

ALCOAST 177/22

SSIC 1540

SUBJ: COAST GUARD CREDENTIALING ASSISTANCE PILOT PROGRAM

A. DOD Credentialing Programs, DODI 1322.33

B. Program to Assist Members in Obtaining Professional Credentials, 10 U.S. CODE 2015

C. Coast Guard Voluntary Credentialing Program (VCP), COMDTINST 1540.10

D. Military to Mariner Voluntary Credentialing Program, COMDTINST 1540.2

E. COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC 171440Z FEB 22/ACN 011/22

1. The Coast Guard is implementing a Credentialing Assistance pilot program under the Voluntary Credentialing Program (VCP). The pilot reflects the renewed commitment to invest in our people through professional development, training, and support for lifelong learning. Credentialing Assistance (CA) is currently used to pay for exam fees, maintenance fees, renewals, and membership dues (when applicable) for eligible Coast Guard members towards approved credentials. This pilot expands CA by paying for approved training courses that lead to a credential. This includes paying for course fees, books, and exam preparation materials. These additional benefits will help emphasize the importance of both academic and vocational opportunities for the Coast Guard workforce.

2. The pilot program is supported by DOD instruction and U.S. Code (REFs (A) and (B)). It will be conducted in two phases. Phase 1 focuses on credentials related to the Military to Mariner (M2M) program. Phase 2 focuses on all other credentials listed in Coast Guard Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (CG COOL). Future modifications to VCP and M2M policy may be implemented based on usage, lessons learned, and feedback from participants during the pilot.

3. Effective 10 May 2022, FORCECOM is establishing a \$4,500 annual cap for CA for M2M related credentials per fiscal year (FY). This is in addition to the \$4,500 annual cap for Tuition Assistance (TA). Eligible members may participate in both the TA and CA programs simultaneously. Because of the positive impact of TA and CA on Coast Guard recruiting, retention, and readiness, we highly encourage all hands to help raise awareness of CA, with the goal of CA becoming synonymous with TA relative to professional development and lifelong learning.

4. Phase 1 goes into effect on 10 May 2022. Eligible Coast Guard active duty and reserves will be able to use CA to fund approved training courses which lead to a merchant mariner credential (MMC) supported by the M2M program. The training provider for M2M/MMC related training must be approved by the National Maritime Center (NMC). In Phase 1, only CA applications for M2M/MMC related training courses are being accepted at this time. Following completion of the training, the participant is required to submit their M2M/MMC credential application to NMC.

5. Phase 2 goes into effect upon completion of system changes (anticipated Summer 2022). At this point, the \$4,500 annual cap for CA will no longer be limited to M2M/MMC credentials. For Phase 2, eligible Coast Guard active duty and reserves will be able to use CA to fund approved training courses that lead to a credential, certification, or license listed on the CG COOL website. CG COOL is the online tool to find information on credentials, certifications, and licenses related to military occupations and

duties. This website identifies occupation related credentials, highlights potential knowledge gaps between military training and civilian credentialing requirements, and provides guidance to assist in filling those gaps. The site also outlines the process for requesting CA.

(Copy and paste URL below into browser)

<https://www.cool.osd.mil/uscg/index.htm>

6. Vetting of training providers is crucial to a successful CA pilot program. Participants in the CA pilot are required to only use training providers that have been vetted and approved by Veterans Affairs (VA) at: (Copy and paste URL below into browser)

<https://inquiry.vba.va.gov/weampub/buildSearchInstitutionCriteria.do> or Department of Labor (DOL)

at: (Copy and paste URL below into browser)

<https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/EmploymentAndTraining/find-WIOA-training-programs.aspx>

To further protect members against predatory and substandard training providers, FORCECOM reserves the right to implement vetting requirements above and beyond what is currently in place with the VA and DOL. A process will be established in the near future that allows CA pilot participants to submit a package to add a training provider that is currently not on the VA or DOL approved lists. Consideration will only be given to new training providers that are highly reputable, cost effective, and meet all vetting requirements.

