Command Support Letter (CSL) Instructions

WHAT RESEARCH REQUIRES A COMMAND SUPPORT LETTER?
IAW DoDI 3216.02, if human subject research involves DoD-affiliated personnel or access to USMA facilities, the principal investigator must receive approval to conduct the research from a USMA official with command authority.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A COMMAND SUPPORT LETTER (CSL)?
The CSL documents command approval to access USMA resources for the purposes of human subject research. A Human Research Protections Program (HRPP) approval does not obligate a commander to provide a CSL. Likewise, the CSL does not constitute USMA HRPP approval.

The principal investigator must consider all resources (e.g., personnel, time, equipment, facilities, etc.) that are required for the research when requesting a CSL. They should communicate with the commander to discuss the details of the research including the purpose and anticipated risks and benefits. The commander should have an opportunity to express concerns and ask questions before deciding whether to support the research. Some commanders may delegate a representative to complete the fact-gathering portion of this responsibility, but the commander of the activity must be the signatory on the CSL.

WHO SHOULD SIGN THE COMMAND SUPPORT LETTER?
For human subject research conducted by USMA personnel, the CSL is signed by the lowest level of command authority that is appropriate, such as a department head. If more than one department is engaged or supports the project, the major activity director (MAD) will be the signatory. If more than one MAD is engaged or supports the project, the USMA Chief of Staff or the Superintendent will sign the CSL. Alternatively, the principal investigator can obtain more than one CSL to cover all aspects of the research.

External investigators who are not employees or agents of West Point must obtain a CSL from the USMA Chief of Staff or the Superintendent, regardless of the resources that are requested. To initiate this process, they must submit a request to the Institutional Research Committee (IRC). The IRC will discuss the impact of the research on USMA personnel and resources and will provide a recommendation to the USMA Chief of Staff/Superintendent. The final decision whether to support the research and provide a CSL will be made by the USMA Chief of Staff/Superintendent.

HOW DO I USE THE TEMPLATE?
To use the CSL template, fill in the sections in red print, and change all print to black. If you have questions about letterhead, signature blocks, or other administrative issues, contact the commander’s administrative assistant or refer to Army Regulation 25-50. When your letter is complete, contact the Human Protections Director (HPD) at HRPP@westpoint.edu. The HPD will check the CSL for content and arrange for legal review. The HPD will return the CSL and legal review to the principal investigator for signature routing. The signatory can provide either a wet or electronic signature.