

Army's Career Skills Program Trains Transitioning Soldiers for Civilian Careers

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Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey addresses ways to connect Soldiers to civilian careers at the 2017 Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Program Symposium in Louisville, Kentucky, March 29, 2017. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brian Hamilton)

The Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program offers more than 5,000 employment opportunities to help Soldiers gain civilian skills while transitioning out of active duty. The Career Skills Program gives Soldiers the opportunity to learn vital career skills in targeted industries. Noncommissioned officers are prime candidates for the 30 Army installations with 130 training programs located throughout the country.¹

History of the CSP

Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act and Returning Heroes and Wounded Warriors Work Opportunity Tax Credits, helped create the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program of today.

Through this new law, public law 112-56, other Soldier-to-civilian initiatives took place, such as the Department of Defense SkillBridge (<https://dodskillbridge.com/>) program, which the Army implemented through the CSP. CSPs are executed by Installation Management Command and provide Soldiers the ability to participate in apprenticeships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, employment skills training, and internships while still on active duty.²

The first Army CSP was established in April 2013 at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Tacoma, Washington, with United Association Veterans in Piping, which prepares Soldiers for careers in the pipe trade.³ UA VIP hosted 22 participants its first year and continues to grow considerably each year.

Prior to December 2016, Soldiers could participate in a CSP within a 50-mile radius of their duty location. Now with the availability of permissive temporary duty, Soldiers can attend a CSP outside of the 50-mile radius.⁴ Commanders with general court-martial authority can approve up to 120 days of permissive temporary duty in order for Soldiers to attend.⁵

Successes

In 2016, 2,625 Soldiers enrolled in CSPs with a 95 percent completion rate, which resulted in the job placement of approximately 2,150 Soldiers.⁶ Programs for 2017 are on-target to exceed these milestones.

Retired Staff Sgt. Justin Ackerman, a recently transitioned field artillery automated tactical data systems specialist, previously assigned to 2nd battalion, 77th Field Artillery Regiment, 21st Brigade Combat Team at Fort Carson, Colorado attended the Teamsters Military Assistance Program. TMAP helps transitioning Soldiers train for careers as ABF Freight truck drivers.⁷

"The TMAP program was the answer to a very hard question for me. What will I do when I get out of the Army?" Ackerman said. "And, I know now that it was the right decision for me and my family to provide a stable income with full benefits during my transition."⁸

Past CSPs have included training in welding, pipefitting, roofing, construction, and trucking. Other programs provided training in solar energy, software systems, mechatronics, conservation, and electrical careers; they also provided introductions to the medical industry, police training, and corporate business.

How to Join

To apply for a CSP, Soldiers should contact the local SFL-TAP center at their installation. The SFL-TAP staff will put Soldiers in touch with CSP coordinators located on their installation or with a regional coordinator.

Soldiers must meet the following qualifications: honorable discharge, battalion commander approval, and begin the program within 180 days of their transition date.⁹ Each individual program is highly competitive with varying admissions qualifications, often requiring an interview or application process. Soldiers must also sign a letter of participation, which allows them "to fully participate in the CSP through completion."¹⁰

To learn more about CSP opportunities and to download the required commander approval forms, visit the IMCOM Career Skills Program website at <https://www.imcom.army.mil/Organization/G1Personnel/CareerSkillsProgram.aspx> (<https://www.imcom.army.mil/Organization/G1Personnel/CareerSkillsProgram.aspx>).

How Companies Can Register as a CSP

The Army works with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, as well as federal and non-federal entities, to determine potential training to add to CSP. The focus of CSP program offerings includes "no-cost" opportunities with at least an 85 percent graduation rate and an employment rate of at least 90 percent of program graduates.¹¹

Every company must go through a vetting process. The program they provide must give Soldiers the opportunity to participate in training during their transition, as well as employment opportunities for a successful future career.¹²

CSP is one of the Army's up-and-coming transition programs. The program's efforts directly connect transitioning Soldiers with careers in the civilian sector.¹³

The program is expected to grow and assist more Soldiers if they are encouraged to attend SFL-TAP early and often, spreading requirements out over the course of 18 months (or 24 months for retirees).¹⁴

Since the application process is rigorous and CSPs are only available in the final 180 days of a Soldier's transition, it is important for them to attend SFL-TAP early in order to consider their options for bridging any skills gaps required for future career success.

NCOs are great candidates for many CSPs and can be advocates for helping junior Soldiers gain awareness about the program, as well as opportunities in the civilian sector. They can learn more at <https://www.imcom.army.mil/Organization/G1Personnel/CareerSkillsProgram.aspx> (<https://www.imcom.army.mil/Organization/G1Personnel/CareerSkillsProgram.aspx>).

Notes

1. *NCO Journal*, "Career Program Helps Cut Soldier Unemployment Payments to 13-Year Low," *NCO Journal* website, 31 January 2017 accessed 07 November 2017, <http://ncojournal.dodlive.mil/tag/career-skills-program/> (<http://ncojournal.dodlive.mil/tag/career-skills-program/>).
2. U.S. Army Installation Management Command, "Army Career Skills Program," Army Mil website, 12 July 2017, <https://www.army.mil/standto/2017-07-13> (<https://www.army.mil/standto/2017-07-13>).
3. "About UA VIP Veterans in Piping," UA VIP website, accessed 22 November 2017, <https://www.uavip.org/about-uavip> (<https://www.uavip.org/about-uavip>).
4. "Organization / G1 Personnel / Career Skills Program," INCOM Mil website, accessed 03 November 2017, <https://www.imcom.army.mil/Organization/G1Personnel/CareerSkillsProgram.aspx> (<https://www.imcom.army.mil/Organization/G1Personnel/CareerSkillsProgram.aspx>).
5. "Organization / G1 Personnel / Career Skills Program," IMCOM Mil website.
6. "Common Operating Picture (COP) Reporting Data," IMCOM, 2016.
7. "ABF Freight Partners With Teamsters and U.S. Army for Civilian Career Training," ArcBest website, 21 January 2015, accessed 06 November 2017, <https://arcb.com/about/news-events/press-releases/abf-freight-partners-with-teamsters-and-u-s-army-f> (<https://arcb.com/about/news-events/press-releases/abf-freight-partners-with-teamsters-and-u-s-army-f>).
8. Success story submitted to IMCOM by Justin Ackerman. October 2017.
9. U.S. Army Installation Management Command, "Army Career Skills Program."
10. U.S. Army, *Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance*, AR 600-81 (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, May 17, 2016) 35-36, http://www.apd.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/r600-81%20FINAL%20for%20the%20WEB.pdf (http://www.apd.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/r600-81%20FINAL%20for%20the%20WEB.pdf).

11. AR 600-81, 34-38.
12. AR 600-81, 48.
13. *NCO Journal*, "Career Program Helps Cut Soldier Unemployment Payments to 13-Year Low."
14. "Preseparation Timeline," Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program website, accessed 06 November 2017, https://www.sftap.army.mil/pages/transition/preseparation_timeline.aspx (https://www.sftap.army.mil/pages/transition/preseparation_timeline.aspx).