

Uniform program for city carrier assistants



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Letter carriers in uniform are the public face of one of the country's largest employers, representing more than 500,000 employees of the USPS. Uniforms serve several purposes. They provide immediate visual identification to the public, which makes the job safer when going down streets and up to houses all over America. In addition, uniforms project a neat and professional appearance that customers associate with the outstanding service provided by letter carriers.

I often field calls and questions about issues related to uniforms for city carrier assistants (CCAs). It is important for CCAs, shop stewards and NALC representatives to understand how the uniform program works so

that they are in the best position to ensure CCAs are provided with a uniform allowance and may purchase uniforms.

The interest arbitration award issued on Jan. 10, 2013, by the panel chaired by Arbitrator Shyam Das incorporated a uniform allowance for CCAs equivalent to that afforded to career letter carriers. This is reflected in Article 26.3 of the National Agreement. This is the first time that non-career letter carriers have been provided with the same allowance as career letter carriers. However, the process of obtaining the allowance and purchasing uniforms is different for CCAs.

The first point to understand is when a CCA becomes eligible for a uniform allowance. Article 26.3 of the National Agreement states:

When the CCA has completed ninety (90) work days, or has been employed for 120 calendar days, whichever comes first, the CCA will be provided with an annual uniform allowance equal to the amount provided to career employees in Section 2.A. Time served as a Transitional Employee will count toward the 90/120 day requirement.

The uniform purchases are reimbursed by the Postal Service directly to the vendor. Uniforms will be returned by CCAs separated and not reapointed.

CCAs are eligible for a uniform allowance after completing 90 workdays or having been employed for 120 calendar days, whichever comes first. This date is the anniversary date the CCAs will maintain for the duration of their career, even after being converted to full-time career status. This is the date each year that the letter carrier becomes eligible for the yearly uniform allowance.

The second point to understand is how a CCA receives the allowance and purchases uniforms. We reached agree-

ment with the Postal Service on the process that would be used to provide the uniform allowance to CCAs. This agreement is reflected in the *Questions and Answers 2011 USPS/NALC National Agreement*. It is assigned Materials Reference System (MRS) number M-01833 and is available on the NALC website at mseries.nalc.org/Mo1833.pdf. CCA uniform information, including how the uniform allowance is provided, how uniforms are purchased and how the uniform vendor is reimbursed, is addressed in this document in Questions 47-56.

The most common issue that arises is failure to provide a letter of authorization form to purchase uniforms within 14 days of the eligibility date as required by Question 50, as follows:

50. How is a uniform allowance provided to a CCA?

When a CCA becomes eligible for a uniform allowance, funds must be approved through an eBuy submission by local management. After approval, a Letter of Authorization form must be completed and provided to the employee within 14 days of the eligibility date. The CCA takes the completed form to a USPS authorized vendor to purchase uniform items. The Letter of Authorization can be located on the Uniform Program website on the Blue Page under Labor Relations.

I strongly encourage each CCA to review these questions and answers. If you have any questions about uniforms or have not received a letter of authorization for purchasing uniforms within 14 days of your eligibility date, promptly contact your shop steward or an NALC branch officer.

Any violation of the agreed-upon process defined in M-01833 is a contract violation. In such case, a grievance should be filed citing a violation of Article 26.3 of the National Agreement and the *Questions and Answers 2011 USPS/NALC National Agreement (M-01833)*. An issue statement for such a grievance could be:

Did management at the [Installation name] Installation violate Article 26.3 of the National Agreement and the jointly developed Questions and Answers, 2011 USPS/NALC National Agreement (M-01833) by not providing a completed Letter of Authorization for uniform purchase to CCA(s) [name(s)] within 14 days of their eligibility date. If so, what should the remedy be?

The Postal Service also created an additional document designed to help explain the uniform program and how it works to local managers. This document has been assigned MRS number M-01822. It is available on the NALC website at mseries.nalc.org/Mo1822.pdf. This document provides detailed instructions for local managers on all aspects of the uniform program and how it relates to CCAs. Issues that arise locally can often be quickly rectified by providing this document to your manager.