

It's your call to make.....

Choosing Telecommunications Services

Telephone service isn't simple anymore. Local service, in-state long distance, out-of-state long distance, extended area calling, internet, fax, email, cable TV- with hundreds of companies offering thousands of options, how can anyone choose what is best?



Different plans are offered by different companies, changing on a daily basis. It is very difficult to accurately determine if you have the best plan available. Inside you will find a listing of things to consider before selecting services.

A Few Things To Remember

- ◆ You may change services at any time. There may be fees for changes.
- ◆ Only one in-state and one out-of-state carrier may be chosen through your local service company; however, you may "dial around" to use an alternate carrier by using that company's access code (ex: 10-10-xxx).
- ◆ If you move or change your number, your choices don't automatically transfer. You may need to request the same choices you had previously.
- ◆ Watch out for 800, 888, or 866 calls for services such as sports scores, betting services, psychic hotlines, weather forecasts, etc. Although the call may be free, you could still be charged for the services. 900 and 976 are not free calls.
- ◆ To protect yourself from unwanted charges or slamming, request a block or PIC freeze from your local telephone company.

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Public Utilities Commission
500 E Capitol
Pierre SD 57501
1-800-332-1782
www.puc.sd.gov**

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Tips for Choosing Your Telephone Service Provider:

- ?** **Consider the options you need.** Companies offer a wide variety of services such as call waiting, voice mail, Caller ID, and three-way calling. The company may be creative by “packaging” services to offer discounts. You may want to prioritize your needs before talking to companies offering its services.
- ?** **Do you want one company to provide all your telecommunications services?** Some companies will be able to offer a more complete package of services which could include local, in-state and out-of-state long distance. It may be easier for you to receive your services from just one company.
- ?** **Think about the calls you make.** Determine your “calling pattern” by examining the nature of your calls:
 - How many local calls do you make and how long is each call?
 - Are your long distance calls mostly instate, out-of-state, or international calls?
 - What is the average length of your calls?
 - Do you need any special services? (Remote call forwarding, conference calling, etc.)Once you have determined if there is a pattern to your calls, you may contact companies to see if any offer programs which match your calling pattern.
- ?** **Look for Extended Area Service.** Many people have to make frequent long distance calls to nearby towns. Check to see if there is a company which offers a wider local calling area.
- ?** **Do you use just a few services?** Some companies many have a lower cost plan if you use minimal services.
- ?** **Do you want to sign a long-term contract?** If you consider a long-term contact, check to see if it includes a clause for cancellation or termination fees. Make sure you can end the contract without penalty if you are not happy with the service.
- ?** **Compare “apples to apples.”** Sometimes companies will compare their lowest rate to another company’s basic or higher rate. It is wise to get information from more than one company before making a decision.
- ?** **Do you live outside the city limits?** Check to see if you can get comparable rates to those offered within city limits.

Questions to Ask:

- ?** **Do you have a calling plan that offers special rates?**
- ?** **Do you charge installation fees, minimum usage fees, or monthly service fees?**
- ?** **What is your billing increment?** For example if I make a 20 second call, will I be charged for three minutes? Does the time begin from the time I dial or does it begin once the call has been answered?
- ?** **Will I be charged for unanswered calls?**
- ?** **Is this a short term program?**
- ?** **How will I be notified before rates increase or change?**
- ?** **Will I be charged a fee for changing long distance providers?**