

Coming out of extinction, part 1



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When the city carrier assistant (CCA) classification of letter carriers was created in January of 2013, we had close to 13,000 part-time flexibles (PTFs) in our craft. Along with the creation of CCAs came a real path to convert to career status. However, that bridge could not be crossed until all the PTFs in a given installation were converted from PTF to full-time status. We were down to about 450 PTFs around the country by 2016.

The 2016-2019 National Agreement created some new PTFs through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Re: CCA Conversion to Career Status. Additional PTFs have been created through CCA conversions to career status as a result of four national settlements/agreements. The end result is that we currently have 4,348 PTFs in our craft. It is now time to go back to the business of aggressively pursuing PTF conversions to full-time status, so we can then get additional CCAs converted to career.

The easiest way to obtain a PTF conversion is when you have a vacant assignment that goes up for bid and comes down as a “no bid” job. This is known as a residual vacancy. When you have this situation, you should use the MOU Re: Full-time Regular Opportunities—City Letter Carrier Craft which states in relevant part:

Full-time regular opportunities in the city letter carrier craft covered by this memorandum (which are not subject to a proper withholding order pursuant to Article 12 of the collective bargaining agreement) that become available on and after the ratification date of the 2016 collective bargaining agreement will be filled as follows:

1. Full-time regular opportunities defined above will be filled within 28 days of becoming available in the following order:
 - a. if the opportunity is a residual vacancy(s), assignment of an unassigned full-time regular or full-time flexible city letter carrier in the same installation
 - b. conversion to full-time regular status of a part-time flexible city letter carrier in the same installation pursuant to Article 41.2.B.6(b) of the collective bargaining agreement

There are two things to keep your eye on here:

1. Make sure postings are made timely. If this does not happen, this issue should be addressed through the grievance procedure.

2. Remember that the time frame for conversion is different from the CCA conversions you are used to. PTFs must be converted to full-time status within 28 days from the date the residual vacancy forms. If this does not happen, same answer as above.

There are other ways to achieve PTF conversions to full-time status. However, they all require a PTF to work 40 hours per week for six months straight. That does not mean the PTF cannot take leave during this period, but we have to make sure management makes every effort to work a PTF 40 hours of straight time work each week. We can use the plain language in the contract to do this.

Article 7, Section 3.C is located on page 17 of the National Agreement, and states:

- C. A part-time flexible employee working eight (8) hours within ten (10), on the same five (5) days each week and the same assignment over a six month period will demonstrate the need for converting the assignment to a full-time position.

This provision applies to all offices, regardless of size. It requires the establishment of an additional full-time position if the qualifying conditions are met.

Article 7.3.C conversion opportunities usually are a result of a PTF working on an opt/hold-down for an extended period of time. Additionally, Article 25 applies to PTFs. This means that PTFs have a contractual right to bid on temporarily vacant carrier technician positions that become available in their immediate work area.

There are several rules to keep in mind regarding Article 7.C.3 that have been established through national settlements over the years, such as:

1. A PTF must work full-time (40 hours over five days each week) on the same assignment for six continuous months (M-01069).
2. Time spent on approved paid leave does not constitute an interruption of the six-month period, except where the leave is used solely for purposes of rounding out the workweek when the PTF otherwise would not have worked (M-00913).
3. A PTF not working all or part of a holiday or observed holiday (as defined in Article 11) does not constitute an interruption in the six-month period.
4. Time spent working on an opt/hold-down counts toward qualification for a PTF to be converted to full-time status. However, the provisions of Article 7.3.C will be applied to an uninterrupted temporary vacant duty assignment only once (M-01398).
5. If your office is under withholding and a PTF works a vacant duty assignment for six months, a full-time position will be created pursuant to Article 7.3.C and the resulting residual vacancy will be withheld. This can be an effective way to achieve a PTF conversion, but can be used only once for each such vacant duty assignment (M-01837).

To be continued...