

**NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL SERVICE  
STATE PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT MANUAL  
Policy Bulletin #18-01**

**1805(B) Permanent/Non-Competitive**

**October, 2018**

PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTMENTS PURSUANT  
TO SECTION 55-b OF THE CIVIL SERVICE LAW

These Guidelines and Procedures set forth the eligibility criteria and the application and appointment processes for the Civil Service Law (CSL) section 55-b Program.

Administration of the 55-b Program is governed by Part 58 of the Regulations of the State Civil Service Commission (Commission's Regulations). These Guidelines and Procedures are intended to clarify for applicants, employees, and appointing authorities the standards for appointment for the CSL section 55-b Program. These Guidelines do not supersede or impair any rights which an individual may possess under any law or rule. For specific questions not addressed in these Guidelines and Procedures, please contact the Department of Civil Service (DCS) 55-b/c Unit at 518-233-3118 or toll-free at 1-866-297-4356 or by e-mail at [ssdrecruitservices@cs.ny.gov](mailto:ssdrecruitservices@cs.ny.gov).

## **I. PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND OTHER METHODS OF APPOINTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

CSL section 55-b, commonly referred to as the "55-b Program," authorizes the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to determine up to 1,200 positions to be filled by persons with a physical or mental disability who are found otherwise qualified to perform satisfactorily the duties of any such positions. Upon such determination by the CSC, the positions are placed in the non-competitive class and may be filled by a person who has been certified by DCS as being 55-b "eligible."

CSL section 55-b is not the only avenue for hiring individuals with disabilities into the State civil service. This section provides agencies with significant flexibility for hiring, but is limited by statute to 1,200 positions.

Candidates with disabilities remain eligible for appointment to any non-competitive (positions not designated 55-b/c), exempt and labor class positions for which they are qualified.

## **II. ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION**

### **A. Application for Program Eligibility**

Individuals interested in being considered for appointment pursuant to the 55-b Program must submit a formal application, including medical documentation and employment history. The applications are submitted to, and reviewed by, DCS.

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**B. Certification of Eligibility**

**1. Criteria for Eligibility**

55-b Program applicants will ordinarily be found eligible to participate in the Program provided she/he adequately documents a permanent disability which meets at least one of the following criteria:

- a. Is legally blind (central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with corrective lenses or visual field restriction to 20 degrees diameter or less in the better eye);
- b. Is deaf (has a profound hearing loss and relies on visual communication such as sign language, writing, lip reading and gestures) or has a severe hearing impairment (best corrected average loss of > 70 db in the better ear at 500, 1000 and 2000 Hz);
- c. Has a musculoskeletal condition (e.g., amputation) or neuromuscular condition (e.g., Multiple Sclerosis) which severely limits ambulation;
- d. Has a cardiovascular condition (e.g., Class IV CHF) or pulmonary condition (e.g. COPD) which severely limits ambulation and/or requires constant oxygen administration;
- e. Has a developmental disability attributable to Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy, Neurological Impairment, Familial Dysautonomia, Autism or any other condition closely related in terms of severe impairment of intellectual functioning, adaptive behavior or requiring similar treatment and services;
- f. Has a mental illness, disease, or condition manifested by a disorder or disturbance in behavior, feeling, thinking or judgment which severely disrupts his or her ability to relate to others and daily functioning;
- g. Has other physical or mental conditions which substantially limits one or more major life activities, including, but not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working. Major life activities also include major bodily functions such as immune system functions, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, and endocrine functions.

Qualifying conditions will be assessed based upon the applicant's current functional status, taking into account measures which the individual has taken to

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ameliorate functional limitations, including, but not limited to prostheses, medications, eyeglasses/contact lenses or hearing aids.

All DCS determinations are made on an individual basis upon review of the application.

**C. Letter of Eligibility**

Applicants determined to be eligible to participate in the 55-b Program will receive a letter of eligibility. Once enrolled in the program, participants will be asked to renew their interest every three years through responding to an e-mail inquiry from DCS. Upon renewal, participants will receive an updated letter of eligibility, which they must supply to agencies when applying for positions under the 55-b Program. Agencies should contact the Department of Civil Service to verify eligibility in cases when a candidate's letter is older than 3 years.

**D. Appeals**

As provided by section 58.3 of the Commission's Regulations, a person found not eligible for participation in the 55-b Program may appeal that determination to the CSC. Such appeal shall be in writing and shall state the reasons why the individual believes that the determination is incorrect. An appeal must be received by the CSC within 30 days of the date of the written notice of the determination by DCS. The CSC shall consider such reasons, together with all supporting documents, in making its determination. The CSC may designate a physician, other than the physician who first examined the person, to conduct a secondary examination. The determination of the CSC as to whether the applicant is eligible for appointment under the 55-b Program shall be a final determination within the meaning of article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules.

**III. APPOINTMENTS**

**A. Titles Appropriate for 55-b Classification**

Entry-level titles are defined as any title for which an open-competitive examination is held and the promotion list, if one exists, has been exhausted.

1. The CSC will generally approve any competitive class position, normally filled through open-competitive and/or transition examination, for non-

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competitive classification pursuant to section 55-b, upon agency request. This includes positions for which there are formal traineeships.

2. In cases where positions are filled via both promotion and open-competitive examinations, 55-b candidates can be considered for positions once the promotion list has been exhausted.
3. The CSC will not approve the placement of positions in the non-competitive class pursuant to section 55-b when a reemployment list(s) exists as the result of layoffs. The request may be reconsidered when the re-employment list(s) no longer exists.

