RHC Program News for January 2021

January 7, 2021

Latest News

New! FY2021 Filing Window Open Now!
The FY2021 filing window opened on January 4 and will close 11:59 p.m. ET on Thursday, April 1. This means that you must submit your funding requests (FCC Forms 462 or Forms 466) as early as January 4 and no later than 11:59 p.m. ET April 1, 2021, for the initial filing window period. We highly encourage you to submit your application forms as early as possible in the filing window period. Other forms for FY2021 (FCC Forms 460, 461, or 465) were accepted prior to January 4 to begin the application process. Learn more about filing window periods.

Use the following helpful resources to help you submit your funding request by the April 1 deadline:

- Funding Request Best Practices for FY2021 Webinars
- Funding Request Summary
- FY2021 Recommended Form Submission Dates
- Information for FY2020 Applicants Applying in FY2021

New! FCC Releases Order DA 20-1420: Certain Rule Changes to be Implemented in FY2020
The FCC released Order DA 20-1420 implementing certain rule changes mid-funding year (FY) 2020 that were previously slated for FY2021. The FCC recognizes that making these rules effective mid-FY2020 will provide helpful flexibility to health care providers during the current funding year. The Order accelerates the effective dates of the following rule changes:

- Extending site and service substitutions to Telecom Program applicants
- Amending the SPIN change process to allow for corrective and operational changes across both the HCF and Telecom Programs
- Establishing a service delivery deadline of June 30 while permitting a one-year extension of the service delivery deadline for non-recurring services
- Permitting a one-time 120-day invoice filing extension

Please note, this Order will become effective 30 days following publication in the Federal Register. USAC will communicate additional information including specific instructions on how to submit service substitutions and SPIN change requests for Telecom Program applicants.

New! Additional $249.95 Million Appropriated for FCC COVID-19 Telehealth Program
On December 27, 2020 the Consolidated Appropriations Act was signed into law and provided an additional $249.95 million for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. This additional funding will allow the Commission to continue its efforts to expand connected care throughout the country and enable patients to access necessary health care services while helping slow the spread of the disease.

In addition, the Act requires the Commission to seek comment on "the metrics the Commission should use to evaluate applications for funding" and "how the Commission should treat applications filed during the funding rounds for awards from the COVID-19 Telehealth Program using amounts appropriated under the CARES Act."

Through this Public Notice, the FCC seeks comment on these matters, as well as how to meet the Act's other requirements for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. [Read the PN](#).

New for FY2021

Rates Database for Telecom Program Applicants
Beginning FY2021, the rural and urban rates used to calculate the amount of eligible Telecom Program support for a Health Care Provider (HCP) site location will be the median of available rates as identified in the [Rates Database](#). A database search will also provide users with the underlying data used to calculate those median rates. Telecom Program applicants will use the median rural and urban rates from the Rates Database for the requested telecommunications services when submitting the FCC Form 466.

When submitting an FCC Form 466, the rural rate for the requested service will be calculated based on the rural rate included in the agreement with the service provider or the median rural rate from the Rates Database, whichever is lower. The urban rate for the requested service will be the median urban rate from the Rates Database. At the FCC's direction, the database inputs have been recently updated to include recent E-Rate and RHC Program commitments.

Important Reminders

Submit Your FY2021 Request for Services Today!
New for FY2021 and forward, the competitive bidding period begins 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 by watching the recent [Request for Services Webinars](#). Please keep in mind that it's best practice to submit these forms as early as possible in preparation for the upcoming filing window.

Supply Chain Order Reminder
As you proceed with FY2021 competitive bidding, please keep in mind that the FCC's [Supply Chain Order](#) became effective on January 3, 2020. The Order prohibits Universal Service support from being 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. Huawei Technologies Company and ZTE Corporation are the two companies that have been officially designated as such threats by the FCC.

Tip: Rurality Tier Search Tool
When using the [Rurality Tier Search Tool](#), it is important to put in your site's exact address for best results. If the site's exact address does not yield results, you may also use the latitude and longitude coordinates for your site. To find your site's latitude and longitude coordinates:

1. Go to [Google Maps](#)
2. Type in your site's address
3. Right click on the marker pin pointing to your site on the map and select "What's Here?"
4. The coordinates (a pair of numbers, each with a decimal point) will appear on the screen

Use these coordinates to "Search with geographic coordinates" in the Rurality Tier Search Tool. Be sure to include the negative sign when entering the negative longitude coordinate.

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, but are not limited to:
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) or public documents if the health care provider is owned by a local or state government

- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) accreditation to verify a community health center.

Please note that submission of this supporting documentation does not guarantee form approval. 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 to check if your HCP site has previously registered with the RHC Program.

Telecom 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 funding request 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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