

distance-based charged for a similar service over the same distance in the large city nearest to the rural health care provider;

(ii) If the requested service distance is greater than the SUD for the state, but less than the maximum allowable distance, the distance-based charge for that service can be no higher than the distance-based charged for a similar service in the large city nearest to the rural health care provider over the SUD.

(iii) "Distance-based charges" are charges based on a unit of distance, such as mileage-based charges.

(iv) Except with regard to services provided under § 54.621, a telecommunications carrier that provides telecommunications service to a rural health care provider participating in an eligible health care consortium, and the consortium must establish the actual distance-based charges for the health care provider's portion of the shared telecommunications services.

(2) If a telecommunications carrier, health care provider, and/or consortium of health care providers reasonably determines that the base rates for telecommunications services elements in rural areas are *not* reasonably comparable to the base rates charged for similar telecommunications service elements in urban areas in that state, the telecommunications carrier, health care provider, and/or consortium of health care providers may request that the Administrator perform a more comprehensive support calculation. The requester shall provide to the Administrator the information to establish both the urban and rural rates consistent with § 54.605 and § 54.607, and submit to the Administrator all of the documentation necessary to substantiate the request.

(i) Except with regard to services provided under § 54.621, a telecommunications carrier that provides telecommunications service to a rural health care provider participating in an eligible health care consortium, and the consortium must establish the applicable rural base rates for telecommunications service elements for the health care provider's portion of the shared telecommunications services, as well as the applicable urban

base rates for the telecommunications service elements.

(b) Absent documentation justifying the amount of universal service support requested for health care providers participating in a consortium, the Administrator shall not allow telecommunications carriers to offset, or receive reimbursement for, the amount eligible for universal service support.

(c) The universal service support mechanisms shall provide support for intrastate telecommunications services, as set forth in § 54.101 paragraph (a), provided to rural health care providers as well as interstate telecommunications services.

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§ 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.

§ 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