

City carrier assistant: The bridge to career

Non-career city letter carriers have existed within the Postal Service since 1970, but city carrier assistants (CCAs) are the first non-career employees with a direct path to career status. Over the years, the non-career workforce has consisted of several different classifications, including substitute carriers, casual carriers and transitional employees (TEs). Prior to the creation of the CCA classification in 2013, letter carriers hired in non-career positions had no guaranteed path to becoming career letter carriers. For decades, NALC had advocated for a vehicle to assure that any non-career letter carrier has a way to reach career status.

In January 2013, a national interest arbitration panel issued an award that set the terms of our National Agreement and created a new category of non-career letter carriers—CCAs. This award, known as the Das award, provided that when the Postal Service hires new city letter carrier career employees, CCAs within the installation will be converted to full-time regular career status to fill vacancies based on their relative standing. Although the Das award required conversion of CCAs to fill full-time vacancies, it provided no mechanism to process these conversions.

NALC and USPS negotiated a memorandum of understanding (M-01824) that provided the first set of procedures to facilitate filling residual full-time regular city letter duty assignments. Over several years, with the signing of subsequent MOUs (M-01834, M-01856 and M-01876), this mechanism was amended to expedite and clarify the process for many CCAs to be converted to career. These MOUs resulted in the Memorandum of



Understanding Re: Full-time Regular Opportunities—City Letter Carrier Craft, found on pages 161-165 of the 2019-2023 National Agreement. This MOU requires that management fill full-time opportunities through assignment of an unassigned full-time regular letter carrier, promotion of a part-time flexible (PTF) in the installation to full time, acceptance of a voluntary reassignment, or conversion of a CCA to full-time regular career status. Nearly all newly hired career carriers have come from the non-career ranks, and more than 100,000 CCAs have now been converted to career status.

In addition to conversions to fill full-time vacancies, NALC has negotiated several agreements over the last few years that resulted in thousands of one-time conversions to career status in all sizes of offices. To continue our pursuit of an all-career workforce, NALC negotiated the Memorandum of Understanding Re: City Carrier

Assistants - Conversion to Career Status for CCAs who have not been converted to career status by the time they reach 24 months of relative standing in their installation. For CCAs who don't convert under the Memorandum of Understanding Re: Full-time Regular Opportunities—City Letter Carrier Craft, this new MOU requires USPS to convert to PTF career status all CCAs who had at least 24 months of relative standing as of the ratification date of the agreement. Additionally, the MOU provides a continual conversion process for CCAs once they reach 24 months of relative standing within the installation. This continual conversion process provides peace of mind to CCAs by limiting non-career service time to a maximum of 24 months, a definite improvement over the previous conditions. For more information on this new memorandum and the differences between PTFs and CCAs, see page 4.

Negotiated improvements for CCAs

The new agreement also gives CCAs many other enhanced benefits, including improved USPS contributions toward health care premiums. When they sign up for the USPS Non-Career Health Benefit Plan, they receive \$125 a month toward the premium for Self Only, or 65 percent of the premium for Self Plus One or Self and Family coverage in their first year of employment, which rises to 75 percent in subsequent years. Effective Plan Year 2022, the Postal Service will begin paying 75 percent of the premium for any CCA who wishes to participate in the USPS plan, regardless of the type of coverage selected or how long he or she has been employed.

Also included in the new agreement is a new pay schedule that eliminates the Step CC pay rate in June 2021, increasing the entry rate for newly hired CCAs from \$18.01 to \$18.51 per hour. The 2019 National Agreement also contains general wage increases which, in combination with the elimination of the CCA Step CC hourly pay rate, will raise starting wage rates for most CCAs to \$19.33 per hour over the term of the Agreement.

The 2016 National Agreement required local offices to negotiate annual leave provisions for CCAs in their local memorandum of understanding (LMOU), provided six paid holidays, and eliminated probationary periods for career carriers who spent at least one 360-day term as a CCA. The 2019 National Agreement continues these provisions and reiterates the obligation for local management to negotiate with local branches for CCAs to schedule annual leave.

CCAs and NALC

Many branches have CCAs, or former CCAs, in leadership positions as stewards, officers or committee board members. Also, many current and former CCAs serve as delegates at the national convention, where the convention body debates and votes on National Agreement resolutions for future contractual negotiations. These convention delegates share CCA concerns and feedback to assist in framing the future of the NALC and the Postal Service.

When possible, NALC has provided union membership benefits to fit the needs of CCAs. For instance, the Mutual Benefit Association (MBA) offers a CCA Retirement Savings Plan to give CCAs access to retirement savings benefits. It offers both a traditional and a Roth IRA—the balance in the traditional IRA may be rolled over to the federal employee Thrift Savings Plan when the letter carrier converts to career status. There is no open season for enrollment in the CCA savings plan—one may enroll at any time. Information and applications are available at nalc.org/mba.

The NALC *Letter Carrier Resource Guide*, a comprehensive reference for all letter carriers, career and non-career, is being revised to reflect the changes in the new National Agreement. The guide covers the letter carrier job as well as negotiated rights and benefits, and also provides information and guidance for CCAs during the process of conversion to full-time career status. The guide is available online at nalc.org/resourceguide. Members can order a printed version of the *Letter Carrier Resource Guide* by logging on to the Members Only section of the NALC website and clicking

CITY CARRIER ASSISTANTS
NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan
administered by the
Mutual Benefit Association



"With my Retirement Savings Plan from my union's MBA, I'll be receiving checks during retirement—not delivering them!"

When CCAs become career employees, they can join the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) and will have the option to transfer their Traditional IRA funds from the MBA.

the checkbox below the image of the guide. A printed copy will be mailed to your NALC address of record.

As any CCA or career carrier who converted from CCA status can tell you, starting a letter carrier career as a CCA isn't easy. CCAs often work long hours—sometimes evenings and weekends—to provide outstanding mail and parcel delivery service to the American people. Some CCAs suffer difficulties with work-life balance, sacrificing personal time with family and friends or recreational activities. CCAs work hard as they learn their jobs, which include all of the traditional letter carrier duties as well as new services being offered. When USPS tests new technology, retail partnerships or product innovations, CCAs often are instrumental in these pilot programs. The physical and mental challenges CCAs face when learning the job can be demanding, but fortunately, with the new MOU providing a 24-month-to-career ceiling, there is light at the end of the tunnel. **PR**