



RHC Program News for July 2020

July 1, 2020

Latest News

New! View the Funding Year (FY) 2021 Calendar!

The FY2020 filing window period may have ended on June 30th, but FY2021 is just getting started! Mark your calendar with upcoming important dates for FY2021: including the FY2021 filing window period which will take place from January 4, 2021 through April 1, 2021. Download the [FY2021 calendar](#) and take a look at the [RHC Funding Year Overview Page](#) for more information.

FCC Announces Increase in Rural Health Care Program Funds for FY2020

On June 30, 2020, the FCC Wireline Competition Bureau directed USAC to carry forward up to \$197.98 million in unused funds from prior funding years to the extent necessary to satisfy funding year (FY) 2020 demand for the Rural Health Care Program. The total amount of support available to eligible health care providers for FY2020 will be \$802.74 million, the most in the Program's history. Read [Public Notice DA 20-688](#).

Sign up for the FY2021 Kickoff Webinar

New to the RHC Program? Prepare for the upcoming Funding Year by registering for the FY2021 Kickoff Webinar on Wednesday, July 15 at 2:00 p.m. ET. This webinar will help new and returning applicants prepare for FY2021 and cover important dates, new tools, and best practices for a successful application process. [Register now!](#)

Begin to Submit Your FY2021 Request for Services Today!

New for FY2021 and forward, the competitive bidding period will begin on July 1 of the prior calendar year. This allows RHC Program applicants more time to complete and submit their FCC [Forms 461](#) and [Forms 465](#) for the purposes of competitive bidding. Learn about the changes to the FY2021 competitive bidding process and corresponding My Portal updates at the upcoming Request for Services Webinars:

- HCF Program FCC Form 461 Best Practices – July 22, 2020, 2:00 p.m. ET – [Register now!](#)
- Telecom Program FCC Form 465 Best Practices – July 29, 2020, 2:00 p.m. ET – [Register now!](#)

New! RHC 101 Training Module

You asked, and we listened. RHC now has a self-paced training module to help applicants learn program fundamentals and best practices. Learn at your own pace with interactive quizzes and step-by-step guides with this [RHC 101](#) module. Let us know what you think about this resource by emailing our help desk RHC-Assist@usac.org with feedback. More training modules coming soon!

New! Rurality Tier Search Tool and Rates Database Available Now

As a reminder, FCC [Report and Order 19-78](#) implemented RHC Program changes that promote transparency, predictability, and further the efficient allocation of limited program resources while guarding against waste, fraud, and abuse. Two major changes included establishing rurality tiers for Telecom Program support and implementing a rates database for Telecom Program applicants. You can now access these two new tools which make program participation and form submission more efficient.

- [Rurality Tier Search Tool](#) – This tool can be used to search, by health care provider (HCP) site location, the applicable rurality tier for your HCP site. The rurality tier is used to calculate the “rural rate” for determining the amount of support for eligible telecommunications services in the Telecom Program. In addition to helping determine your HCP site’s rural rate, the rurality tier is also a factor (together with degree of medical service availability) in determining the prioritization of funding in the event eligible funding requests exceed the amount of available funding for a particular funding year.
 - Resources: [How to Use the Rurality Tier Search Tool, Methods and Procedures](#)
- [Telecom Program Rates Database](#) - Beginning in FY2021, the rural and urban rates used to calculate the amount of eligible support for an HCP site location will be the median of available rates as identified in the Rates Database. Telecom Program applicants will use the median rural and urban rates from the Rates Database for the requested telecommunications services when submitting Telecom Funding Requests FCC Form(s) 466.
 - Resources: [How to Use the Rates Database, Methods and Procedures](#)

If there are relevant rates that are not already in the database, the public may submit these rates to USAC for inclusion in the database by emailing RHC-Assist@usac.org with the subject line “Urban and Rural Rate Database” by August 31, 2020.

Important Reminders

FCC Established \$200 Million COVID-19 Telehealth Program

Note: As of June 25, 2020, the FCC is [no longer accepting applications](#) for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. Health care providers that submitted an application prior to June 25, 2020 can access their applications via the [COVID-19 Telehealth Program Application Portal](#). Visit the FCC [COVID-19 Telehealth Program website](#) for complete information about the program, including eligibility, supported services and equipment, and the application process. Please note that the COVID-19 Telehealth Program is limited to nonprofit and public eligible health care providers.

FCC Introduced \$100 Million Connected Care Pilot Program

Included in [FCC Report and Order 20-44](#) were final rules for a new Connected Care Pilot Program which will provide up to \$100 million of support from the Universal Service Fund (USF) to help defray health care providers’ costs of providing connected care services and to help assess how the USF can be used in the long-term to support telehealth. The Pilot Program will provide funding for selected pilot projects to cover 85% of the eligible costs of broadband connectivity, network equipment, and information services necessary to provide connected care services to the intended patient population. Additional details regarding the Connected Care Pilot Program, including application information, will be made available soon.

Information Requests - Deadline Extended

On March 26, 2020 the FCC released [Order DA 20-345](#), granting relief measures to RHC Program participants to help health care providers (HCPs) effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this relief, the FCC waived the 14-day deadline for applicants to respond to Information Requests from USAC issued on or before September 30, 2020. Account holders have an additional 28 days, allowing a response time of 42 days. This waiver includes Information Requests related to funding requests, appeals and waivers, invoices, audits, and other documentation submitted by the applicant. Read a [summary](#) of the relief brought on by the Order.

FCC Form 460 Best Practice

During the submission of an FCC Form 460 (HCF Eligibility and Registration Form), we recommend that applicants upload any supporting documentation necessary to validate form data to the “Supporting Documentation” section. This includes documentation that is relevant to the required fields of the FCC Form 460. Submitting supporting documentation helps to verify health care provider (HCP) eligibility thereby expediting the review process. A few examples include:

- Hospital licenses, with the address clearly posted, to verify a non-profit hospital
- A recent bill or lease, with the address clearly posted, to verify the HCP address provided on the FCC Form 460
- Public tax documents to verify the Non-Profit Tax ID (EIN)
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) accreditation to verify a community health center.

You can submit your FCC Form 460 at any time during the funding year. First time applying? We suggest you review this [step-by-step guide](#) or watch a [short video](#) to check if your HCP site has previously registered with the RHC Program.

FCC Form 467 Revisions

Please remember to carefully review your Funding Commitment Letter (FCL) and Healthcare Support Schedule (HSS) prior to beginning the invoicing process. If there is an error or you have any questions about the information on the FCL or HSS, email RHC-Assist@usac.org with the FRN number in the subject line. As a reminder, if services were delayed or not turned on, it is the responsibility of the HCP to submit a request for an FCC Form 467 revision.

Need Help? Contact Us!

For questions about the Rural Health Care Program, call the RHC Help Desk Call at 800-453-1546 or email RHC-Assist@usac.org.

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