

Notes from the Rural Health Care monthly conference call: March 11, 21010
Basics of the Rural Health Care Program

Tess Ellis, Senior Manager for Rural Health Care, moderated today's call.

Today's discussion, the "Basics of the Rural Health Care Program," is essentially a preview of the upcoming training sessions we have scheduled – one here at USAC on April 6th and another at the American Telemedicine Association conference (in San Antonio) on May 15th. Nicole will discuss the training opportunities later in the call.

Topics covered on today's call will include:

- **Dates to Remember**
- **Filing Forms – What's Needed**
- **A Little Clarity**
 - Line 29 on FCC Form 465
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 - Contracts
 - HCP POC on Forms 465
 - Support Schedules
 - The Invoice Process
- **Resources**
 - Webinar
 - Welcome Packet
 - Contact information for more assistance
 - Basic Terminology – Some basic terms explained
 - Upcoming training opportunities
- **Question and Answer Session**

Tess introduced the people who would lead today's discussion topics:

Nicole Theodoropoulos is the Program Manager who handles all pre-commitment aspects of the RHC program. "Pre-commitment" includes anything that occurs before a Funding Commitment or denial letter is issued. More specifically, this might include determining eligibility, reviewing contracts, reviewing applications (or packets) with potential issues and handling other concerns that cannot be answered by RHC's help desk.

Rekha Ayalur, who is not on the call today but who will be at both training sessions, is the Program Manager who handles all post-commitment aspects of the program RHC. "Post-commitment" is anything that occurs after a Funding Commitment or denial letter is issued. This would include issues/problems with the FCL or Support Schedule which cannot be answered by RHC's Help Desk, appeals, and all outreach efforts.

Liz Anderson has ten years of experience working in the RHC Program, working in pre-commitment and post-commitment side of the house. Liz will talk about what needs to be submitted as supporting documentation when submitting your forms.

Nicole started by discussing Dates to Remember:

- **March 15, 2010 at 12:00 p.m.:** 2010 Window Open for Form 465 submissions. RHC will send out an email and post a note on its website when applicants may submit their Forms 466 and 466-A
- **July 1, 2010 (12:00:01 a.m.):** Funding Year 2010 opens
- **June 2, 2010:** the last day an applicant may post a Form 465 to receive a full year's support
- **June 30, 2010 (midnight):** Fund Year 2009 ends

Fund Years always run from July 1st through June 30th of the following year.

Liz Anderson then discussed **Filing Forms – What’s Needed**, covering what applicants need to include when filing forms to ensure a smooth application process:

- Form 466:
 - A copy of the rural rate (the actual amount being paid). This can be a copy of the bill or be provided on signed letterhead by your provider
 - A copy of the contract if applicable
 - Proof of the urban rate if not using a rate on the RHC website. The urban rate must be on signed letterhead from the provider
 -
- Form 466-A:
 - A copy of the rural rate (the actual amount being paid). This can be a copy of the bill or be provided on signed letterhead by your provider
 - Copy of the contract if applicable

Nicole provided **A Little Clarity** in a number of areas:

- **Line 29 on FCC Form 465:**
 - Nicole explained what applicants should include on Line 29 of the Form 465 (a description of how the applicant will use the supported services). RHC recommends that applicants do not post for specific services (T-1, DS3, MPLS, etc.) since doing so locks the applicant in to receiving that service type. For example, if an applicant includes, “seeking T-1 service to connect hospital A to clinic B,” the applicant must only sign a contract for T-1 service.
 - The applicant should instead include a description of how it will use the supported services, such as transmission of data and medical images or X-rays, provider-to-provider consultation between health care professionals in a rural facility and professionals in other locations, provider-to-patient consultation, offsite storage of medical records, etc. By doing so, this will allow service providers to fully understand the applicants needs and to propose services to best meet those needs
 - This topic was also covered in the [January conference call](#) in a little more detail
- **Line 30 on FCC Form 465:**
 - On this line the applicant has the option of choosing “Telecommunications & Internet services,” “Telecommunications service ONLY,” or “Internet service ONLY.” RHC recommends that if the applicant is unsure, they should check option one, “Telecommunications & Internet services.”
- **Contracts:**
 - For contracts to be considered Evergreen, they must be submitted to RHC for review and must contain the following:
 - Both parties in the contract are identified
 - Both parties sign and date the contract (after the Allowable Contract Sign Date)
 - Contract specifies the type and terms of service
 - Contract has a specific duration
 - The benefit of having evergreen status is that HCPs do not need to re-compete for service each year, so they do not need to file the FCC Form 465 annually. The HCP does not need to re-bid the services as long as the evergreen contract is valid, or until the contract is modified in any way. Read more about [Evergreen](#) status on the RHC website.
 - If the applicant has an existing contract in place prior to applying for RHC discounts, it must seek bids and choose the most cost-effective option (which could be the existing provider)
- **HCP Point of Contact for Form 465:**
 - The HCP Point of Contact (POC) must be physically located at the HCP. The Mailing Contact may be the same person or someone from a parent organization, etc. The Form 465 must be signed by someone authorized to do so by the HCP organization
- **Support Schedules:**
 - The HCP Support Schedule (HSS) comes later in the RHC process, after the HCP has submitted the Form 467. The HCP should submit the Form 467 after it has received its Funding Commitment Letter (FCL). The Form 467 confirms the Billing Account Number (BAN) and the actual service start and termination

date for the supported services. The HSS amount can be equal to or less than the amount on the FCL, but can never be more

- The HSS is the trigger for the service provider to credit the HCP's account with the amount on the HSS, either by check or a credit on the HCP's monthly bill

- **The Invoice Process:**

- Once the credit has been provided to the HCP, the service provider should prepare and submit an original invoice to RHC, allowing USAC to reimburse the service provider for the credits provided to the HCP
- USAC does not provide reimbursements directly to the HCP

Resources:

Tess mentioned that the RHC staff spent a lot of time this past year developing some tools to help new applicants through the application process. There was an attachment to the email that went out with the agenda that explains much of the [terminology](#) applicants and service providers may run into and not be familiar with as they go through the application process.

There are also a few links on the email – a [Welcome Packet](#) that provides an overview of the program for both applicants and service providers and is chock full of useful information such as the types of services that are supported. We also have a link to a [Webinar](#) that walks you through each of our Forms.

We encourage you to reach out to our Help Desk: 1.800.229.5476 or rhc-admin@usac.org if you have questions or need additional assistance

Finally, the upcoming training events were discussed. [Registration](#) for both the April 6th and May 15th sessions is now open. If those on the call did not receive the email, the link above will take you to the main training page where interested applicants or service providers may review the agendas and register.

Tess reminded all on the call that the RHC Window Open is scheduled for Monday, March 15, 2010, at 12:00 p.m.

Tess noted that the RHC program was expecting the **FCC Broadband Plan** to be announced on Wednesday, March 17th:

- RHC will post a link to the report on the RHC website as soon as it comes out and noted that the FCC will have it posted on its site as well
- April's monthly call will focus solely on the Broadband Plan and its impact on the Rural Health Care program

The next monthly call is scheduled for Thursday, May 8, 2010 at 2:00 p.m.