


Telecommunications Policy

	Louisiana Department of Health (LDH)	
	Policy Number	59.3
	Content	Establishes guidelines for determining the need for telecommunication device(s).
	Effective Date	April 16, 2021
	Inquiries to	Office of Management and Finance Office of the Undersecretary - Administrative Services P.O. Box 629 Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821 Phone: (225) 342- 9331

If there is a discrepancy between an LDH Policy and a Program Office or facility policy, the LDH policy shall govern/overrule/supersede the conflicting section within the Program Office or facility policy.

I. POLICY

This policy adheres to the guidelines promulgated by the Division of Administration’s (DOA) Office of Technology Services-Network Services (OTS) enacted by Act 241, 2015 Regular Session. It is the policy of the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) to utilize telecommunication devices for those positions that require a telecommunications device to perform the essential functions of their position. It is the goal of LDH to assure that such provision is the most cost efficient and effective per Louisiana Administrative Code, Title IV, Part 9, Chapter 9: Telecommunications Use. **NOTE: All telecommunications devices (cellular phone/MIFI) and accounts (cellular, zoom, personal cellular accounts (if receiving stipend) are subject to public records review and audit per Louisiana Revised Statute Title 44: Public Records and Recorders.**

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a guideline to Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) employees for the proper authorization, acquisition, utilization, reimbursement, and managerial

control of analog/digital office telephone lines, mifi's, pagers, tablets/iPads, and cellular phones (employee owned and state issued), and teleconference services.

III. APPLICABILITY

This policy is applicable to all LDH employees that require the use of analog/digital office telephone lines, mifi's, pagers, tablets/iPads, and cellular phones (employee owned and state issued), and teleconferencing services. **No cellular telecommunications device (cell phone/mifi) shall be ordered without the signature of the LDH Undersecretary/Deputy Secretary, or his or her designee.**

IV. CELLULAR PLAN OPTIONS

The LDH offers two (2) cellular plan options to employees detailed below:

Option I – An employee will be paid a monthly allowance of no more than \$35 for the use of their personal cellular device for business needs.

Option II – An employee will be provided a cellular phone or mifi with service plan at the LDH's expense. The **one** cellular device will be provided for business use only.

An employee may only choose one option above.

V. GUIDELINES

A. ELIGIBLE POSITIONS

- a. Assistant Secretaries/Medicaid Director/OS Directors/Executive Directors will provide their agency/district telecommunications coordinator (TC) those essential positions that require a stipend, cell phone or MIFI.
- b. Essential positions should be those positions that are needed for immediate consultation while away from the office or after regular work hours.
- c. It is recommended that essential positions be limited to the Deputy level or higher in the program offices, Section Chief level or higher in the Medicaid office, or a Director level or higher in the Office of the Secretary. Exceptions to these position levels must be justified in the request for the stipend.
- d. Health standards and OPH sanitarian employees will be evaluated on an as-needed basis for a stipend or a state-issued cellular device.
- e. Those employees that travel routinely in the performance of their duties may be offered a state-issued cell phone.

B. STIPEND

An employee authorized to receive a stipend of \$35, is responsible to purchase a cellular phone device, at his/her own expense, that will be utilized for personal and/or official state business. In order to receive the stipend, the monthly cellular service contract must be in the employee or employee spouse's name.

The stipend will be paid for twenty-six (26) pay periods and will appear on the employee's remuneration statement as earned income. In accordance with IRS regulations, the stipend will be reported as income on an employee's W-2 and will be taxable to the employee.

Any remaining amount of an employee's cellular phone bill and the purchase/upgrade of any cellular device and/or accessories will remain the responsibility of the employee.

There will be no reimbursement of any cellular device/accessories other than the stipend.

An employee that is approved for this option will be required to complete the LDH Stipend Request Form, and follow the instructions on the form.

Stipend suspension shall occur when an employee is no longer employed with the department, changes positions within the department and/or when LDH Human Resources is notified to suspend the stipend by the employee's appointing authority or the LDH Administrative Services Section.

Every July, essential position/employees that are authorized to receive a Stipend for Cellular Device must be recertified by their Assistant Secretary/Director to continue the stipend. LDH Administrative Services staff will send the list of employees and it will be the Assistant Secretary/Director responsibility to ensure that the employee is still using their personal cellular phone for official state business. The LDH Deputy Secretary and/or the LDH Undersecretary, using the Telecommunications Stipend Renewal Form, shall approve or disapprove the recertification of services, as appropriate.

