October 2022 RHC Monthly Newsletter

October 6, 2022

Latest News

News! FCC Waives Certain RHC Program Rules in Response to Hurricane Fiona
On September 22, 2022, the FCC released order DA 22-998, waiving certain RHC rules and deadlines to assist participants and providers located in areas affected by Hurricane Fiona. This Order applies to healthcare providers and service providers located in the areas in Puerto Rico that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has designated as eligible for Individual or Public Assistance for the purposes of federal disaster relief as of September 22, 2022. This Order takes the following actions:

- Grants a 60-day extension to the deadline for appeals and requests for waiver for all requests from September 18, 2022 through February 21, 2023;
- Waives the 14-day Information Request deadline for Information Requests related to funding requests, appeals and waivers, invoices, audits and other documentation and applies to all funding years for all Information Requests issued on or after September 4, 2022 (affected health care providers and service providers have until February 21, 2023 to respond);
- Waives the invoicing deadline for FY2021 funding requests and grants an automatic 120-day extension; and
- Waives the September 30, 2022 deadline for Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) program annual reports (HCF program participants have until February 21, 2023 to submit annual reports).

Impacted program participants will not be penalized for failure to retain records destroyed by Hurricane Fiona. For more information, read FCC Order DA 22-998.

News! FCC Waives Certain RHC Program Rules in Response to Hurricane Ian
On October 4, 2022, the FCC released order DA 22-1063, waiving certain RHC rules and deadlines to assist participants and providers located in areas affected by Hurricane Ian. This Order applies to healthcare providers and service providers located in the areas affected by Hurricane Ian which struck the State of Florida on September 28, 2022, and the States of North Carolina and South Carolina on September 29, 2022. This Order takes the following actions:

- Grants a 60-day extension to the deadline for appeals and requests for waiver for all requests from September 18, 2022 through March 3, 2023;
- Waives the 14-day Information Request deadline for Information Requests related to funding requests, appeals and waivers, invoices, audits and other documentation and applies to all funding years for all Information Requests issued on or after September 4, 2022 (affected health care providers and service providers have until March 3, 2023 to respond);
- Waives the invoicing deadline for FY2021 funding requests and grants an automatic 120-day extension; and
- Waives the September 30, 2022 deadline for Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) program annual reports (HCF program participants have until March 3, 2023; to submit annual reports).

Impacted program participants will not be penalized for failure to retain records destroyed by Hurricane Fiona. For more information, read FCC Order DA 22-1063.

Submit Funding Year (FY) 2023 Requests for Service Now
RHC program applicants can submit FCC Forms 461 and Forms 465 to initiate competitive for FY2023. The FY2023 filing window will open on December 1, 2022 and close on April 3, 2023. Requests for services must be posted to USAC's website by March 2, 2023. View the FY2023 Program Calendar.

The platform used to submit FCC forms is being updated to improve user experience and has been named **RHC Connect**.

Although the platform is changing, the information requested on the FCC forms will not change. For FY2023, FCC Form 461 (Request for Services) must be submitted in RHC Connect. Over time, RHC Connect will manage all FCC forms in both the HCF and Telecommunications (Telecom) Programs.

The following resources have been posted to the Welcome to RHC Connect webpage:

- RHC Connect – FCC Form 461 User Guide
- Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 461 Webpage
- RHC Connect – FCC Form 463 User Guide

- [Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 463](#)

FY2023 Filing Window Opens December 1, 2022 – Register for Upcoming Training Today!
The FY2023 filing window will take place from December 1, 2022 to April 3, 2023. This means that you must submit your funding requests (FCC Forms 462 or 466) as early as December 1, 2022, and, no later than 11:59 p.m. ET April 3, 2023. We highly encourage you to submit your funding requests as early as possible in the filing window. Other forms for FY2023 (FCC Forms 460, 461, or 465) are accepted prior to December 1. Learn more about [filing windows](#).

