

# The Modern CIF

Improving Operational Readiness  
& Soldier Experiences at Fort Carson



*“The Fort Carson CIF is easily the best CIF I’ve been to in my 11 years of service. The staff was super nice and the facility is state of the art.”*

– CIF Comment Card, 2019

For new, existing, and transitioning soldiers, Central Issue Facilities (CIF) are a critical component for ensuring operational readiness. CIFs serve as the single point for receipt, storage, issue, exchange, and return of over 200 pieces of authorized clothing and equipment specified by the U.S. Army. For most installations, CIFs are large warehouse-like buildings where soldiers take physical shopping carts and pick up necessities from long shelving units, much like at a common grocery store. However, soldier wait times at CIFs are often lengthy, sizing of items can be uncertain, and the issuance of critical items can sometimes be overlooked.

With an eye towards leveraging advancements in technology and improving outcomes, the leadership at Fort Carson set out to modernize the CIF experience for their soldiers.

## Challenge

A few years ago, the CIF at Fort Carson faced numerous challenges:



The CIF warehouse was outdated, both physically and technologically.



Soldiers were unable to pre-set appointments and were forced to line up hours ahead of time—sometimes even having to come back if they were unable to be served during that day’s operating hours. With tens of thousands of soldiers on base, this meant long wait times and significant stress and frustration.



Providing timely, quality customer service was next to impossible due to the overload faced by CIF staff. Issuing critical equipment could be overlooked, and soldiers would often have to come back numerous times to get the correct sizes for boots, helmets, jackets, and more—putting even more stress on an already taxed system.



## Solution

The leadership at Fort Carson knew something had to change, so they partnered with Akima Support Operations (ASO) to help transition their CIF into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

First things first, they relocated the CIF to a more central location near other commonly used buildings such as the bank, DMV and Post Office to provide a “one-stop-shopping” experience for soldiers. They also completed major renovations prior to the move, ensuring the new building was not only more aesthetically pleasing, but also modern and efficient. But most significantly, they completely changed the way they do business.

### Automated Equipment

With the help of ASO, the Army implemented two new automated systems: A Now Serving System and a rotating shelving system.

The Now Serving System provides the ability to identify the needs of the customer at a self-service kiosk prior to speaking with a CIF employee (instead of the antiquated “sign in and wait” system). Customers use the kiosk to fill out their name, social security number, and reason for their visit, and are then provided with a “now serving” number. When their number is called, they are immediately directed to the necessary department such as direct exchange, turn-in, or customer service. The Now Serving System has significantly reduced wait time for soldiers, and also provides leadership the ability to track service times and adjust processes and staffing as necessary.

The rotating shelving system, known as the Hanel system, increases storage capacity for equipment by a factor of eight. It also significantly reduces the number of steps it takes staff members to pull equipment from stock. CIF employees can now simply input the item they are looking for and the Hanel system will automatically rotate to the correct location for that specific item—increasing space utilization, speed, efficiency, and accuracy for providing services to soldiers.

*“The Ft. Carson CIF is very user friendly and offers a streamlined process for issue, turn-in, DX, and all other services. The Ft. Carson CIF is one of the best experiences I have had in the Army when it comes to servicing soldiers. I would recommend other posts adopt the Ft. Carson CIF process.”*

– CIF Comment Card, 2019

*“In my 9 years and 6 PCS’s, I’ve never had a better interaction with a CIF Facility. The two people that helped me were some of most professional, helpful and efficient contractors. It made the dreaded “turn-in” appointment actually pleasant.”*

– CIF Comment Card, 2019

*“Staff went above any standard published. Professionalism was the rule not exception. All staff members were calm and helpful. Staff and Management deserve kudo’s and praise.”*

– U.S. Army Sergeant Major

### Modern Process

Previously, soldiers spent upwards of four hours collecting their gear directly at the CIF. Leveraging new lean six sigma processes, soldiers can now collect their gear in as little as 15 minutes—at their replacement detachment—eliminating the need to physically visit the CIF for many soldiers. The process works as follows:

1. On day zero of in processing, a soldier is provided a sizing sheet. Once complete, the sizing sheet is delivered to the CIF and equipment is pulled and pre-packaged by CIF employees. Equipment is triple checked to ensure accuracy.
2. On day two of in processing, soldiers with a rank above Staff Sergeant visit the CIF at their convenience to pick up their issued equipment. At that time, they can digitally sign for their order and have five days to complete their inventory and report any shortages. Shortages of three items or less are provided with no question.
3. For Staff Sergeants and below, the replacement detachment picks up prepackaged equipment and transports it back to them on day three of in processing. If something is found to be missing, soldiers can then visit the CIF for replacement or exchange.

The turn-in process was also completely updated. Formerly, soldiers would have to stop at multiple counters and endure a lengthy visit to the CIF. With the new one-to-one process, soldiers turn in their gear to a *single* staff member reducing visit time from approximately 45 minutes to 22 minutes.

Overall these updated operating process have saved thousands of hours for soldiers and commanders in the short-term, as well as millions of dollars in improperly issued equipment.

The Fort Carson CIF also features a centralized Customer Service Desk and a modern fitting room where soldiers can try on equipment to ensure proper sizing.

### Benefits

Today, the CIF at Fort Carson is known to be one of the most highly functioning and best performing in the U.S. Army. The team continues to look at new ways to modernize the facility to make it even more streamlined and deliver superior experiences for both customers and CIF staff.