

UNIFORM VIDEO SERVICES LOCAL FRANCHISE ACT (EXCERPT)
Act 480 of 2006

484.3310 Prohibited conduct; establishment of dispute resolution process; notice to customers; filing of complaint; manner of dispute resolution.

Sec. 10.

(1) A video service provider shall not do in connection with the providing of video services to its subscribers and the commission may enforce compliance with any of the following to the extent that the activities are not covered by section 2(3)(l):

(a) Make a statement or representation, including the omission of material information, regarding the rates, terms, or conditions of providing video service that is false, misleading, or deceptive. As used in this subdivision, "material information" includes, but is not limited to, all applicable fees, taxes, and charges that will be billed to the subscriber, regardless of whether the fees, taxes, or charges are authorized by state or federal law.

(b) Charge a customer for a subscribed service for which the customer did not make an initial affirmative order. Failure to refuse an offered or proposed subscribed service is not an affirmative order for the service.

(c) If a customer has canceled a service, charge the customer for service provided after the effective date the service was canceled.

(d) Cause a probability of confusion or a misunderstanding as to the legal rights, obligations, or remedies of a party to a transaction by making a false, deceptive, or misleading statement or by failing to inform the customer of a material fact, the omission of which is deceptive or misleading.

(e) Represent or imply that the subject of a transaction will be provided promptly, or at a specified time, or within a reasonable time, if the provider knows or has reason to know that it will not be so provided.

(f) Cause coercion and duress as a result of the time and nature of a sales presentation.

(2) Each video service provider shall establish a dispute resolution process for its customers. Each provider shall maintain a local or toll-free telephone number for customer service contact.

(3) Each provider shall notify its customers not less than annually of the dispute resolution process created under this section. Each provider shall include the dispute resolution process on its website.

(4) Before a customer can file a complaint with the commission under subsection (5), the customer shall first attempt to resolve the dispute through the dispute resolution process established by the provider under subsection (2). If the dispute cannot be resolved by the provider's dispute resolution process, the customer may file a complaint with the commission under subsection (5). The provider shall provide the customer with the commission's toll-free customer service number and website address.

(5) A complaint filed under this section involving a dispute between a customer and a provider shall be handled by the commission in the following manner:

(a) An attempt to resolve the dispute shall first be made through an informal resolution process. Upon receiving a complaint, the commission shall forward the complaint to the provider and attempt to informally mediate a resolution. The provider shall have 10 business days to respond and offer a resolution. If the dispute cannot be resolved through the informal process, the customer can file a formal complaint under subdivision (b).

(b) A formal complaint filed under this subdivision shall be in writing and shall state the section or sections of this act that the customer alleges the provider has violated, sufficient facts to support the allegations, and the exact relief sought from the provider. The formal complaint shall comply with the same requirements of a written complaint filed under section 203 of the Michigan telecommunications act, 1991 PA 179, MCL 484.2203. The complaint shall be resolved by 1 of the following:

(i) If the dispute involves an amount of \$5,000.00 or less, the commission shall appoint a mediator within 7 business days of the date the complaint is filed. The mediator shall make recommendations for resolution within 30 days from the date of appointment. Within 10 days of the date of the mediator's recommendations, any named party in the complaint may request a contested case as provided under subparagraph (ii).

(ii) If the dispute involves an amount greater than \$5,000.00, a contested case hearing in the same manner as provided under section 203 of the Michigan telecommunications act, 1991 PA 179, MCL 484.2203.

(6) If the dispute is between a provider and a franchising entity or between 2 or more providers, the dispute will be resolved in the following manner:

(a) An attempt to resolve the dispute shall first be made through an informal resolution process. If a provider or franchising entity believes that a violation of this act or the franchising agreement has occurred, the provider or franchising entity may begin an informal complaint process with the commission. The provider or the franchising entity shall file with the commission a written notice of dispute identifying the nature of the dispute, request an informal dispute resolution, and serve the notice of dispute on the other party. Commission staff will conduct an informal mediation in an attempt to resolve the dispute. If a satisfactory resolution to the dispute is not achieved, any named party in the complaint may file a formal complaint under subdivision (b).

(b) A formal complaint to the commission filed under this subdivision shall be in writing and shall state the section or sections of this act or parts of the franchising agreement that the party alleges have been violated, sufficient facts to support the allegations, the relief requested, and shall further contain all information, testimony, exhibits, or other documents and information within the moving party's possession on which the party intends to rely to support the complaint. For a period of 60 days after the date the complaint is filed, the parties shall attempt alternative means of resolving the complaint. If the parties cannot agree on the alternative means within 10 days after the date the complaint is filed, the commission shall order mediation. Within 60 days from the date mediation is ordered, the mediator shall issue a recommended settlement. Within 7 days after the date the recommended settlement is issued, each party shall file with the commission a written acceptance or rejection of the recommended settlement. If the parties accept the recommendation, then the recommendation shall become the final order in the contested case. If a party rejects or fails to respond within 7 days to the recommended settlement, then the complaint shall proceed to a contested case hearing in the same manner as provided under section 203 of the Michigan telecommunications act, 1991 PA 179, MCL 484.2203. A party that rejects the recommended settlement shall pay the opposing party's actual costs of proceeding to a contested case hearing, including a reasonable, nonexcessive attorney fee, unless the final order of the commission is more favorable to the rejecting party than the recommended settlement. A final order is considered more favorable if it differs by 10% or more from the recommended settlement in favor of the rejecting party. If the recommendation is not accepted, the individual commissioners shall not be informed of the recommended settlement until they have issued their final order.

History: 2006, Act 480, Eff. Jan. 1, 2007 ;-- Am. 2009, Act 4, Imd. Eff. Apr. 2, 2009