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wireline services. In such case, the Administrator shall determine on a case-by-case basis whether the telecommunications service selected by the mobile rural health care provider is the most cost-effective option. Where a mobile rural health care provider seeks a more expensive satellite-based service when a less expensive wireline alternative is most cost-effective, the mobile rural health care provider shall be responsible for the additional cost.

[68 FR 74502, Dec. 24, 2003, as amended at 70 FR 6373, Feb. 7, 2005]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTES: 1. At 68 FR 74502, Dec. 24, 2003, as corrected at 69 FR 3021, Jan. 22, 2004, § 54.609 was revised, effective Jan. 23, 2004. Paragraph (d)(2) contains information collection and recordkeeping requirements and will not become effective until approval has been given by the Office of Management and Budget.

2. At 70 FR 6373, Feb. 7, 2005, § 54.609 was amended by adding paragraph (e). Paragraph (e) contains information collection and recordkeeping requirements and will not become effective until approval has been given by the Office of Management and Budget.

§ 54.611 Distributing support.

(a) A telecommunications carrier providing services eligible for support under this subpart to eligible health care providers shall treat the amount eligible for support under this subpart as an offset against the carrier's universal service support obligation for the year in which the costs for providing eligible services were incurred.

(b) If the total amount of support owed to a carrier, as set forth in paragraph (a) of this section, exceeds its universal service obligation, calculated on an annual basis, the carrier may receive a direct reimbursement in the amount of the difference.

(c) Any reimbursement due a carrier shall be made after the offset is credited against that carrier's universal service obligation.

(d) Any reimbursement due a carrier shall be submitted to that carrier no later than the end of the first quarter of the calendar year following the year in which the costs were incurred and the offset against the carrier's universal service obligation was applied.

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§ 54.613 Limitations on supported services for rural health care providers.

(a) Upon submitting a bona fide request to a telecommunications carrier, each eligible rural health care provider is entitled to receive the most cost-effective, commercially-available telecommunications service at a rate no higher than the highest urban rate, as defined in § 54.605, at a distance not to exceed the distance between the eligible health care provider's site and the farthest point on the jurisdictional boundary of the city in that state with the largest population.

(b) This section shall not affect a rural health care provider's ability to obtain supported services under § 54.621.

[64 FR 66787, NOV. 30, 1999, as amended at 68 FR 74503, Dec. 24, 2003]

§ 54.615 Obtaining services.

(a) *Selecting a provider.* In selecting a telecommunications carrier, a health care provider shall consider all bids submitted and select the most cost-effective alternative.

(b) *Receiving supported rate.* Except with regard to services provided under § 54.621, upon receiving a bona fide request for an eligible service from an eligible health care provider, as set forth in paragraph (c) of this section, a telecommunications carrier shall provide the service at a rate no higher than the urban rate, as defined in § 54.605, subject to the limitations set forth in this Subpart.

(c) *Bona fide request.* In order to receive services eligible for universal service support under this subpart, an eligible health care provider must submit a request for services to the telecommunications carrier, Signed by an authorized officer of the health care provider, and shall include that person's certification under oath that:

(1) The requester is a public or non-profit entity that falls within one of the seven categories set forth in the definition of health care provider, listed in § 54.601(a);

(2) The requester is physically located in a rural area, unless the health care provider is requesting services provided under § 54.621; or, if the requester is a mobile rural health care provider requesting services under

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§ 54.609(e), that the requester has certified that it is serving eligible rural areas.

(3) If the health care provider is requesting services provided under § 54.621, that the requester cannot obtain toll-free access to an Internet service provider;

(4) The requested service or services will be used solely for purposes reasonably related to the provision of health care services or instruction that the health care provider is legally authorized to provide under the law in the state in which such health care services or instruction are provided;

(5) The requested service or services will not be sold, resold or transferred in consideration of money or any other thing of value;

(6) If the service or services are being purchased as part of an aggregated purchase with other entities or individuals, the full details of any such arrangement, including the identities of all co-purchasers and the portion of the service or services being purchased by the health care provider; and

(7) The requester is selecting the most cost-effective method of providing the requested service or services, where the most cost-effective method of providing a service is defined as the method that costs the least after consideration of the features, quality of transmission, reliability, and other factors that the health care provider deems relevant to choosing a method of providing the required health care services.

(d) *Annual renewal.* The certification set forth in paragraph (c) of this section shall be renewed annually.

[62 FR 32948, June 17, 1997, as amended at 70 FR 6373, Feb. 7, 2005]

§ 54.617 Resale.

(a) *Prohibition on resale.* Services purchased pursuant to universal service support mechanisms under this subpart shall not be sold, resold, or transferred in consideration for money or any other thing of value.

(b) *Permissible fees.* The prohibition on resale set forth in paragraph (a) of this section shall not prohibit a health care provider from charging normal fees for health care services, including instruction related to such services rendered

via telecommunications services purchased under this subpart.

§ 54.619 Audits and recordkeeping.

(a) *Health care providers.* (1) Health care providers shall maintain for their purchases of services supported under this subpart documentation for five years from the end of the funding year sufficient to establish compliance with all rules in this subpart. Documentation must include, among other things, records of allocations for consortia and entities that engage in eligible and ineligible activities, if applicable. Mobile rural health care providers shall maintain annual logs indicating: The date and locations of each clinic stop; and the number of patients served at each such clinic stop.

(2) Mobile rural health care providers shall maintain its annual logs for a period of five years. Mobile rural health care providers shall make its logs available to the Administrator and the Commission upon request.

(b) *Production of records.* Health care providers shall produce such records at the request of any auditor appointed by the Administrator or any other state or federal agency with jurisdiction.

(c) *Random audits.* Health care providers shall be subject to random compliance audits to ensure that requesters are complying with the certification requirements set forth in § 54.615(c) and are otherwise eligible to receive universal service support and that rates charged comply with the statute and regulations.

(d) *Service providers.* Service providers shall retain documents related to the delivery of discounted telecommunications and other supported services for at least 5 years after the last day of the delivery of discounted services. Any other document that demonstrates compliance with the statutory or regulatory requirements for the rural health care mechanism shall be retained as well.

[68 FR 74503, Dec. 24, 2003, as amended at 69 FR 12087, Mar. 15, 2004; 70 FR 6373, Feb. 7, 2005; 71 FR 13281, Mar. 15, 2006; 72 FR 54218, Sept. 24, 2007]