C. CELL PHONES/MIFI (STATE ISSUED)

Assistant Secretaries/ Director will provide their agency/district TC their essential positions that require a cellular phone, stipend, mifi, pager, or tablet/iPad to perform his/her customary job duties using the proper LDH Telecommunications Form(s). (Note: Health Standards Section and Office of Public Health Sanitarian employees will be evaluated separately for stipends or cell phones.)

All Mifi devices shall be limited to those with a business need to access LDH data outside of an LDH location/facility on a daily/weekly basis.

- A) After approval by the Assistant Secretary/Director, the employees TL or TC will use the Telecommunications Device Request Form and submit the form in accordance with the forms instructions.
- B) All changes to cellular services must be submitted on the LDH Telecommunications Change Form to the LDH TC.
- C) All cellular device billing matters, troubleshooting, and orders must be submitted directly to the LDH TC. No employee should contact cellular service provider(s) directly.
- D) No telecommunications device or service shall be idle for more than sixty (60)

days. The agency/district TC is to contact the LDH TC and either terminate the cellular device/service or place it on vacation for ninety (90) days. Vacationing cannot be done more than twice (2) a year for a single cellular devices' service contract year.

- E) The Agency/ District TC shall complete the LDH Device Acceptance/Return Form and obtain the employee's signature. This form must remain on file by the Agency/District TC for five (5) years.
- F) For devices that are shared through an agency pool, the Agency/District TC shall maintain a record/log for employees to check out these community shared devices that includes the date, time, and signature for when device is checked out and when it is returned.
- G) For any lost or stolen state issued cellular/Mifi device, please refer to the LDH Movable Property Policy.

D. OFFICE TELEPHONE (ANALOG/DIGITAL)

Analog/digital office telephone services are offered through OTS through the agency/district TC and must comply with to Louisiana Administrative Code, Title IV, Part 9, and Chapter 9: Telecommunications Use.

Personal use of an office telephone is prohibited. The agency/district TC or TL is required to provide their monthly agency/district analog telephone bill to each employee for review. The Monthly Telephone Bill Certification Form is to be utilized to validate the review of long-distance telephones calls and identify any calls that were personal and not for official state business. The certification form must be signed and dated by the employee. Any long-distance calls that are identified as personal in nature are to be noted on the form. The employee is required to reimburse the State for any personal calls that incurred tolls, within 30 days upon notification by the agency/district TL, for the costs (\$0.04 per minute) associated with the personal call(s). The employee should submit a check, made payable to LDH for the cost of the identified calls. The check must be sent to the LDH Division of Fiscal Management along with a copy of the phone bill that documents what calls are being reimbursed.

In the event of a telephone billing discrepancy, in which the employee does not have knowledge of the call on their assigned workstation telephone number, the employee will need to complete the necessary information that is required on the Monthly Telephone Bill Certification Form, accompanied with a signature, and a copy of the telephone statement where the discrepancy appears to the agency/district TC for follow-up

All agency/district TC are responsible for maintaining the completed Monthly Telephone Bill Certification Form and store them in an agency/district file for at least 5 years.

E. TELECONFERENCING

Zoom teleconferencing is a standardized service for all LDH agency/district locations. To establish zoom teleconference services, the agency/district TC shall contact the LDH TC and submit a formal justification as to why service is being requested. All set-up,

equipment lease, and monthly bills are the responsibility of the requesting agency/district. Please note that Zoom licenses are not transferrable between employees and/or zoom accounts.

VI. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. STIPENDS

Employee Responsibilities:

- 1) Complete in its entirety and submit the Telecommunications Stipend Request Form to the LDH TC
- 2) Employee shall maintain detailed billing of all incoming and outgoing calls. These bills must be maintained for public records review request(s) and/or audit.
- 3) Cellular device must be compatible with OTS and cellular phone company standards, and must be compatible with statewide email system: Microsoft Outlook/Exchange.
- 4) Refrain from storing proprietary, sensitive, or confidential departmental data on a personally owned cellular device.
- 5) Ensure an entry security code/password that meets the LDH security standards is setup on the cellular device.
- 6) LDH is not responsible for the purchase of any personal accessories or device upgrades.

