

# New Employee Experience, Retention and Mentoring Program

## Giving new city letter carriers the chance to succeed

**N**ew city letter carriers face a variety of obstacles as they adapt to their new workplace and environment delivering the nation's mail. Challenges such as navigating unfamiliar routes and territories, workload and time management, the physical demands of the job, navigating USPS procedures and policies, and handling the social and emotional challenges of their new position can be overwhelming, especially if the carriers are left to deal with these issues alone.

New city letter carriers face the significant hurdle of memorizing and efficiently navigating unfamiliar routes, streets, addresses and delivery points, which can be particularly challenging in densely populated urban areas. Routes can encompass diverse terrain, from bustling city sidewalks and high-rise buildings to more suburban or even rural areas, which can vary greatly from what the carrier may be accustomed to. Each route might have unique delivery requirements, such as special instructions for mailboxes, specific locations for parcels, or addresses with animals.

Carriers also are often responsible for delivering large quantities of mail and packages, especially during peak season, which can be physically demanding and time-consuming. As letter carriers, we routinely operate under tight delivery schedules that often can be a source of stress. Carriers must efficiently manage their time on the street to complete deliveries in a timely manner, which can be especially challenging on unfamiliar routes or during periods of heavy mail volume.

The job involves significant physical exertion, including standing and

walking for long periods, lifting and carrying heavy mailbags and parcels, bending, twisting, stooping and climbing stairs—all which city letter carriers must do regardless of weather, including extreme heat or cold, heavy rain, snow and icy conditions. In addition to weather hazards, carriers also face risks like avoiding the threat of vehicle or pedestrian accidents, dog bites, and even crime in some areas.

The social and emotional challenges of the job can be tough to overcome for a new city letter carrier as well. They are faced with navigating a new work environment, meeting new colleagues, and dealing with new supervisors. They must quickly learn about local procedures for handling mail, parcels and customer inquiries, as well as reporting issues and seeking support from supervisors and union representatives. This can be mentally exhausting for a new employee.

Addressing these challenges so that new carriers can thrive requires a combination of effective training, comprehensive support systems and personal resilience. While the Postal Service offers training programs such as Carrier Academy and on-the-job instruction, new carriers may face situations or challenges that require support beyond those initial trainings.

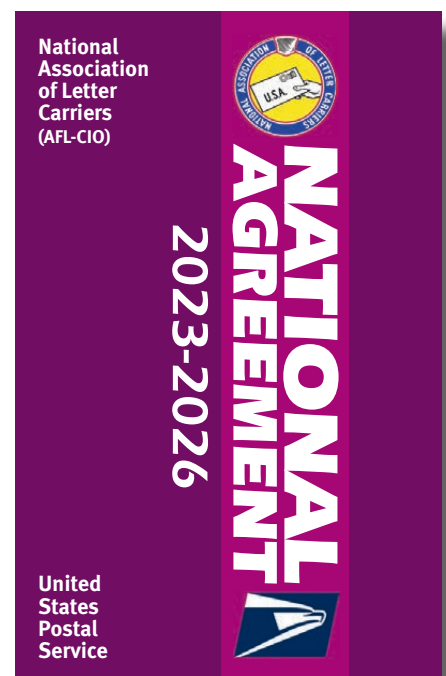
With the implementation of the 2023-2026 National Agreement, a nationwide program called the New Employee Experience, Retention and Mentoring Program began. The new program was designed with the intent of improving communication between new letter carriers and their managers and co-workers, providing work experiences that give new letter carriers

the ability to learn their jobs at a more moderate pace, and providing them with continuing education beyond the Carrier Academy and the on-the-job instruction stages. It also provides new city letter carriers with the resources they need to successfully navigate their new careers.

### New Employee Experience and Retention

With the nationwide implementation of the program on July 1, all newly hired city letter carriers now receive the following, prior to leaving the Carrier Academy and reporting to their employing office:

- Contact information for their employing office, including the direct phone number and email



# New Employee Experience, Retention and Mentoring Program (continued)

address of the employee's immediate supervisor, the office phone number, the address of the delivery unit, building access information, and the employee's reporting date and time.

- A defined work schedule for their first week in the delivery unit. This schedule will include anticipated start and end times, daily hours of work, and scheduled days off. It also will identify days specified for training with an on-the-job instructor (OJI). Additionally, their first day in the office will not be on a Sunday.
- An Employee Identification Number (EIN) and instructions for completing time reporting records. This requirement is necessary to ensure that new letter carriers get paid for the time they spend at Carrier Academy and that they have no issues with their pay when they arrive at their delivery unit.