**B. Qualification Requirements for Appointees to 55-b Positions**

1. Candidates must possess the minimum qualifications for the selected title as established by the Staffing Services Division of the DCS. Ordinarily, the minimum qualifications described in the last examination announcement for the title are controlling.
2. Candidates must meet the applicable minimal mental and/or physical requirements for the job with a reasonable accommodation, if necessary.

**C. Considerations for a 55-b Appointment**

1. Candidates who can be Considered for Appointment

In addition to having an eligibility letter and meeting the qualifications described in III B above, candidates in the following circumstances can be considered for a 55-b appointment:

- a. A person who has never worked for the state.
  - b. A 55-b certified, current or former State employee.
  - c. A current state employee in a 55-b position who meets the technical requirements for a 70.1, 70.4 or 52.6 transfer (see *Lateral Mobility and Subsequent Appointments* below).
  - d. A person previously employed in a 55-b position who resigned from that position may be considered for reinstatement to a 55-b position pursuant to Rule 5.4 of the Rules for the Classified Service.
2. Candidates who should not be Considered for Appointment
    - a. Individuals certified eligible for the 55-b program may not be considered for a 55-b appointment to a title they previously held on a permanent, competitive basis. In such cases, agencies interested in appointing such individuals should do so as a reinstatement to a permanent, competitive class position.

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- b. The CSC may consider agency requests for waivers of these requirements in extraordinary circumstances for good cause shown and where the interests of government would be served.

**D. Promotion**

By statute, 55-b employees enjoy the same promotion opportunities as afforded competitive class incumbents. Consequently, 55-b employees may compete in promotional examinations; they may be provisionally appointed to competitive class promotion level titles; and they may be considered for a non-competitive promotion when such requirements are met.

**E. Lateral Mobility and Subsequent Appointments**

55-b eligible employees are intended to have the same career mobility as their competitive class colleagues in the same title. A permanent 55-b employee may be given a new appointment to a different 55-b position when the proposed transaction meets the technical requirements for transfer determined by the Department of Civil Service pursuant to Civil Service Law sections 70.1, 70.4, 52.6 and Civil Service Rule 5.1.

**F. Reinstatement to a 55-b Position**

55-b employees separated from their positions may be reinstated to a non-competitive 55-b position pursuant to Rule 5.4 of the Classified Service.

**G. Probationary Service**

1. All 55-b Program appointees are subject to a probationary period in accordance with Classified Service Rule 4.5. During the period of probationary service, an appointee must demonstrate ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position to the satisfaction of the appointing authority.
2. In instances where permanent 55-b appointees are given subsequent appointments to different positions, such employees are deemed to be on leave of absence from their 55-b positions until they have satisfactorily completed probationary service in the new 55-b position.

**H. Temporarily Vacant 55-b Positions**

When a 55-b position is permanently vacated it automatically reverts to the competitive class. A 55-b position will also automatically revert to the competitive class when it has been vacant for three months or more. If, thereafter, the

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permanent 55-b incumbent returns, the position is re-designated non-competitive.

#### **IV. AGENCY APPOINTMENT PROCESS**

Prior to offering an appointment to a 55-b candidate, agencies who are considering a 55-b appointment must take the following steps:

- Identify an appropriate title
- Identify an item number\*
- Review the candidate's qualifications
- Verify that the candidate is currently 55-b eligible
- Check list clearance codes
- Contact the 55-b/c Unit to verify appointment is appropriate, that positions are available, and the candidate can perform the essential duties of the position, with or without reasonable accommodation, based upon the medical opinion from EHS.
- Submit the S90, 55-b/c Program Appointment Request Form to the 55-b/c Unit by email at [ssdrecruitservices@cs.ny.gov](mailto:ssdrecruitservices@cs.ny.gov).

If everything is in order, the 55-b/c Unit will advise agencies to complete the on-line appointment request form. When the agency has been notified that they may proceed with the appointment request process, the intended incumbent may be appointed "temporary pending commission action" to 55-b. It is not necessary for the CSC to approve the agency request prior to such temporary appointment.

\*Note: Agencies can make 55-b appointments to encumbered items, with the understanding that the applicant is informed of his or her contingent status at the time of hire.

#### **V. CSC AND DCS ACTION**

Division of Staffing Services

Upon receipt of the appointment request form seeking jurisdictional reclassification, the 55-b/c Unit will review the form for completeness and send the requesting agency an e-mail acknowledging the request.

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As appropriate, Staffing Services Representatives will review the request to confirm that the individual meets the minimum qualifications of the position sought.

Office of Civil Service Commission Operations (CommOps)

Once the review of the appointment request form is complete, the 55-b/c Unit will forward the form to CommOps for placement on the Commission Calendar.

By law and rule, the CSC retains discretion to reject any agency appointment request made through the 55-b Program. If the appointment is approved, CommOps will note the disposition on the Calendar which is posted on the DCS website. This is the only notification agencies will receive.

If the jurisdictional reclassification request is denied, CommOps will advise the 55-b/c Unit to notify the agency.

Upon CSC approval, CommOps will change the jurisdictional classification of the item/position and set the effective date of the jurisdictional classification change to the date of Commission approval. Once the item number has been changed to non-competitive, the agency must submit a NYSTEP transaction making the employee permanent.