

**199—6.8(476) Special procedures for complaints alleging unauthorized changes in telecommunications services.** Notwithstanding the deregulation of a communications service or facility pursuant to Iowa Code section 476.1D, complaints alleging an unauthorized change in telecommunications service (see rule 199—22.23(476)) will be processed pursuant to the rules set forth in this chapter with the following additional or substituted procedures:

**6.8(1)** Upon receipt of the complaint and with the customer's acknowledgment, a copy of the complaint or a notification of receipt of a telephone, or other oral, complaint will be forwarded to the executing service provider and the preferred service provider as a request for a change in the customer's service to the customer's preferred service provider, unless the service has already been changed to the preferred service provider.

**6.8(2)** The complaint or notification of receipt of a telephone, or other oral, complaint will also be forwarded to the alleged unauthorized service provider. That entity shall file a response to the complaint within ten days of the date the complaint or notification of receipt of a telephone, or other oral, complaint was forwarded. The response must include proof of verification of the customer's authorization for a change in service or a statement that the unauthorized service provider does not have such proof of verification.

**6.8(3)** If the alleged unauthorized service provider includes with its response alleged proof of verification of the customer's authorization for a change in service, then the response will be forwarded to the customer. The customer will have ten days to challenge the verification or otherwise reply to the service provider's response.

**6.8(4)** As a part of the informal complaint proceedings, board staff may issue a proposed resolution to determine the potential liability, including assessment of damages, for unauthorized changes in service among the customer, the previous service provider, the executing service provider, and the submitting service provider, and any other interested person. In the event of a soft slam (as defined in 199—subrule 22.23(1)), board staff may also propose joint and several liability between the reseller and the facilities-based service provider. In all cases, the proposed resolution shall allocate responsibility among the interested persons on the basis of their relative responsibility for the events that are the subject matter of the complaint. For purposes of this rule and in the absence of unusual circumstances, the term "damages" means charges directly relating to the telecommunications services provided to the customer that have appeared or may appear on the customer's bill. The term "damages" does not include incidental, consequential, or punitive damages.

**6.8(5)** If the complainant, the service provider, consumer advocate, or any other interested person directly affected by the proposed decision is dissatisfied with the proposed resolution, a request for formal complaint proceedings may be filed. A request for formal complaint proceedings will be processed by the board pursuant to 199—6.5(476) et seq.

If no request for formal complaint proceedings is received by the board within 14 days after issuance of the proposed resolution, the proposed resolution will be deemed binding upon all persons notified of the informal proceedings and affected by the proposed resolution. Notwithstanding the binding nature of any proposed resolution as to the affected persons, the board may at any time and on its own motion initiate formal proceedings which may alter the allocation of liability.

**6.8(6)** No entity shall commence any actions to re-bill, directly bill, or otherwise collect any disputed charges for a change in service until after board action on the complaint is final. If final board action finds that the change in service was unauthorized and determines the customer should pay some amount less than the billed amount, the service provider is prohibited from re-billing or taking any other steps whatsoever to collect the difference between the allowed charges and the original charges.