

Stretch your telecommunications dollars by taking advantage of discounted services.

A guide to understanding state tariffs for telecommunication services.

Is your school receiving discounts for regulated telecommunications services? Many educators are not aware of state-regulated programs available to them. These discounts, which are different than the Federal E-Rate program, can allow your district to maximize its telecommunications budget.

Telecommunications services regulated by the state Public Utility Commissions (PUCs) are tariffed. A tariff is a document that describes the services and rates for both monthly recurring charges and non-recurring charges (non-recurring charges are the installation charges). Tariffs are filed by telecommunications providers and approved by the state PUCs. They are a matter of public record and govern how providers deliver and price services. Many states have special tariffs or approved discount percentages for schools, libraries, hospitals and government. Every state approaches discounts in a different manner. Some require a special filing with set rates for each service and others require a discount be applied to the bill. The *types* of services also differ by state so it's a good idea to know what qualifies for discounts and what does not.

Generally speaking, telecommunications circuits used for distance learning or videoconferencing, information sharing, interactive multimedia and broadband Internet access (1.54 Mbps or higher) are eligible for discount. Some states provide discounts for voice lines -- those plain-old-telephone-service (POTS) lines you talk on every day. Some PUCs require the customer to sign an "affidavit" of use to ensure the services discounted meet the criteria set by state law. Most states require the customer to certify that the services will be used as described on the affidavit.

The types of services most often discounted are:

- B1 lines - These are POTS lines, often referred to as "business lines". Sometimes there are limitations placed on POTS/B1 lines.
- T1 lines - These are 1.54 Mbps circuits used for distance learning or Internet access. Some districts use T1s for voice trunking. However, voice trunking is not always eligible for discount. T1s are often referred to as "private line" services because they are "always on" and bandwidth is dedicated to that circuit, whether used or not.
- ISDN BRI/PRI - Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) comes in two types: Basic Rate Interface (BRI), providing two 64 Kbps B-Channels for voice or data; and Primary Rate Interface (PRI), providing 23 64 Kbps B-Channels for voice or data. These B-Channels may also be "bonded" together to support videoconferencing.
- Frame Relay - A type of high-speed transmission services to move

data in units called frames. It can be used for the transport of voice or data packets. Frame Relay is an excellent service for Internet and intranet access.

➤ Asynchronous Transfer Mode(ATM) - A high-speed, high-volume service that supports simultaneous voice, data and video communications with a guaranteed Quality of Service (QoS).

Discounts will vary by state because the cost of doing business in each state is different. The cost of labor, equipment maintenance and network infrastructure development can vary resulting in different discount rates for each state. States may also apply discounts differently when E-Rate discounts are also applied.

Once you understand what discounts are allowed you can place an order. However, it is the customer's responsibility to request the discount. Here are steps you can take to ensure the discounts are approved and applied to your bill:

- Go to <http://www.sprintbiz.com/bizpark/markets/education/discounts.html> and review information for your state.
- Once you are in contact with a sales representative, ask that the discount be identified on your sales agreement/contract. If a contract is not required, as in the case with POTS lines, or month-to-month billing for private line services, ensure you are quoted both the regular rate and the discounted rate. Your bill will not state that a discount has been applied, but you should verify the costs to ensure the discount was applied.
- If you are required to submit an affidavit then do so and retain a copy.
- Comply with all laws regarding use of the discounted service. Services cannot be re-sold or used by an outside organization.

If you need further assistance contact a Sprint education specialist at www.sprint.com/education