



PUBLIC NOTICE

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>
TTY: 1-888-835-5322

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WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU ANNOUNCES THAT RURAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAM SERVICE PROVIDERS MAY ELECT THEIR PREFERRED METHOD OF REIMBURSEMENT

WC Docket No. 02-60

The Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) announces the availability of the revised FCC Form 498, which enables service providers in any of the Commission's Rural Health Care (RHC) universal service support programs to choose their preferred method of reimbursement for services they provide to health care providers ("HCPs"). Service providers may now select their preferred method of reimbursement using the new FCC Form 498.

In December 2012, the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) created the newest RHC program, the Healthcare Connect Fund.¹ The Commission also amended reimbursement rules for service providers participating in any RHC program (including the existing Telecommunications and Internet Access programs) to allow such providers to elect on the FCC Form 498 whether they want to receive reimbursement directly or as an offset to their federal universal service fund (USF) contribution requirement.² The FCC Form 498 is the form by which service providers obtain a service provider identification number (SPIN), and by which service providers can now elect their method of reimbursement in the RHC program. In amending the RHC reimbursement rules, the Commission acknowledged that Form 498 would have to be revised, and such revision approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Paperwork Reduction Act, before service providers could make their reimbursement elections.³

FCC Form 498 has been approved by OMB and is now available on the website of the USF Administrator, the Universal Service Administrative Company, located at

¹ *Rural Health Care Support Mechanism*, WC Docket No. 02-60, Report and Order, 27 FCC Rcd 16678 (2012) ("Healthcare Connect Fund Order").

² *Id.* at 16824-26, paras. 369-74; 47 C.F.R. § 54.679 (2013). Prior to this rule amendment, service providers were required to receive reimbursement for services they provided to HCPs in the RHC program as an offset to their universal service obligation. See *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, CC Docket No. 96-45, Report and Order, 12 FCC Rcd 8776, 9154-55, para. 734 (1997); 47 C.F.R. § 54.611 (2012). In amending this RHC program reimbursement rule, the Commission recognized a few shortcomings of the offset requirement, including its effect on some small, rural HCPs and their service providers. *Healthcare Connect Fund Order*, 27 FCC Rcd at 16825-26, paras. 371-73.

³ *Healthcare Connect Fund Order*, 27 FCC Rcd at 16826, para. 374.

<http://www.usac.org/cont/tools/forms/default.aspx>.⁴ By default, current service providers will automatically receive reimbursement as an offset to their USF contribution requirement unless they change their method of reimbursement by unchecking Box 122, Block 14 on the FCC Form 498. Service providers newly participating in the RHC program can choose their method of reimbursement when they file their FCC Form 498 for the first time. By default, new service providers will automatically receive direct reimbursement unless they have elected on the FCC Form 498 to receive reimbursement as an offset to their USF obligation.

For further information, please contact Christianna Barnhart, Telecommunications Access Policy Division, Wireline Competition Bureau at (202) 418-1372, TTY (202) 418-0484, or Christianna.Barnhart@fcc.gov.

⁴ Rural Health Care Support Mechanism, 78 Fed. Reg. 38,606, 38,607 (Jun. 27, 2013).