

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

RULES AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE :
CERTIFICATION AND VERIFICATION PROCEDURES : DOCKET NO. 4337
FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIERS ELIGIBLE :
TO RECEIVE PAYMENTS FROM THE FEDERAL :
UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND :

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 39-1-1 and 42-35-3 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended, the Public Utilities Commission (the “Commission”) hereby gives notice that it will solicit comments on proposed rulemaking process to adopt new rules entitled “Rules and Regulations Governing the Certification and Verification Procedures for Telecommunications Carriers Eligible to Receive Payments From the Federal Universal Service Fund” and to repeal a related existing regulation.

The proposed rules and regulations reflect a comprehensive rewrite of the currently effective regulations entitled “*Rules and Regulations Governing the Certification and Verification Procedures for Telecommunications Carriers Eligible to Receive Payments From the Federal Universal Service Fund and Certification and Verification Processes for Compliance With Providing Lifeline and Linkup Service*” effective date February 4, 2010. Accordingly, the Commission plans to repeal the existing rules and regulations through this rulemaking process.

The rules and regulations implement the Telecommunications Act of 1996, specifically 47 U.S.C. §§151–760 which gives the Commission authority to certify and designate Eligible Telecommunication Carriers (ETC) to receive subsidies from the federal Universal Service Fund to provide lifeline services to eligible consumers. The rules provide a process for telecommunications providers to demonstrate eligibility. Additionally, the proposed rules adopt and implement requirements pursuant to recent federal laws, specifically, an FCC Order (“Lifeline Reform Order”) issued on February 6, 2012 adopting new rules regarding the Universal Service Fund which, among other reforms, set a minimum eligibility standards for program participants, minimum certification procedures for ETCs and minimum annual verification procedures for ETCs.

The Regulations will affect the interests of all current Eligible Telecommunications Carriers, or any carrier who may seek ETC status, along with residential consumers who currently or who may seek to participate in the Lifeline and Link-Up programs. The regulations will also affect the RI Department of Human Services.

In the development of the proposed adoption consideration was given to the following: (1) alternative approaches; (2) overlap or duplication with other statutory and regulatory provisions; and (3) significant economic impact on small business. No alternative approach or duplication or overlap was identified based upon available information. The regulation will apply to all persons and entities seeking access to public records maintained by the Commission.

The proposed rules and regulations are on file at Commission Clerk's Office at 89 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, Rhode Island. Copies of the proposed rules and regulations may be obtained in person, by mail by calling 401-780-2107 or accessed under the Commission's Docket Menu, Docket No. 4337 at www.ripuc.org. Interested persons wishing to offer data, views, or arguments on the proposed rules and regulations may file written comments not later than July 23, 2012 with the Commission Clerk to the following address:

Luly E. Massaro, Commission Clerk
Public Utilities Commission
89 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, Rhode Island 02888

An oral hearing will be granted if requested by twenty-five (25) persons, or by a governmental subdivision or agency. Reference is also made to R.I.G.L §§ 42-35, 39-1, 39-26.1 et seq., specifically, §§ 42-35-1, 42-35-2, 42-25-3, 42-35-4, 42-35-5, 39-1-15 and 39-26.1-3(e) and 39-26.1-5(e).

The Public Utilities Commission is accessible to the handicapped. Individuals requesting interpreter services for the hearing impaired must notify the Commission's office by calling 401-7801-2107, seventy-two (72) hours in advance of the hearing date.

Luly E. Massaro, Commission Clerk
June 22, 2012