# RHC Program News for May 2020

May 7, 2020

## Latest News

**USAC and RHC Remain Open for Business**
At USAC, we are committed to the health and safety of our employees, contractors, and stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic. While USAC's Washington, DC office is closed, the RHC Division remains fully operational. RHC Program staff will work remotely and continue to process and review forms and implement guidance from the FCC. Visit the RHC Program COVID-19 Response page for more information about the relief provided to HCPs and helpful resources for those affected, including evergreen contract guidance. We will continue to update the Announcements page with all the latest news relating to COVID-19 and the RHC Program.

**FCC Established $200 Million COVID-19 Telehealth Program**
On April 2, 2020 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released Report and Order FCC 20-44 which included the COVID-19 Telehealth Program, funded through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The COVID-19 Telehealth Program will provide immediate support to health care providers responding to the pandemic by providing funding for telecommunications services, information services, and devices to enable the provision of connected care services. 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. The FCC began accepting applications for the program on April 13, 2020 and continues to review and approve applications on a rolling basis. Interested new applicants must submit an FCC Form 460 through USAC to be eligible for the program. RHC participants with an existing approved FCC Form 460 or 465 are already eligible and can submit applications directly to the FCC.

**FCC Introduced $100 Million Connected Care Pilot Program**
Also included in Report and Order FCC 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.

**FY2019 Funding Requests Continue Without Proration**
FCC Order 20-30, issued March 13, 2020, directed USAC to carry forward additional unused funds from prior years to fully fund all eligible RHC Program funding requests filed during the FY2019 filing window. The Order also waived the funding cap on multi-year commitments and upfront payments. Without this Order, pro-rated reductions in FY2019 support for rural health care providers would be necessary. RHC is currently issuing decisions on FY2019 funding requests and will continue to do so on a rolling basis. RHC will communicate any updates via the email addresses the applicant has submitted in My Portal.

**FY2020 Filing Window Extended to June 30, 2020 due to COVID-19**
In order to minimize potential disruptions caused by COVID-19, the FCC released Order DA 20-345, directing USAC to extend the FY2020 filing window to June 30, 2020. This means that you must submit your funding requests (FCC Forms 462 or 466) by 11:59 p.m. ET June 30, 2020. We highly encourage you to submit your application forms as early as possible in the filing window. See below for helpful resources:

- Funding Request Webinars: HCF Program, Telecom Program
- Funding Request Summary
- FY2020 Recommended Submission Dates
- Information for FY2019 Applicants Applying in FY2020
- Urban and Rural Rate Information (Telecom Program only)

**New for FY2020**
Starting on February 1, for FY2020, several new rules adopted in FCC Report and Order 19-78 became effective, including: elimination of the grace period for the consortia majority rural rule, gift rule, elimination of limitation on support for satellite services, and revised and harmonized funding request certifications. Read more and download the Report and Order 19-78 Tip Sheet.

**FCC Releases Supply Chain Order and Mandatory Service Provider Survey**
On January 3, 2020, the FCC's Supply Chain Order, became effective. The Order adopts a new rule that no universal service support may be used to purchase, obtain, maintain, improve, modify, or otherwise support any equipment or services produced or provided by companies that pose a national security threat to the integrity of communications networks or the communications supply chain. The FCC has initially designated Huawei Technologies Company and ZTE Corporation as companies covered by this Order.

The Order requires all USF program service providers that are designated Eligible Telecommunication Carriers (ETCs) to complete a survey identifying whether their networks contain equipment or services from Huawei and/or ZTE by May 22, 2020.  Other USF program participants can complete the survey on a voluntary basis.
USAC will share additional information about this Order as it is available.

**Urban and Rural Rate Database Feedback Opportunity**
RHC is currently accepting feedback on urban and rural rates. RHC will consider this feedback as it develops the urban and rural databases that will be used beginning with competitive bidding for FY2021. As per FCC Report and Order 19-78, RHC will determine the median urban and rural rates for eligible services and publish these rates in publicly available databases. To assist in this process, service providers "are encouraged to bring their available urban and rural rate data to [RHC's] attention."

Interested in providing your feedback on urban and rural rates database? Feel free to email RHC-Assist@usac.org  with the subject line "Urban and Rural Rate Database Feedback."

# Important Reminders

**Telecom FCC Form 467 Revisions**
Please remember to carefully review your Funding Commitment Letter (FCL) and Telecom 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 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 a 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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