7. Participants in the CA pilot (active duty and reserves) must meet eligibility requirements in REFs (C), (D), and (E). CA criteria, coverage, and limitations listed in REF (C), paragraphs 11.b(1), 11.b(4), and 11.c(6) are waived for eligible members. M2M program limitations listed in REF (D), paragraph 14 are also waived. Because VCP is for voluntary certifications and licenses, training course participation will occur off-duty. Training courses and exams for credentials that are required for the member's job are not authorized to be reimbursed under this program. CA will not cover travel or lodging costs related to training courses. This waiver is in place until REFs (C) and (D) are updated to reflect these changes.

8. Service obligation incurred from using CA for training courses will be prorated by dollar usage. Participants that use all \$4,500 will incur 12 months of service obligation beginning at the time the training was completed or when the credential was earned, whichever occurs later. Participants that fail to meet the service obligation may be required to repay the amount of CA used.

9. Each participant using CA for training is responsible for the following:

a. Participants are highly recommended to conduct a MilGears assessment as part of the CA application process:

(Copy and paste URL below into browser)

<https://milgears.osd.mil/>

It is highly recommended that a member review their MilGears assessment with an Education Services Officer (ESO). ESOs can help interpret the assessment, identify missing items such as Joint Services Transcript (JST), previous courses taken, etc. and provide recommendations and counseling as needed.

b. Request approval from ETQC no earlier than 90 days prior and no later than 14 days prior to scheduling training or incurring any fees to include registration. Participants who pay for training fees prior to approval are not eligible for CA reimbursement.

c. Submit CA application in the MyCGEd portal to include MilGears assessment and all applicable information and endorsements. The application must identify that CA will be used for training assistance.

d. Electronically endorse and submit Official Form for Miscellaneous Reimbursement (OF-1164) with valid receipts to ETQC within 30 calendar days of fee payment.

e. Complete training course and submit a legible copy of course completion certificate to ETQC within 90 days of CA authorization. Failure to provide a copy of course certificate may result in recoupment of funds reimbursed to the member.

f. If a credential is obtained through training alone, submit a legible copy of training completion certificate and credential to ETQC within 30 days of credential attainment for entry into Direct Access and the member's JST. Failure to provide a legible copy of credential(s) may result in recoupment of funds reimbursed to the member.

g. If credential attainment requires examination and/or application from the credentialing authority, complete the credential requirements and submit a legible copy of training completion certificate and credential to ETQC within 30 days of credential attainment for entry into Direct Access and the member's JST.

10. Each participant using CA for examinations is responsible for the following:

a. Submit CA application in the MyCGEd portal to include MilGears assessment and all applicable information and endorsements. The application must identify that CA will be used for exam related fees (exam, renewal, or application fees).

b. Request approval from ETQC no earlier than 90 days prior and no later than 14 days prior to scheduling credentialing exams or incurring any fees to include registration. Participants who pay for fees prior to approval are not eligible for CA reimbursement.

c. Electronically endorse and submit Official Form for Miscellaneous Reimbursement (OF-1164) with valid receipts to ETQC within 30 calendar days of fee payment.

d. Complete examination and submit a legible copy to ETQC within 90 days of CA authorization. Failure to provide a copy of course certificate may result in recoupment of funds reimbursed to the member.

e. Submit a legible copy of credential(s) to ETQC within 30 days of credential attainment for entry into Direct Access and the member's JST. Failure to provide a legible copy of credential(s) may result in recoupment of funds reimbursed to the member.

11. The M2M program provides counseling to those seeking MMCs and assistance with the application process after completing training to receive a MMC. Questions regarding MMCs may be directed to the CG M2M mailbox at: [CGM2M@uscg.mil](mailto:CGM2M@uscg.mil).

12. Questions regarding this ALCOAST may be directed to the CG COOL mailbox at: [CGCOOL@uscg.mil](mailto:CGCOOL@uscg.mil).

13. RDML M. W. Raymond, Commander, Force Readiness Command (FC-C), sends.

14. Internet release is authorized.