Human Resources Responsibilities:

- 1) Upon receipt from the LDH-TC, HR is required to enter the stipend onto the employee's record using date the Telecommunications Stipend Request Form was approved by LDH Undersecretary.
- 2) HR is responsible for deactivating stipends when an employee is no longer employed with the department, changes positions within the department and/or when notified by appointing authority or LDH Administrative Services to cease the stipend.

Appointing Authority Responsibility:

- 1) Review all Stipend Request Forms prior to approval/disapproval and then submit to the LDH Deputy Secretary and/or Undersecretary for final approval.
- 2) Annually (in July) recertify essential position/employee receiving the stipend and returning re-certifications to LDH Administrative Services in a timely manner.
- 3) Notify LDH-HR and LDH Administrative Services when a stipend is to be suspended.

LDH TC Responsibilities:

- 1) Submit to LDH-HR final approval for new stipends so they can be entered timely.
- 2) Every July submits to Appointing Authority the listing of their agency stipends for recertification process.
- 3) Notify LDH-HR when a stipend is to be suspended/terminated.

B. CELL PHONE/MIFI (STATE ISSUED)

Agency/District TC/TL Responsibilities:

- 1) Notify the LDH TC of any devices that need service changes, cancellations, suspensions,

- vacations, replacements, lost or stolen, etc.
- 2) Complete and submit the LDH Telecommunication Device Request Form along with justification to the LDH TC for processing.
 - 3) The Agency/ District TC shall complete the LDH Device Acceptance/Return Form and obtain the employee's signature. This form must remain on file for five (5) years.
 - 4) For shared community devices, Agency/ District TC shall have a record/log for employees to sign that includes the date, time, and signature for when devices are checked in and out.

LDH TC Responsibilities:

- 1) Review Telecommunication Device Request Form and justification to ensure the requestor meet(s) the screening criteria for determination of approval for cellular device.
- 2) Submit agency/district TC service changes, cancellations, suspensions, vacations, and replacements.
- 3) Submit forms for circulation and approvals.
- 4) Once the approved forms are received, order the telecommunication device and services within 5 days of receipt.

Employee Responsibilities:

- 1) Safeguard telecommunication device
- 2) Sign the LDH Device Acceptance/Return Form
- 3) Maintain liability for the payment of damages whenever wrongful or grossly negligent act or omission causes any loss, theft, disappearance, damage or destruction of property of their agency for which he/she is responsible as provided herein, and such damages shall be recoverable in a civil lawsuit therefore prosecuted on behalf of the State by the Attorney General.
- 4) Provide state owned asset(s) to any LDH official or their designee, at any time, for inspection of the equipment.
- 5) Remain responsible for the property until release of responsibility by the agency/district TL
- 6) Notify the agency/district TC when the telecommunications device is no longer needed.
- 7) To prevent any damages to the device, agencies are permitted to purchase accessories (cases, cords, cubes) for the employee
- 8) Return any equipment and accessories upon termination, resignation, change in job duties, or upon request in proper working condition to the agency/district TL
- 9) Immediately report any lost, stolen, or damaged equipment to their immediate supervisor and agency/district TL

C. OFFICE TELEPHONE (ANALOG/DIGITAL)

Agency/District TC Responsibilities:

- 1) Submit disconnects, connections, transfers, new service, feature add on, etc.
- 2) Report trouble tickets to OTS
- 3) Confirmation of all ticket completions submitted to OTS.
- 4) Report any discrepancies to appointing authority presented by the agency/district TL regarding long distance charges. The agency/district TC will then work with the

appointing authority on collecting payment from the employee.

Agency/District TL Responsibilities:

- 1) Reports any discrepancies or suspicious charges found on the monthly agency/district sections' telephone bill to the agency/district TC.
- 2) Report any idle digital/analog office telephone lines to the agency/district TC.
- 3) Agency/Districts TL has access to the self-service portal to review monthly office telephone bills.

LDH TC Responsibilities:

- 1) Oversight of all agencies/districts TC and TL to ensure they are performing their duties as required.

Appointing Authority Responsibilities:

- 1) Approve/Disapprove any changes or new request
- 2) Address any discrepancies and/or suspicious charges that are reported.

