



# Association of the United States Army

Voice for the Army—Support for the Soldier

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## Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness

*Building Resilience, Enhancing Performance*

*We have to take our Soldiers from the time they come into the Army and build resiliency within them all the way until the time they get out, not only with our Soldiers and their families, but with our great civilians.*

General John F. Campbell  
Vice Chief of Staff, Army  
31 July 2013<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

America's all-volunteer Army has prevailed during more than 12 continuous years at war in some of the most formidable missions in its history. These professional Soldiers, their families and the Army civilians who serve alongside them have faithfully answered the nation's repeated calls to duty and accomplished sustained missions that would have decimated most forces. Throughout its history the Army community has demonstrated character, competence and commitment to the Army profession.

In addition, the all-volunteer force learned to be agile and flexible following cumulative challenges associated with sustained combat and multiple deployments. Now, as more Soldiers transition to a garrison environment—a culture that also presents specific challenges—there is an opportunity to further reinforce the Army profession and improve unit readiness by focusing on resilience across the force. Resilience is directly linked to readiness; therefore, the Army must invest in its people by providing them with the training, skills, tools and resources needed to build, strengthen and maintain their overall fitness.

Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2) is an Army program designed to ensure that members of the Army community continue to thrive in their professional and personal lives. The program aims to sustain the entire Army—active, Guard, Reserve, civilians and family members—by ensuring that the quality of life of those who volunteer to serve is commensurate with the quality of their service.



### Background

During the protracted conflict of the early 2000s, the Army recognized the need to build resilience throughout the force to maintain readiness and ensure the well-being of the entire Army community. Therefore, it took immediate steps to develop and implement preventive, proactive measures to improve the total health of its Soldiers.<sup>2</sup> It approached industry partners and academia to identify ways to better instill holistic fitness in its personnel.

With more than 30 years of scientific validation and proven results, the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Resiliency Project has emerged as a model for building an Army-wide resilience training program. The skills taught by this program helped grow a wide range of competencies that Army leaders recognized as ideal traits to foster across the all-volunteer force. In 2009, the Army formally established the Comprehensive

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.army.mil/article/108475>

<sup>2</sup> See AUSA Torchbearer National Security Report "Resetting Reserve Component Units: Taking Care of Soldiers and Families," July 2011, [http://www.ausa.org/publications/ilw/Documents/TB\\_Reset\\_web.pdf](http://www.ausa.org/publications/ilw/Documents/TB_Reset_web.pdf). See also AUSA Torchbearer Issue Paper "The Army National Guard's Path to Greater Resilience," December 2010, [http://www.ausa.org/publications/ilw/Documents/TBIP\\_Resilience\\_PRESS%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.ausa.org/publications/ilw/Documents/TBIP_Resilience_PRESS%20(2).pdf).



Soldier Fitness program<sup>3</sup> (later expanded and renamed Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness), an adaptation of the Penn Resiliency Project crafted for an Army audience.

### **Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness**

CSF2 takes a holistic approach to personal wellness—combining emotional, social, spiritual, family and physical elements of fitness to build overall resilience and enhance performance. The program comprises both online self-development opportunities and formal training.

**Online Self-Assessment and Self-Development.** The Global Assessment Tool (GAT) was among the earliest initiatives in the CSF2 program. Because self-awareness is the first step to improvement, CSF2 provides all Soldiers, family members and Army civilians the opportunity to take an online, confidential self-assessment measuring several areas of strength. Recently, the GAT was updated to include assessment questions related to the physical dimension of wellness (including, for example, topics such as sleep, activity and nutrition). This updated version (GAT 2.0) is truly a holistic assessment of overall well-being. Completion of the GAT 2.0 survey is an annual requirement for Soldiers; family members and Army civilians are also strongly encouraged to participate.

Following completion of the GAT 2.0 assessment, the user instantly receives specific feedback and results based on his or her responses. The feedback consists of tailored self-development resources that the user can access to grow in any of the five areas of strength.

In an effort to make CSF2's online components more user-friendly, the program recently developed a social media platform called ArmyFit—an expansion of the online resources available when the program was first created. ArmyFit includes a wide range of social media capabilities. Users can engage experts and organizations to learn how to improve their fitness (according to needs identified by

GAT 2.0). They can also participate in online challenges and competitions, track their progress, engage with friends, family and teammates, follow their local CSF2 training center and more. Within this protected environment, users can also interact with more than 50 comprehensive resilience/performance modules—guided self-development videos that supplement formal CSF2 training.

