



# California Public Utilities Commission

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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Docket #: R.06-05-028

## **CPUC UPDATES COMMUNICATIONS PUBLIC PROGRAMS TO ASSIST CONSUMERS AND COMMUNITIES**

SAN FRANCISCO, June 12, 2008 - The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) today took action to update and modernize its public policy programs relating to communications in order to reflect advanced technologies and add new eligible communities to the programs.

Following workshops and three public hearings throughout the state, the CPUC made changes to the following programs:

### **California Teleconnect Fund (CTF) - Provides discounted telecommunications services including voice and Internet service to K-12 schools, libraries, health care facilities, and community organizations:**

- The CTF is expanded to include California Community Colleges, with an initial monetary cap of \$7.2 million annually.
- CTF participants may now receive Internet access services offered on a voluntary basis from Internet service providers. This participation in the CTF program will not subject the Internet service provider to state tariff requirements. This will give CTF participants more choices for Internet access for their programs.
- Non-profit Community-Based Organizations providing important 2-1-1 Information and Referral Services to California communities are eligible to participate in the CTF.
- The CPUC will create a CTF Outreach and Assistance Unit to encourage and assist non-participating schools and libraries to obtain services under the federal E-rate and state CTF programs, and may also provide outreach support for other CTF-eligible



entities. The Unit, which will be fully functional by July 1, 2009, will coordinate its efforts with the California Department of Education and other state and federal agencies as appropriate.

- All health care facilities in the California Telehealth Network (CTN) granted federal funding in the Rural Health Care Pilot Program will be eligible to receive a 50 percent discount on their monthly recurring charges for CTF-eligible communications services integral to the CTN not otherwise paid for.

**Public Payphone Program - Funds payphones in locations where a public telephone is needed but not economically viable:**

- The Payphone and Enforcement Program surcharge applicable to each payphone access line is eliminated. However, to aid the CPUC's enforcement efforts, local exchange carriers will still be required to provide a monthly report on payphone location and owner information.
- The duties of the Payphone Enforcement program are combined with the existing enforcement duties within the CPUC's Consumer Protection and Safety Division funded by the fee established by Public Utilities Code Section 431.
- The existing Public Policy Payphone Program is eliminated. However, by July 1, 2009, the CPUC will implement a new Public Policy Payphone Program that provides for payment of up to 50 percent of the otherwise applicable monthly charges to no more than 50 public payphones. Governmental entities or local community groups may apply to the new Public Policy Payphone Program and will be responsible for paying at least half the costs of the public payphone. However, if the number of public payphones falls below 10 in the new program, the CPUC may terminate the program.

**Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program (DDTP) - Provides telecommunications equipment to deaf and disabled residents:**

- The CPUC declined to make major changes to the DDTP, finding it is generally functioning well. The CPUC will continue to monitor the new wireless equipment pilot program, which provides for wireless devices for low income persons who are deaf or disabled, for further action as needed.

“We spoke with consumers directly impacted by these important programs before making this decision. I am confident that our actions today improve our programs and better assist consumers,” said CPUC President Michael R. Peevey.



Added Commissioner Dian M. Grueneich, “The changes we adopt in this decision reinforce the Commission’s long-standing commitment to Universal Service in California.”

“Today’s decision makes important changes to the CTF in order to gain full participation of all eligible schools and libraries in the state and to enhance our support of the California Telehealth Network. This decision also confirms our commitment to the availability of payphones for public safety reasons and in other needed areas,” said Commissioner John Bohn.

“In coming to today’s decision, we conducted a thorough and long-overdue review of the many telecommunications Public Policy Programs,” said CPUC Commissioner Rachelle Chong, the assigned Commissioner on the docket. “We have updated these programs to reflect modern communications technology and regulatory standards for programs that impact many consumers, ranging from our deaf and disabled consumers, to our community colleges and health clinics.”

Commissioner Timothy Alan Simon said, “Every Californian must have continued access to basic telephone service at reasonable rates regardless of income and where the person lives - equally critical is ubiquitous access to new communications technologies.”

The CPUC will address the remaining public program, California LifeLine, which provides a discount on telephone service for qualifying low income consumers, in a future decision.

For more information on communication issues, please visit [www.CalPhoneInfo.com](http://www.CalPhoneInfo.com).

For more information on the CPUC, please visit [www.cpuc.ca.gov](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov).

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