Join the RHC Program Outreach team in November for the Funding Request Best Practices webinars. These webinars will cover any changes to the forms for FY2023 and include a walkthrough of the FCC Forms 462 and 466 in RHC Connect. Register below:

- HCF Program Funding Request Webinar – Wednesday, November 9, 2022 2:00 p.m. ET - [Register](#)
- Telecom Program Funding Request Webinar – Wednesday, November 16, 2022 2:00 p.m. ET - [Register](#)

RHC Connect Updates
The FCC Form 463 is now available in RHC Connect for FY2022 funding commitments. The platform change affects only HCF Program participants. HCF Program applicants submitting FCC Forms 460 and 463 (for funding years prior to FY2022) will continue to do so in My Portal. Participants in the Telecom Program and the Connected Care Pilot Program (CCPP) will not be affected, unless those applicants also participate in the HCF Program.
To learn more, please visit the [Welcome to RHC Connect](#) webpage.

Funding Reviews Status
As of September 30, 2022:

- FY2022 HCF – 66.6% of FCC Forms 462 are committed (Approved, Denied, or Withdrawn)
- FY2022 Telecom – 81.6% of FCC Forms 466 are committed (Approved, Denied, or Withdrawn)

Important Reminders

Duplicate Funding Prohibited
Please remember: FCC rules prohibit duplicate funding for the same service, for the same locations, during the same period, from more than one FCC program. This includes the RHC programs (HCF and Telecom), the COVID-19 Telehealth Program, and the CCPP.

Invoicing Deadline
Per [FCC Order 19-78](#), the invoicing deadline is four months (120 days) from the later of the service delivery deadline, the date of a revised FCL approving a post-commitment request, or a successful appeal of a previously denied or reduced funding request. This invoicing deadline applies to both RHC programs.
The Order also adopted a rule, effective FY2021, permitting a single 120-day extension of the invoicing deadline if the HCP is unable to meet the invoicing deadline for any reason. The request for an extension must be submitted prior to the original invoicing deadline. The invoicing deadline for single year FY2021 commitments is October 28, 2022.

Please use the [RHC Invoicing Deadline Tool](#) on the Open Data platform of the USAC website to look up the invoicing deadline for specific FRNs.

Invoicing Best Practices
Please keep in mind that once you receive an approved funding commitment, you should follow the necessary steps to invoice prior to your invoicing deadline(s). Please be sure to respond to any invoicing Information Requests by the 14-calendar day deadline listed in the email. For more information, please see the [HCF invoice page](#) and [Telecom invoice page](#).

Online Tools Updates

Invoicing Deadlines
The new [Invoicing Deadline Tool](#) replaces the Invoicing Deadline spreadsheet. The tool allows service providers and health care providers to look up the deadline to submit invoices for funding commitments. As an upgrade to the spreadsheet, the tool allows users to avoid having to set up specific Excel configurations to find their deadlines.

Note: The tool does not contain any additional information such as form submissions, payment status, or funds remaining. Contact the [RHC Customer Service Center](#) for questions about those topics. The Invoicing Deadline tool and all other RHC tools can be found on the [Tools webpage](#).

Eligible Rural Areas Search Tool
The Eligible Rural Areas Search tool has been removed from the [Tools webpage](#) and the HCF and Telecom eligibility webpages. HCP rurality and priority tiers can be searched using the [Rurality Tier Search Tool](#). For more information about how to use this tool, please use the [How to Use the Rurality Tier Search Tool](#) tip sheet on the USAC website.

Note: This tool is for information purposes only. Rurality tiers are formally assigned during the review and approval of the FCC Form 460 in the HCF Program and FCC Form 465 in the Telecom Program. Applicants should check approved forms for assigned rurality tier.

News You Can Use

What To Do When You Receive an Information Request
As part of their review of any eligibility, request for services, funding requests, and invoicing form, RHC reviewers

will contact all account holders (the primary and all secondary and tertiary account holders associated with the HCP) with a request for additional information ("Information Request"). This request will assist with the collection of any missing documentation, address deficiencies, or ask clarifying questions about the FCC form.

Information Request Tips for the Telecom Program

- HCPs can receive Telecom Program Information Requests through My Portal or by email.
  - For Information Requests received through My Portal, HCPs should respond through My Portal only.
  - For Information Requests received by email, HCPs should "Reply All" to respond to the Information Request by email.
- Use only Chrome or Firefox Internet browsers when using My Portal.
- When uploading a document as a response, the file must be limited to 10MB and its file name should not contain any special characters, only letters and numbers.