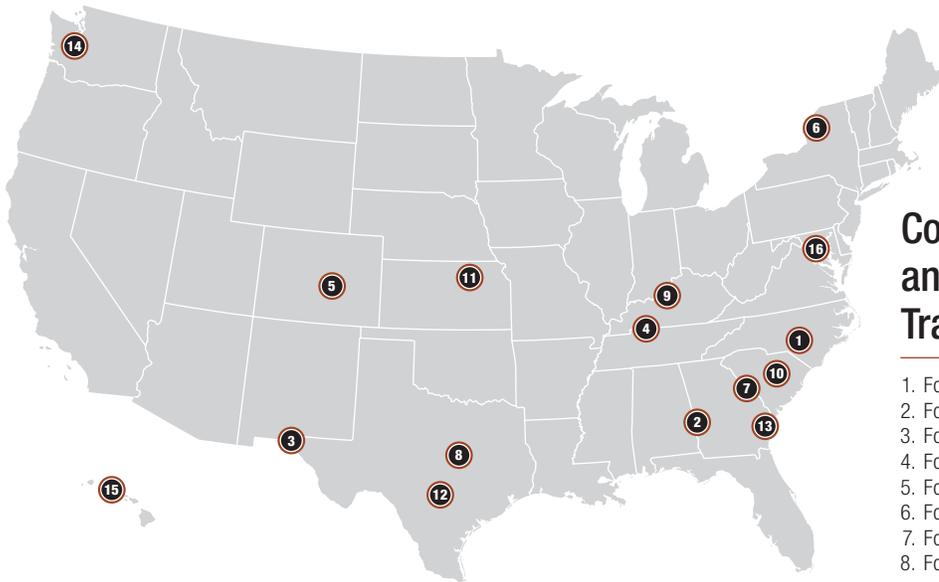
**Training.** Since the program's inception, the Army has established a requirement for all Soldiers to receive annual training in 12 of the skills taught by CSF2. To make this training available across the Army community, the program has certified more than 20,000 Soldiers, family members (statutory volunteers) and Army civilians as master resilience trainers (MRTs) who, in turn, teach the skills of resilience to their subordinates, family members and Army civilians. They ensure that the vocabulary and skills of resilience become and remain part of Army culture. The Army's goal in 2010 was to ensure that at least one MRT was available to each battalion; to do this, CSF2 must train at least 7,700 new MRTs per year to provide at least one per Army company, one per company-size family readiness group and one per 250 Army civilians.

In addition to MRTs, the CSF2 program also offers performance enhancement training (added to the program in 2011). This training provides Soldiers with skills that enable them to perform to their full potential regardless of the situation. Setting goals, managing energy and building confidence are just a few of the skills taught as part of this training. These mental skills enhance one's ability to focus and perform under pressure—in combat and in life.

Research has proven that resilience skills can be taught and learned—but skills are also perishable and must be refreshed and maintained over time. To provide the continuity necessary to master these skills, CSF2 implements institutional resilience training at every major level of the Army education system and professional military education. Courses that incorporate resilience training include Basic Combat Training, Officer Candidate School, the Warrant Officer Basic Course, Basic Officer Leadership Course B, the Advanced Leadership Course, the Senior Leader Course, the Pre-Command Course and the Sergeants Major Academy. With the help of CSF2, Soldiers develop total wellness skills throughout their entire experience in the Army.

**Results.** Continuous program evaluation and scientific reporting are hallmarks of the program. To date, CSF2's independent program evaluation and research group has published four reports on the program's effectiveness at strengthening the Army community when it was needed most. The team's most recent report examined how CSF2 resilience training impacted a host of behaviors including

<sup>3</sup> See AUSA Torchbearer Issue Paper "Building Resilience: Comprehensive Soldier Fitness," April 2010, [http://www.ausa.org/publications/torchbearercampaign/torchbearerissuepapers/Documents/TBIP\\_ComprehensiveSoldierFitness\\_042010.pdf](http://www.ausa.org/publications/torchbearercampaign/torchbearerissuepapers/Documents/TBIP_ComprehensiveSoldierFitness_042010.pdf).



## Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness Training Center Locations

- |                      |                                  |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Fort Bragg, NC    | 9. Fort Knox, KY                 |
| 2. Fort Benning, GA  | 10. Fort Jackson, SC             |
| 3. Fort Bliss, TX    | 11. Fort Riley, KS               |
| 4. Fort Campbell, KY | 12. Fort Sam Houston, TX         |
| 5. Fort Carson, CO   | 13. Fort Stewart, GA             |
| 6. Fort Drum, NY     | 14. Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA |
| 7. Fort Gordon, GA   | 15. Schofield Barracks, HI       |
| 8. Fort Hood, TX     | 16. National Capital Region      |

Source: Headquarters, Department of the Army

anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress (PTS) and drug and alcohol abuse. Findings from this peer-reviewed report show significantly lower incident rates of these behaviors in units with MRTs than in those units without trainers.<sup>4</sup> In previous reports, CSF2 program evaluators determined that the benefit from CSF2 resilience training was most pronounced in Soldiers who were 18–24 years old and that the program worked best in units where local leadership endorsed the program.<sup>5</sup> Reports due later in 2014 will calculate the program’s financial return on investment, specifically focusing on how the training results in cost savings due to decreased attrition from the Army and decreased medical treatment related to anxiety, depression, PTS and drug and alcohol abuse.

*The effects of resilience training may reach beyond improving the health of the individual Soldiers by improving the aggregate health and effectiveness of the Army as an organization.*

The Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness Program Evaluation Report #4, April 2013

Moving forward, CSF2 will continue to ensure that the training it provides is in keeping with the best standards of evidence-based practice. Soldiers, families and Army civilians demand and deserve the best skills training that science can offer.

