

Relative standing and conversion to career status

What is “relative standing,” and how does it apply to conversion to career status? These are commonly asked questions by city carrier assistants (CCAs). As a new employee, you may have heard other employees talking about seniority and relative standing on the workroom floor, but don’t exactly understand what it means or how it applies to you.

The term “seniority” is common in labor contracts. Seniority refers to the amount of time a career letter carrier has worked in an installation. As non-career employees, CCAs do not have seniority but do have something similar called relative standing. While relative standing is important for a variety of reasons, one of the most important is the relationship between an individual’s relative standing and his or her conversion to career status.

Relative standing is the amount of time that a CCA has in the installation where he or she works. It starts on the day a CCA is hired into that installation. For example, if a CCA was hired on Jan. 1, 2022, and another CCA is hired on Jan. 15, 2022, in the same installation, the first CCA would have 14 more days of relative standing. Additionally, CCAs who have worked for USPS in the past as transitional employee (TE) letter carriers receive credit for all the time they spent on the rolls as a TE after Sept. 29, 2007, regardless of where they worked as a TE. This time spent as a TE is added to their relative standing in their current installation.

What happens if two or more CCAs are hired on the same day and have the same relative standing date? In this case, how the CCAs were ranked as applicants on the hiring list (appointment register) is used to determine which CCA is ranked higher on the relative standing list. Applicants are

ranked on the appointment register by their test score combined with their applicable Veteran’s Preference points.

What happens if you move to another installation? With the exception of the TE time described above, relative standing earned in one installation does not move with CCAs who are re-employed in another installation. Their relative standing starts over on the date they begin working in the new installation, augmented by any TE time. This means that even though you may have been working for the Postal Service longer as a whole, a CCA who has been with USPS for less time could have a higher relative standing in the new installation. Careful consideration should be given before you choose to be re-employed in another installation, because it could affect the timing of your conversion to career status down the road.

Why is relative standing important when it comes to converting to career?

In the 2019-2023 National Agreement, NALC and the Postal Service agreed to continue a long-standing process through which full-time regular opportunities within the city letter carrier craft are filled. This process includes opportunities for CCAs to be converted to full-time regular positions within their installations and is outlined in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) Re: Full-time Regular Opportunities - City Letter Carrier Craft. When full-time opportunities exist within the installation, and the positions cannot be filled by qualified full-time or part-time career carriers, then the opportunity exists for CCAs to be converted to career status to fill those positions. CCAs are converted to full-time based on their relative standing. CCAs with the highest relative standing within the installation are converted first.

In addition to conversions to fill full-time vacancies, NALC has negotiated several agreements throughout the years that have resulted in thousands of one-time conversions for CCAs to career status. Those conversions were also based on the relative standing of CCAs in their installations.

Additionally, another path to career exists for CCAs. Also agreed upon in the 2019-2023 National Agreement is MOU Re: City Carrier Assistants – Conversion to Career Status. Under this agreement, CCAs who reach 24 months of relative standing who haven’t yet been converted to career status under one of the previously described methods are converted to part-time flexible (PTF) career status within their installation. The PTF classification is part of the career workforce, with flexible hours rather than a fixed schedule. The PTF classification also provides additional benefits and protections beyond those you receive as a CCA. Under this agreement, CCAs are given one opportunity to convert to PTF. If a CCA declines this opportunity for conversion, he or she becomes ineligible for conversion to PTF under the provisions of this MOU in the future but remains eligible to convert to career status under MOU Re: Full-time Regular Opportunities - City Letter Carrier Craft described earlier.

The *Letter Carrier Resource Guide* is a great resource for gathering more information on the benefits of relative standing and other items concerning CCAs who are new to the NALC and the Postal Service. The MOUs discussed above can be found on pages 160-165 of the 2019-2023 National Agreement. Both the *Letter Carrier Resource Guide* and the National Agreement can be found on the NALC website (nalc.org) in the “Resources” section under “Workplace Issues.” **PR**