Information Request Tips for the HCF Program

- For FY2022 FCC Forms 462, an auto-generated email will be sent directing HCPs to RHC Connect to respond. HCPs should respond through RHC Connect only. Please use the Information Request Tip Sheet to help you navigate Information Requests sent through RHC Connect.
- HCPs that receive HCF Program Information Requests through email should "Reply All" to respond to an Information Request by email.

Changes to a Commitment After Funding Has Been Approved

When a Funding Commitment Letter (FCL) is received, it is the responsibility of the applicant to confirm that the information contained therein is accurate. Applicants must contact USAC to request changes to an HCP site or service for any of the circumstances listed:

- If the site address changes or the primary account holder no longer works for the HCP, an FCC Form 460 revision for HCF or a new FCC Form 465 for Telecom must be submitted within 30 days of the change. The 30-day requirement applies at all points during the funding lifecycle including all post-commitment activities.
- If all approved funds will not be used, a request to decrease funding may be submitted by sending an email to RHC-Invoicing@usac.org. The HCP name and number, the affected Funding Request Number (FRN), and the amount reduced in the commitment must be included. USAC will complete a partial de-commitment for the FRN in that amount.
  - In the Telecom Program, the approved FRN service dates can be revised prior to invoicing using the FCC Form 467.
  - If any additional changes are required after submitting the FCC Form 467, an FCC Form 467 can be resubmitted prior to invoicing.
- If funds within an FRN must be re-allocated, a site and service substitution must be submitted. Learn more about site and service substitutions.
- If no funds will be used in the approved or disbursed funding commitment, the disbursed funds must be returned to USAC. Learn more about voluntary return of funds by visiting the Returning Program Funding webpage.

Certifications Requirements for National Supply Chain

As a reminder, when service providers log in to My Portal, two new Supply Chain certifications included in the FCC Form 463 and Telecom Program invoice will be displayed.

The first certification affirms compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 47, Section 54.9 , prohibition on USF support to purchase, obtain, maintain, improve, modify, operate, manage, or otherwise support equipment or services produced or provided by the covered companies deemed to pose a national security threat to the integrity of the communications network or communications supply chain. As of September 20, 2022, Huawei Technologies Company, ZTE Corporation, Hytera Communications Corporation, Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company, and Dahua Technology Company, AO Kaspersky Lab, China Mobile International USA Inc., China Telecom (Americas) Corp, Pacific Network Corp and its wholly-owned subsidiary ComNet(USA) LLC, China Unicom (Americas) Operations Limited and their affiliates and subsidiaries., are the 10 companies that have been officially designated as such threats by the FCC and placed on the Covered List. The second certification affirms compliance with CFR 47 Section 54.10, which prohibits the use of any federal subsidies on any communications equipment and services on the Covered List.

- **FY2022 program participants:** If you requested services or equipment provided or that contain components of products produced by any company on the Covered List, or any of their parents, affiliates, and subsidiaries in FY2022, you cannot invoice for these funds. Instead, you should immediately request a service substitution prior to invoicing in order to ensure complete program compliance.
- **FY2023 program participants:** As you proceed with competitive bidding, please ensure you are not requesting funding for services or equipment from any company on the Covered List, or any of their parents, affiliates, and subsidiaries.

USAC updated the Supply Chain webpages to include three new subpages: COVID-19 Broadband Programs, Audits, and FAQs.

Let's Plan a Virtual Site Visit!

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, RHC will not be on the road during calendar year 2022. In prior years, USAC has gone to conferences and visited sites to connect with program participants to see first-hand how HCPs benefit from the RHC programs. RHC would like to continue to learn more about the people and communities who benefit from RHC program support by holding a virtual event. This is a great opportunity to introduce RHC staff to participating HCPs and to deepen the relationship between RHC staff and applicants. If you are interested in having your HCP or Consortia featured in an upcoming virtual site visit, please send a request to RHC-Outreach@usac.org with "Virtual Site Visit" in the subject line. Once the request has been received, RHC will reach out with more information.

Need Help? Contact Us!

For questions about the Rural Health Care program, contact RHC-Assist@usac.org or the Customer Service Center at (800) 453-1546 from 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. ET Monday through Friday for assistance. Use the Customer Service Center Tip Sheet to learn about what the RHC Customer Service Center can and cannot help you with.