

Health Care Providers Support Program

The purpose of the Health Care Providers Support Program is to enable public and non-profit rural health care providers to have access to telecommunications services necessary for the provision of health care services at rates comparable to those paid for similar services in urban areas. The Health Care Providers Support Program offers eligible public and non-profit health care providers located in rural areas reduced rates for Company intrastate services, available in this Guide. Such services must be purchased in accordance with the Rules adopted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in its Universal Service Order 97-157, issued May 8, 1997 and the New York State Public Service Commission in its Order in Cases 94-C-0095 and 28425, issued November 4, 1997. The FCC Rules are codified at 47 Code of Federal Regulation (C.F.R.) 54.601 et.seq., and any amendments made thereto.

Regulations

- a. To be eligible for the reduced rates, rural health care providers are required to comply with the terms and conditions set forth in the FCC Rules.
- b. Reduced rates are available only to the extent that they are funded by the federal universal fund.
- c. Eligible rural health care providers may aggregate demand with other entities to create a consortium. Universal service support shall apply only to the portion of eligible services used by an eligible health care provider.
- d. Responsibility of eligible health care providers:
 1. Rural health care providers and consortia shall participate in a competitive bidding process for all services eligible for reduced rates in accordance with any state and local procurement rules.
 2. Rural health care providers and consortia shall submit requests for services to the program Administrator, as designated by the FCC, and follow established procedures.
 3. Services requested must be used for purposes related to the provision of health care services or instruction that the health care provider is legally authorized to provide under law.
 4. A health care provider that cannot obtain toll free access to an Internet service provider and who is eligible for support for limited toll-free access under the Rules must certify that it lacks toll-free Internet access and that it is an eligible health care provider.
 5. Services cannot be sold, resold or transferred in consideration for money or any other thing of value.
- e. Responsibility of the Company:
 1. The Company shall offer the current New York intrastate rates and charges as specified in the Guide, to eligible health care providers to the extent that facilities and services are available and offered in the Guide specified in 1. preceding.
 2. The Company shall offer services to eligible rural health care providers and consortia at prices no higher than the highest urban rate as defined in the FCC Order and Rules.
 3. In competitive bidding situations, where specific flexible pricing arrangements are allowed, the Company may offer flexible pricing (to determine the reduced rate).

Health Care Providers Support Program Rate and Charges

The following price adjustments will be available to eligible rural health care providers, except subparagraph c., which shall be available to all eligible health care providers, regardless of location.

- a. A reduced rate for telecommunications services, using a bandwidth capacity of up to 1.544 Mbps, not to exceed the highest tariffed or publicly available rate charged to a commercial customer for a similar service provided over the same distance in the nearest city in New York State with a population of at least 50,000.
- b. An exemption from some mileage charges for any telecommunications services, using a bandwidth capacity of up to 1.544 Mbps, that is necessary for the provision of health care services. The exempted mileage includes the distance between the rural health care provider and the most distant perimeter of the nearest city in New York State with a population of 50,000 or more, less the standard urban distance, which is the maximum average diameter of all cities with population of 50,000 or more in the state.
- c. Each eligible health care provider that cannot obtain toll-free access to an Internet service provider is entitled to receive toll charge credits for toll charges imposed for connecting to an Internet service provider as per the FCC Rules.