

## FCC Order DA 20-345 – Additional Relief for HCPs due to COVID-19

On March 26, 2020, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released Order FCC DA 20-345 providing relief to RHC Program participants responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The FCC acknowledges the scale of this public health emergency, the extensive disruption to health care providers (HCPs), and the enhanced need for telehealth and telemedicine services during this global pandemic. Read the Order [here](#).

### Funding Year 2020 Application Filing Window

The Order extends the FY2020 filing window until June 30, 2020 at 11:59 ET. Applicants now have an additional two months to submit their FY2020 funding requests (FCC Forms 462 and 466).

### Evergreen Contract Extensions

The FCC waives two requirements regarding the voluntary extension of evergreen contract terms. The waivers allow for the following:

- 1) HCPs and service providers with evergreen contracts that expire in FY2019 may continue with the services in the evergreen contract even if their contracts do not include an option for voluntary extensions.
- 2) HCPs and service providers with evergreen contracts that reach the five-year voluntary extension limit during FY2019 may extend their contract terms for one additional year for FY2020.

HCPs are required to memorialize the extension with the service provider and to retain any documentation associated with the extension.

### Additional Response Time for USAC Information Requests

The FCC waives the 14-day deadline for applicants to respond to all information requests from USAC issued on or before September 30, 2020 regardless of the funding year for which those requests relate. The deadline will automatically extend the original deadline an additional 28 days, allowing a response time of 42 days. USAC is also directed to consider information that an applicant submits even after the deadline if the applicant can reasonably attribute the delay to its efforts to fight COVID-19. This waiver includes information requests related to funding requests, appeals and waivers, invoices, audits, and other documentation submitted by the applicant.

### Service Delivery Deadline

Program rules require that non-recurring services in the Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program must be delivered by June 30 of the funding year for which services were sought. The Order extends the service delivery deadline an additional year for all non-recurring services in the HCF Program for FY2019.

### Invoice Filing Deadline

HCF Program rules require applicants to complete their invoicing six months after the end of their funding commitment. The Order grants applicants a 180-day extension of the invoice filing deadline for FY2019 commitments.

### Deadline for Appeals and Requests for Waiver

Program rules require applicants to file an appeal or waiver request within 60 days of a decision by USAC or the FCC. The Order waives this 60-day deadline and provides an additional 60 days for appeals and waiver requests to be filed. This waiver will be in effect for all deadlines of appeals and waiver requests from March 11, 2020 through September 30, 2020.

### Preventing Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

Although the FCC is granting these limited waivers, HCPs and service providers must continue to comply with RHC Program rules and requirements and remain subject to audits and investigations to determine compliance.