D. TELECONFERENCING

LDH TC Responsibilities:

- 4) Once a zoom teleconference request is approved, establish the most appropriate account within 5 days of approved request.
- 5) Determine what is in the best interest for the specific site (Zoom Room vs. Individual Zoom Pro Account)

Agency/District TC Responsibilities:

- 1) Submit zoom teleconference request to LDH TC via email with justification as to why services are needed and what add-ons are needed.
- 2) All changes to teleconferencing services must be submitted on the LDH Telecommunications Change Form to the LDH TC.
- 3) All teleconferencing billing, troubleshooting, and orders must be submitted directly to the LDH TC. No one should contact the service provider(s) directly.
- 4) Ensure employee Zoom licenses are activated in a timely manner.
- 5) In the event that there is no agency/district TL then it is the responsibility of the agency/district TC to ensure the zoom teleconference bills are paid timely.

Agency/District TL Responsibilities:

- 1) Request zoom teleconference to the agency/district TC via email with justification as to why services are needed and what add-ons are needed.
- 2) All changes to teleconferencing services must be submitted on the LDH Telecommunications Change Form to the LDH TC.
- 3) All teleconferencing billing, troubleshooting, and orders must be submitted directly to the LDH TC. No one should contact the service provider(s) directly.
- 4) Ensure employee Zoom licenses are activated in a timely manner.
- 5) Ensure agency/district zoom teleconference bills are paid timely.

VII. BILLING FOR SERVICES

Billing for services shall be handled as follow:

- 1) Stated Issued Telecommunications Devices (cell phone/mifi) – Agency/District is responsible to “pay in full” their monthly charges in a timely manner via Purchase Order (PO) to the approved state vendor.
- 2) Teleconference Licenses - Agency/District is responsible to “pay in full” their monthly charges via PO in a timely manner to the approved state vendor.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

Agency/District – any state office, board, division, bureau, or unit that reports under the LDH.

Agency/District Telecommunication Coordinator(s) (Agency/District-TC) – the employee that is appointed in writing using the LDH Telecommunication Appointment form to the LDH-TC by the Agency/District Assistant Secretary/Director that handles their agency/district telecommunication needs and corresponds directly with the LDH-TC for all telecommunications needs.

Agency/District Telecommunication Liaison (Agency/District-TL) – the employees designated in writing using the LDH Telecommunication Appointment form by the agency/district section chiefs or organization managers to their Agency/District Assistant Secretary/Director. This liaison will report to their Agency/District TC.

Appointing Authority – the employee’s immediate supervisor.

Essential Position/Employee – Employees that are at a Deputy level or higher in program offices or a Director level or higher in the Office of the Secretary or other positions as approved by the Deputy Secretary and Undersecretary

Idle Service – telecommunication service/device that is not being utilized for sixty (60) consecutive days or more.

Individual Zoom Account – a teleconference line that is set up specifically to an individual that has a client loaded on their computer/cellular device to enable them to conduct conference calls, webinars, etc.

LDH Employee – the employee who uses LDH telecommunications services and/or devices to conduct official state business.

LDH Telecommunications Coordinator (LDH-TC) – the employee that is designated by the LDH Undersecretary and has governing authority over all LDH agency/district telecommunications needs.

Office of Technology Services (OTS) – the agency that functions as the centralized provider of information technology support services for executive cabinet agencies of state government and is designated as the sole authority for information technology.

State Approved Vendors – a business or other organization that is approved by the Office of State Procurement to provide goods or services to state agencies.

Telecommunication Devices – analog/digital telephones, cellular phones, mifi’s, pagers, and tablets/iPads.

Zoom Room – a conference room with a predesignated conference telephone line, possible leased equipment, and some may have optional add-on features at an additional cost to conduct conference calls and webinars, etc.

IX. EXCEPTIONS

Requests for exceptions to this policy must be justified, documented, and submitted in writing to the LDH Administrative Services Section. Any exception requests will be reviewed and submitted to the Deputy Secretary and/or Undersecretary for final disposition.

X. QUESTIONS

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the LDH Administrative Services Section.

XI. VIOLATIONS

The LDH Undersecretary/Deputy Secretary shall be responsible for ensuring that the provisions of these regulations are carried out. The Assistant Secretary/Director shall consult with LDH Legal, and Internal Audit sections to review all available information. LDH Legal and Internal Audit will conduct any investigation they deem appropriate, and make recommendations to the Assistant Secretary/Director regarding any collections or disciplinary actions.

Any employee who violates this telecommunications policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment.

XII. REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision
June 17, 1997	Policy created
February 13, 2012	Policy revised
June 6, 2012	Policy revised
January 8, 2019	Policy revised
May 28, 2019	Housekeeping Change – Section IX, page 9
April 16, 2021	Policy revised