

Regional grievance assistant role created

To protect and enforce the many rights and benefits afforded to our members, NALC has a long history of working to enhance and make available the best representational resources possible. From creating training materials and written guides to putting the right representatives in the right places, NALC is constantly evaluating and re-evaluating members' needs to ensure that they are properly met. In the past few years, NALC has committed resources to creating new positions to assist members.

Regional workers' compensation assistant (RWCA)

In 2015, President Fredric Rolando made a serious commitment to assist and protect our members who are injured on the job when he appointed seven letter carriers to work as full-time regional workers' compensation assistants (RWCA's). This new position was created to provide members with direct Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) representation.

While many branches provide such representation to their members, there are many branches that do not for one reason or another. Whereas branches are required to represent all letter carriers in the grievance procedure, there is no such requirement to provide OWCP assistance to members who have on-the-job injury claims. It's up to each branch to decide whether to provide OWCP guidance and representation to its members. Additionally, even when branches do provide OWCP assistance, the level of knowledge in the process ranges widely from branch to branch.

For injured members who need assistance beyond what their branch has to offer, NALC has put individuals in place to assist them. In addition to the

full-time RWCA's, each of the 15 NALC national business agents' offices has trained personnel who are able and available to assist members with OWCP issues and problems.

For our members who sustain on-the-job injuries, the addition of the RWCA's has been overwhelmingly successful. The assistance and protection afforded to them as a whole has been much more effective than in the past. RWCA's existence ensures that every member who needs help with an OWCP claim receives it.

Legislative and political organizer (LPO)

In 2017, President Rolando established the position of legislative and political organizer (LPO) to assist NALC state associations. Over the years, the landscape on Capitol Hill has changed drastically, and it is extremely important that our state associations have the support they need to protect letter carriers.

LPO's help develop and implement plans specifically designed for the challenges within each state. They then train other letter carriers, officers and rank-and-file activists to help carry out the plans, to recruit new activists and to encourage members to attend branch meetings, state association meetings and other events to reach letter carriers directly. Additionally, LPO's work with state associations and letter carrier congressional liaisons (LCCL's) to advance our legislative and political agenda in each state.

The state associations' leaders and LCCL's have developed excellent working relationships with the LPO's. The scope of the LPO's work has included working with LCCL's to develop better relationships with members of Congress, increasing Letter Carrier Political

Fund participation, recruiting new activists in each state and using events such as branch meetings and state conventions to educate and mobilize members to better position each state association to be successful.

NALC is fortunate to have many dynamic members who are able and willing to do this important work. Currently, our union has several letter carriers who serve full time as LPO's. No one is better equipped to support our state associations and mobilize our NALC activist network than our own members. These letter carriers, combined with the professional staff working in our Department of Legislative and Political Affairs, provide a strong foundation to continue to strengthen our legislative and political network and serve our members well.

Regional grievance assistant (RGA)

Recently, in an attempt to further enhance the representation our members receive, President Rolando created another new position: the regional grievance assistant (RGA). This new position, filled by letter carrier union activists from around the country, is designed to make sure all letter carriers are represented in the grievance procedure, no matter how large or small their branch is.

While most branches are fortunate enough to have the local resources necessary to fully represent its members' needs, that is not always the case. Some branches may have only a few members and therefore only have minimal financial resources to obtain training. Other branches may have the financial resources but no volunteers willing to take on the role of union representative. Yet other branches may have all the

resources they need, but require help keeping up with the workload.

In all of these instances, the newly appointed RGAs can step in to help. Currently when a branch needs assistance dealing with grievance backlogs, conducting specialized training or simply filing grievances, the 15 NALC regional offices assign union representatives from other areas to go do the work. That will not change. RGAs simply will be an additional resource to complement the network of representation that is currently in place, again ensuring that all NALC members receive the representation they deserve. **PR**

NALC president appoints first two RGAs



President Fredric Rolando named **Margaret Parker** to the newly created position of regional grievance assistant. A letter carrier and member of NALC since 1984, Parker, president of Aurora, IL Branch 219, has held office in the branch since 1994. Prior to becoming president in October 2010, she held the positions of steward, sergeant-at-arms and vice president, the latter for 15 years. Parker also currently serves on the Illinois State Association executive board. She graduated from the Leadership Academy in 2007 and has served on a Dispute Resolution Team

and as a local business agent.

Kevin Flaherty, who has been a letter carrier and a member of NALC since 1986, also has been named to the new position of regional grievance assistant. Currently executive vice president of Boston, MA Branch 34, Flaherty has held numerous positions over the years, including branch steward, area steward, financial secretary and secretary-treasurer. He also has served as a branch organizer and as assistant editor of Branch 34's newsletter, *The CLAN*. **PR**



EAP gets enhanced digital benefits

It is not uncommon for any of us to face adversity at some point in our lives that can affect our home or work environments, but too many people hesitate to seek help for emotional problems. And so, the Postal Service and NALC, along with the other postal unions, offer postal employees going through difficult times a free, confidential service, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP is a negotiated benefit for letter carriers, provided for in Article 35 of the National Agreement.

If you or a family member find yourselves in need of counseling for alcohol, drug abuse or any other personal problem, the EAP is there for you.

As April is Employee Assistance Program Month, this is a good time to explore your options within the EAP and how to access its many benefits.

Those benefits now include enhanced digital features as of April 1, when a new vendor, New Directions Behavioral Health, begins its tenure as



our EAP provider. The EAP4YOU.com website now includes a live chat feature and a downloadable EAP mobile app for smartphones and tablets.

Another new digital feature, text therapy, uses a program called Talkspace to allow patients to get therapy via text messaging.

As before, the website includes interactive programs that address certain problems through a cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) lens. CBT is a practical, goal-oriented approach that explores and tries to correct distortions in thinking that contribute to emotional problems. The disorders addressed have changed slightly. They now are depression, stress, chronic pain, anxiety, substance use and insomnia.

The program remains voluntary and free, and all the services that were of-

fered by the previous provider remain.

An EAP consultant is still available by phone toll-free 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Consultants are prepared to handle crisis intervention and stabilization, but also are available for less immediate needs, such as answering questions, directing you to the proper services or setting up an appointment with a counselor.

Counselors have, at minimum, a master's degree in counseling or social work, a current state license in social sciences and at least five years of clinical experience after receiving their graduate degree.

Most of the EAP consultants and clinicians in your districts will continue in their current roles.

Access to help, guidance, coaching and counseling will be available 24/7 on several types of devices. You can search, call, text, or video or live chat any concern you may have at EAP4You.com or 800-EAP-4You (800-327-4968 or TTY: 877-492-7341). **PR**