### The Way Ahead: New Initiatives

**CSF2 Training Centers.** Because CSF2 has rapidly become engrained in Army culture, there is increasing demand to bring the training and tools to the entire Army community. Another program—the Army Center for Enhanced Performance (ACEP)—had a similar challenge. ACEP combined the principles of sport and performance psychology with academic strategies to train Soldiers to excel in classroom and military training. The first ACEP site opened at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in 2007 and quickly spread to more installations. In 2011, CSF2 began incorporating ACEP sites to complement its resilience training; since then, ACEP sites have become CSF2 training centers, and there are now 16 CSF2 training center locations across the country.

These 16 training centers are an extension of CSF2 at the installation level, serving local active component Soldiers, families and Army civilians as well as Army National Guard and Army Reserve populations. They offer the MRT course locally, training and certifying Master Resilience Trainers who then provide resilience training to others. They provide local commands with day-to-day guidance to help maximize the program’s effectiveness within complex training schedules and needs. Because of their proximity to those they train, expert instructors are able to develop tailored training plans to achieve specific, local objectives—reinforcing the work of local MRTs and ensuring that training is conducted according to standard and with the latest curriculum.

<sup>4</sup> Research Facilitation Team, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army, “The Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness Program Evaluation #4: Evaluation of Resilience Training and Mental and Behavioral Health Outcomes,” April 2013, <http://csf2.army.mil/supportdocs/TR4.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Research Facilitation Team, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army, “The Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program Evaluation Report #3: Longitudinal Analysis of the Impact of Master Resilience Training on Self-Reported Resilience and Psychological Health Data,” December 2011, <http://csf2.army.mil/supportdocs/TR3.pdf>.



# Three Major Components of Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness

## 1. Online Self-Development

### **Global Assessment Tool 2.0**

Confidential survey that is mandatory at least annually for Soldiers; optional for family members and civilians; measures psychological health and resilience.

### **ArmyFit**

Offers members of the Total Army tools and resources that will help them be more self-aware and begin the process of self-development and self-improvement.

## 2. Training

### **Master Resilience Training**

Delivers resilience and deployment-cycle training to Soldiers, family members and Army civilians; one per company + one per company Family Readiness Group + one per 250 Army civilians; more than 20,000 Master Resilience Trainers trained to date.

### **Institutional**

Resilience and Enhanced Performance training is reinforced in schoolhouses from basic training to the War College.

### **Enhanced Performance**

Training via Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness Training Centers provides Soldiers with the specific mental and emotional skills that underlie optimal human performance when it matters most: in combat, healing after an injury or managing work and home life.

## 3. Metrics and Evaluation

### **Program Assessments**

- Technical reports
- Peer-reviewed publications
- Walter Reed Army Institute of Research assessments
- RAND study
- Army Audit Agency audit
- National Defense Authorization Act study

**Executive Resilience and Performance Course.** CSF2 has developed an abbreviated version of the MRT course for Army leadership. Labeled the Executive Resilience and Performance Course, this program is designed for Army leaders at the company level and above. It introduces leaders to the same resilience and performance skills being taught by the MRTs at the unit level. This new course, launched in October 2013, has generated an overwhelmingly positive response from attendees. Perhaps the most significant outcome has been that MRTs are reporting increased leadership engagement and involvement in their unit-level training after their leaders have attended the executive-level course.

**Spouse Training.** Army spouses serve and sacrifice alongside Soldiers, and they too have the opportunity to benefit from the resources and training offered by CSF2. In support of the goal to provide one spouse MRT per company-size family readiness group, CSF2 implemented a pilot program specifically tailored for them; dozens of Army spouses (statutory volunteers) have already completed the new version of the program, which continues to expand. Installation commanders are strongly encouraged to make seats in MRT courses available to Army spouses. In addition, many Army Community Service staff members are certified MRTs and offer training to spouses at installations.

**Teen Resilience and Performance Training.** Children of Army personnel are also affected by the challenges inherent in Army life. Therefore, CSF2 has

been building a teen resilience and performance training curriculum designed to arm young people with the same toolkit received by their parents through annual training. During fall 2013, CSF2 began making pilot programs available for teens at four installations, including multiple venues of delivery such as in-school and after-school programs, recreational teen centers and teen nights. CSF2 is currently reviewing feedback from participants to further refine the teen curriculum. At the same time, the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research is conducting further evaluation of these pilot efforts. Initial findings show that, as a result of the teen programs, families are better sharing a common vocabulary of resilience. Version 1.0 of the teen curriculum will be available at all CSF2 training centers by spring 2014.

## **Conclusion**

The Army is people. Ensuring their well-being now and in the future is the surest way to sustain the all-volunteer force. The early successes of the CSF2 program have shown that resilience training must endure in the institutional Army—well beyond the conclusion of any particular overseas operation. The program has been designed and updated to serve all members of the Army community through all phases of the Soldier lifecycle. With new initiatives and dedicated efforts to refine and improve as needed, CSF2 will continue to be a pillar of Army culture and a cornerstone of the campaign to sustain the all-volunteer force in the future.

Source: Headquarters, Department of the Army