at new job location.
 - (7) Food
- c. Assistance will be provided as a **Grant for up to \$500** for Soldiers who are participating in a local CSP on their respective post, and a **Grant for up to \$1000** for Soldiers who are approved for administrative absence to travel to and participate in a CSP at a location away from their current duty station. Although this category has a \$500 cap for local CSPs and a \$1000 cap for those Soldiers who must travel to another CSP location, additional assistance may be requested as an exception with Unit Chain of Command and Level II concurrence.
- d. Although this is a grant program, a Budget Planning Sheet (BPS) is required to be completed. A review of the completed BPS provides the AER Officer with a

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sense of whether there are financial management indicators that would prompt referral for financial counseling.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES.

a. HQ AER Assistance Section.

- 1) Establish ARMS Program “**Army Career Skills Program**” for assistance request.
- 2) Establish secure portal instructions for AER Officers to send and receive application information from Leaders and Soldiers.
- 3) Receive feedback from the Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, and JBLM AER Sections on any procedural improvements required.

b. HQ AER Accounting Section.

- 1) Process ARMS ACH requests in a timely manner upon validation of signed AER Form 52, AER Check and Promissory Note in ARMS.
- 2) Provide feedback to the Assistance Section of any rejected ACH transactions and reason.

8. PROCEDURE.

a. Soldier approved for participation in CSP.

Inform the Company Commander or First Sergeant of any valid financial needs for CSP expenses listed in paragraph 6(b) above.

b. Company Commander or First Sergeant.

- 1) Validates a financial need exists for items listed in paragraph 6(b) above.
- 2) Reviews Soldier’s Leave and Earning Statement (LES) and Spouse income sources (if applicable) when completing AER Form 57, Budget Planning Sheet (BPS) to determine the overall financial situation.
- 3) If AER assistance is required, verifies the amount(s) to meet valid financial needs IAW paragraph 6(b) above.
- 4) Ensures Soldier meets eligibility criteria for participation in CSP and criteria to receive AER assistance.
- 5) Reviews all required CSP supporting documentation IAW paragraphs 5 and 6 above for accuracy and completion.
- 6) Ensures Soldier completes AER Form 101, Application for Financial Assistance itemizing specific valid needs in Block 17.
- 7) Ensures Soldier completes AER Form 575, Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Authorization Form for ACH transactions, if applicable.
- 8) Through secure means, electronically forwards all required AER application information and supporting documentation listed in paragraphs 5 and 6 above

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- to their respective CSP Coordinators on Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, and JBLM for review, validation, and concurrence.
- 9) Once CSP Coordinator concurrence is received, forwards AER application with CSP supporting documentation listed in paragraphs 5 and 6 above to their respective AER Section located on Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, and JBLM for review, evaluation, and assistance consideration.

NOTE: Unit Leaders and Soldiers will ensure documents containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII) are only transmitted electronically through a secure means i.e. encrypted email, DoD Safe secure portal or other secure means. A secure link can be requested from the local AER Officer or HQ AER to securely transmit documents containing PII.

c. **AER Officers.**

- 1) Receive, evaluate, and process CSP assistance requests in accordance with these guidelines.
- 2) Ensure widest dissemination of these instructions to Soldiers assigned to Fort Hood and Fort Bliss, Texas and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington.
- 3) Provide instructions on how to process AER assistance request(s) electronically in accordance with these guidelines when “face to face” interaction is restricted for AER Staff members.
- 4) When Soldiers and Leaders request a secure link, send secure DoD safe portal links to allow them to **SEND** and **RECEIVE** application data securely.
- 5) Assist Soldiers and Leaders as necessary to validate CSP expenses.
- 6) Input the following case information in ARMS on the “**Application Tab**”:
 - a) Under “**Program**” select “**Army Career Skills Program.**”
 - b) Under “**Assistance Reasons**” select “**Unforeseen / Unbudgeted / Known Expenses - Other.**”
 - c) Under “**Disbursement Category**” on the Transaction Tab select “**Career Skills Program (Local)**” or “**Career Skills Program (PTDY)**” as the category and select the appropriate “**Disbursement Sub-Category**”.
 - d) When entering an amount that exceeds the category cap of \$500 (Local) or \$1000 (PTDY), select “**Exception**” as the “**Disbursement Category**” and enter “**Category Cap Exception**” as the “**Disbursement Sub-Category.**”
- 7) Verify client banking information is correct on AER Form 575 when the funds will be disbursed via ACH.

9. **MANDATORY DOCUMENTS.**

- a. AER FORM 101, Application for AER Assistance
- b. AER Form 57, Budget Planning Sheet (BPS)
- c. AER Form 575, Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Authorization Form for ACH transactions, as applicable
- d. Leave and Earning Statement (LES) and other earning statements for Soldier and/or Spouse, as applicable

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- e. Documentation to support and validate the financial need, as required in paragraphs 5 and 6 above.

10. This bulletin will remain in effect until 17 September 2021.

11. Points of contacts for this bulletin are as follows:

- Assistance Section - CSM(R) Scott Wilder or CSM(R) Charles Durr at (571) 389-7137/ Extension #1 or via email at assistance@aerhq.org.

12. If additional guidance is required during non-business hours, please contact an HQ AER caseworker through the Army Operations Center at (703) 697-0218.

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