



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Phil Montgomery, Chairperson
Eric Callisto, Commissioner
Ellen Nowak, Commissioner

610 North Whitney Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854

October 23, 2013

To: All Telecommunication Equipment Purchase Program Vendors

Re: Administration of the Universal Service Fund

REPLY REQUIRED
5-GF-104

Agreement to Abide by the 2012 Revised Vendor Guidelines

The Public Service Commission (PSC) oversees the State of Wisconsin Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP).¹ This program has enabled thousands of Wisconsin residents with hearing, speech or mobility/motion disabilities to buy equipment they need in order to use basic telephone services. Your company or organization is listed in our records as having participated as a vendor in TEPP. Vendors for this equipment are a critical link in making the TEPP successful.

Applications for TEPP vouchers and the number of vendors participating in TEPP have increased tremendously since the program's inception in 1996. The PSC and Wipfli, the PSC contractor for providing administrative support for TEPP, first implemented TEPP Vendor Guidelines in 2004. Due to persistent problems with the handling of TEPP applications and voucher distribution, revised guidelines are needed for continued operation of TEPP as intended. These revised guidelines were issued in February of 2012, and all vendors authorized since then have been authorized with a signed agreement to abide by these guidelines. **Most TEPP vendors, however, were authorized between 2004 and 2011 based on the prior agreement. All these earlier-authorized providers must sign and return the new agreement to continue as authorized TEPP vendors.**

The changes to the Vendor Guidelines in 2012 were intended to address some of the albeit rare, but serious, vendor abuses of the TEPP program that have lessened or thwarted the benefits of the program for many individuals in need of TEPP equipment. The following are examples of the abuses these guidelines are intended to end:

- Taking money for taking or placing a TEPP application.
- Failing to explain the nature of the TEPP program to potential TEPP applicants.
- Failing to provide information to applicants regarding equipment and vendor alternatives.
- Selling equipment to a TEPP voucher recipient that may be improper or inadequate to meet his/her needs.

¹ TEPP is part of the PSC-administered state Universal Service Fund program; see Wis. Stat. § 196.218 and Wis. Admin. Code ch. PSC 160.

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- Steering customers toward TEPP purchases simply because of the stock the vendor carries.
- Marketing for TEPP-funded purchases without properly identifying the source and nature of the program.
- Urging or asking TEPP applicants to allow the voucher to be sent to the vendor.
- Advertising “free amplified phones” when a TEPP application is involved.
- Altering the TEPP application form in any way.

Enclosed is your copy of the current PSC Vendor Guidelines. Please review these guidelines carefully. On the last page of the Guidelines is a form that must be filled out and signed for your organization to continue to participate as a vendor for Wisconsin’s TEPP. When signing this form, you are agreeing to abide by the guidelines we have sent you.

This form must be signed and returned to Wipfli by November 22, 2013, to remain as a vendor in good standing. After December 1, 2013, TEPP will no longer accept or honor reimbursement claims from vendors that have not completed and filed this form with Wipfli.

Thank you for your past participation as a TEPP vendor. We look forward to your participation in the future. If you have any questions, please contact Diane Sippl at Wipfli (608-661-2688 or at DSippl@Wipfli.com).

Sincerely,



Jeffrey J. Richter
Universal Service Fund Director

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Enclosure: TEPP Vendor Guidelines and Agreement

cc: Diane Sippl, Wipfli