No later than the first day in the employing office following completion of the Carrier Academy, or as soon as administratively possible, all newly

hired letter carriers receive:

- A new USPS-branded reflective vest, mail satchel and hat. They also receive dog spray and other items regularly supplied to new employees.
- An introduction to and familiarization with the employing office, including a facility tour, introduction to union steward/officials, management staff and other key personnel, along with locations of communication/bulletin boards. The introduction and tour are performed jointly by USPS and NALC representatives.

Additionally, the following policies must be followed:

- All city carrier assistant (CCA) and part-time flexible (PTF) city letter carriers are guaranteed a minimum of one non-scheduled day each service week, except during the penalty overtime exclusion period.
- Following completion of the Carrier Academy, work hours and work locations for CCAs and PTFs are limited as follows (Week 1 begins

the week the new carrier reports to their delivery unit following Carrier Academy and begins OJI training):

- Weeks 1 through 8—restricted to working only in their employing office. This includes restricting these employees from working in hubs outside of the employing office.
- Weeks 1 through 4—limited to a maximum of eight work hours per day and 40 work hours per week, including OJI training.
- Weeks 5 through 8—limited to a maximum of 10 work hours per day and 56 work hours per week.
- Weeks 9 through 11—limited to a maximum of 11.5 work hours per day (consistent with *Employee and Labor Relations Manual [ELM]*, Section 432.32), and 60 work hours per week.
- Effective beginning week 12—limited to a maximum of 11.5 work hours per day (consistent with *ELM*, Section 432.32).
- All CCAs and PTFs receive a defined work schedule, identifying anticipated non-scheduled days, start and end times, and route assignments. This schedule is to be posted by the close of business on the Wednesday of the preceding week.
- All newly hired city letter carriers must receive training on Sunday/Dynamic Delivery procedures with an experienced employee prior to performing Sunday delivery services on their own.
- Progress reviews for newly hired city letter carriers are to be conducted at 30-, 60- and 80-day intervals in accordance with cur-



rent guidelines. Copies of these reviews must be provided to the local union.

- Employees should have access to updated route books and maps. Prior to delivering a new route assignment, employees must be provided with reasonable time to review the route book and, if desired, converse with another carrier familiar with the assignment.
- To the extent possible, newly hired letter carriers will be provided with consistent route assignments to help promote confidence, route knowledge, quality of service and familiarity with the employing office.

## Mentoring Program

Research concerning mentoring programs has shown that mentoring relationships increase retention rates and help employees adapt to new workplaces. Employees who have workplace mentors have been found to be likely to experience greater job satisfaction, and mentoring relationships can help eliminate the obstacles, difficulties and stumbling blocks that new employees may encounter. Additionally, mentoring programs provide opportunities for new employees to freely ask questions, gain information necessary to successfully perform their jobs, and help build effective and diverse organizations.

With the implementation of the New Employee Experience, Retention and Mentoring Program, new city letter carriers are paired with experienced city letter carriers who volunteer to serve as mentors to help guide new employees during the early stages of their careers. Mentors participate in a training program to provide them with the skills

necessary to properly mentor new letter carriers. From the first day of the new employee in their delivery unit, mentors will assist them with navigating the challenges of becoming a city letter carrier.

When practicable, the mentor will participate in the mentee's tour of the delivery unit, introducing the new employee to colleagues and providing them with an overview of the workroom floor. The mentor and mentee also should meet regularly, as needed, to discuss the mentee's experiences and to address any work-related concerns or issues the mentee may be experiencing. Additionally, the mentor should provide encouragement and advice to the new employee regarding their performance and ability to adapt to the requirements of being a city letter carrier. During the first 120 calendar days of a mentee's employment as a city letter carrier, whenever possible, topics and results of any discussions related to the performance of a mentee should also be shared with the mentor.

Mentor and mentee participation in the program is voluntary. Mentors con-

duct their duties on the clock and are paid at their normal pay rate. While NALC and USPS have a joint expectation that mentoring relationships will last for a period of four calendar months, the mentorship can be terminated by either the mentor or mentee at any time. In these circumstances, when practicable, efforts will be made to jointly assign a new mentor to the newly hired employee.

Prior to this program being implemented nationally, it was tested in hundreds of delivery units throughout the country. This program was a huge success with the test locations that complied with the requirements. Retention rates, employee satisfaction, workplace culture and employee availability rose steeply, positively affecting all employees in those delivery units.

All CCAs and PTFs should expect to receive each of the benefits described above. If they do not, then they should speak with their local NALC representatives to investigate further and possibly file a grievance if necessary. **PR**

