

# Additional rights and benefits upon conversion to full-time status



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**U**pon conversion from city carrier assistant (CCA) to full-time career status, letter carriers are afforded additional rights and benefits. While all of these rights and benefits are important, some require letter carriers to take some form of action to access them. Such benefits include health and life insurance, and certain elements of the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).

## Health insurance

**After conversion to full-time career status,** a letter carrier has 60 days to enroll in a Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) health insurance plan. If this is not done

within 60 days of conversion, a letter carrier may not enroll until the next open season in November unless a qualifying life event (QLE) as defined by the Office of Personnel Management takes place. The FEHB program has many plans to choose from, including the NALC Health Benefit Plan (HBP).

The NALC HBP is a comprehensive plan that has provided letter carriers and their families with first-rate health insurance since 1950. The plan is owned and operated by letter carriers and pays particular attention to their health needs. The plan provides top-notch benefits at affordable rates.

If a letter carrier was enrolled in the USPS Non-Career Employee Health Benefits Plan and converted to a career position, that enrollment is terminated on the last day of the month that is 28 days after conversion to a career position. To avoid a gap in coverage, newly converted letter carriers should enroll in a FEHB plan as soon as possible. The fastest and easiest way to do so is through the USPS LiteBlue website and PostalEASE. Coverage will begin the first day of the first pay period after signing up online or after Human Resources Shared Services receives the election if a form is manually submitted.

## Life insurance

**Once converted to career status, letter carriers are automatically enrolled in the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FGLI) to receive basic life insurance, unless it's waived by the employee.** The basic coverage begins the first day in a pay and duty status after conversion. USPS pays the entire cost of the basic coverage, which amounts to the annual rate of base pay rounded up to the next even \$1,000, plus \$2,000. Accidental death and dismemberment insurance is automatically included in basic life in-

urance at no additional cost and is equal to the basic insurance amount described above.

Above the basic insurance, FGLI has additional optional coverage that can be purchased. To elect any of the optional coverages, a letter carrier must enroll by submitting a completed Life Insurance Election form (SF 2817) to the local personnel office within 31 days of conversion. The cost is determined by the amount and type of coverage chosen and the age of the employee. Optional insurance is effective the first day in a pay and duty status after the local personnel office receives the election.

## Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)

**Once converted to full-time career status, letter carriers are automatically enrolled in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).** It has three components: FERS Basic Benefit Plan, Social Security and Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

The FERS Basic Benefit and Social Security are defined benefit plans. The Postal Service will withhold the appropriate share of the cost of the basic annuity and Social Security each payday.

The TSP is different. Letter carriers have complete control over how much they contribute and in which funds the money is invested. The Postal Service automatically contributes 1 percent of each employee's base pay and will match contributions up to 5 percent of base pay.

Participation in the TSP is voluntary. However, newly converted letter carriers are automatically enrolled in the TSP and 3 percent of base pay will be deducted from each paycheck and deposited in the traditional balance of their TSP account, unless the employee elects to change or stop contributions. When converted to full-time career status, CCAs who participate in the NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan may transfer their savings to the TSP. The surrender charge will be waived in this instance only.

## City Carrier Assistant Resource Guide

**A more detailed explanation of the above benefits, as well as many other benefits for CCAs, can be found in the newly created *City Carrier Assistant Resource Guide*.** NALC recently created this guide and distributed it to those in attendance at the 2015 NALC national rap session in Houston. The guide covers a variety of topics that apply to letter carriers during their time as CCAs, as well as explains many additional rights and benefits afforded to CCAs upon their conversion to full-time career status.

So far I have received very positive feedback from those who have read this guide and the demand for copies of this guide is very high. We have made several changes and additions to the guide. The final product will be available very soon.