

ARMY EMERGENCY RELIEF

EFFECTIVE DATE: 2 DECEMBER 2021

ASSISTANCE BULLETIN NUMBER: 02-2021-1

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 all Army 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.

5. ELIGIBILITY.

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

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- 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 complete CSP Soldier Participation Memorandum that includes Field Grade Officer approval for participation in the CSP; minimum Battalion / O5 level concurrence
- e. 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. For Soldiers stationed in CONUS locations, assistance may be provided as a **Grant up to \$500** when participating in a local CONUS CSP on or near their respective duty station, and a **Grant up to \$1000** when approved for administrative absence (PTDY) to travel and participate in a CSP at a location away from their current duty station. For Soldiers stationed OCONUS, assistance may be provided as a **Grant up to \$1,500** to participate in a CONUS CSP. Although this category has caps, additional assistance may be requested as an "exception" for amounts that exceed \$500 (Local CSP CONUS), \$1,000 (PTDY Non-Local CSP CONUS) and \$1,500 (PTDY Non-Local OCONUS). Although there is no limit to how many requests a Soldier can submit, the combined total of all requests will not exceed the \$500 (Local CSP CONUS), \$1,000 (PTDY Non-Local CSP CONUS) and \$1,500 (PTDY Non-Local CSP OCONUS) prescribed limits, unless submitted as an exception. All exceptions will require CSP Coordinator and a Level II recommendation for Level III consideration and decision. **Only items on the approved list of expenses will be considered when requesting assistance through the CSP Assistance Program. For expenses that you feel are related**

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to the CSP, but are NOT on the approved list, please submit as a separate request.

- d. No Budget Planning Sheet (BPS) is required when requesting assistance at or under the prescribed limits as stated in paragraph 6c. A BPS is only required when the requested amounts exceed the prescribed dollar caps. A review of the completed BPS provides the AER Officer with a 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 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.

If the request falls at or under the prescribed dollar caps, Soldiers can utilize Direct Access to request funds and can be approved by the Level I. When the requested amount exceeds the prescribed dollar caps, the request must be submitted as a Routine request and will require routing a prescribed in paragraph 6c above. For Routine requests, inform the CSP Coordinator of any valid financial needs for CSP expenses listed in paragraph 6(b) above. AER Officers will insert the CSP Coordinator’s name and contact information in the **Unit COC/Leader** blocks on the Recommendations/Decisions tab.

b. CSP Coordinator.

- 1) Validates a financial need exists for items listed in paragraph 6(b) above.

NOTE: CSP Coordinators and Soldiers will ensure documents containing

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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 their respective installation.
- 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) Reviews Soldier’s Leave and Earning Statement (LES) and Spouse income sources when completing AER Form 57, Budget Planning Sheet (BPS) to determine the overall financial situation (if applicable).
- 6) If AER assistance is required, verifies the amount(s) to meet valid financial needs IAW paragraph 6(b) above.
- 7) Ensures Soldier meets eligibility criteria for participation in CSP and criteria to receive AER assistance.
- 8) Reviews all required CSP supporting documentation IAW paragraphs 5 and 6 above for accuracy and completion.
- 9) Ensures Soldier completes AER Form 101, Application for Financial Assistance itemizing specific valid needs in Block 17.
- 10) Ensures Soldier completes AER Form 575, Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Authorization Form for ACH transactions, if applicable. **The AER Form 575 is not a mandatory requirement when an applicant is serviced “in-person”. It serves as a means to capture Bank Account information when an applicant is not serviced “in person and application data is submitted electronically through secure means.**
- 11) Assist Soldiers and Leaders as necessary to validate CSP expenses.
- 12) Input the following case information in ARMS on the “**Application Tab**”:
 - a) The “**Application Type**” for a CSP request will always be entered as a “**Routine**” request.
 - b) Under “**Program**” select “**Army Career Skills Program.**”
 - c) Under “**Assistance Reasons**” select “**Unforeseen / Unbudgeted / Known Expenses - Other.**”
 - d) Under “**Disbursement Category**” on the Transaction Tab select “**Career Skills Program (Local - CONUS)**”, “**Career Skills Program (PTDY Non-Local - CONUS)**” or “**Career Skills Program (PTDY Non-Local - OCONUS)**” as the category and select the appropriate “**Disbursement Sub-Category.**”
 - e) Due to current ARMS CSP Logic, when entering an amount that exceeds the category cap of \$500 (Local/CONUS), \$1,000 (PTDY Non-Local/CONUS)

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and \$1,500 (PTDY Non-Local OCONUS), the Disbursement Categories and Disbursement Sub-categories will be entered differently based on the number of requested expenses. Both ways will route the request to the Level III Approving Official for final approval. When entering **one Disbursement Sub-Category**, select “**Exception**” as the “**Disbursement Category**” and enter “**Category Cap Exception**” as the “**Disbursement Sub-Category**.” When entering **two or more Disbursement Sub-Categories**, select “**Career Skills Program (Local - CONUS)**”, “**Career Skills Program (PTDY Non-Local - CONUS)**” or “**Career Skills Program (PTDY Non-Local - OCONUS)**” as the “**Disbursement Category**” and select the appropriate “**Disbursement Sub-Categories**”.

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
- 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 rescinded by HQ AER.

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.

5 Encls

1. CSP Decision Matrix/Flow Chart
2. Example CSP Memorandum
3. CSP Map & Region Coordinator List
4. AER Section Phone List
5. Media CSP Marketing/Media Kit

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