

Helping Consumers Apply for Lifeline

Consumer Advocate Training

February 8, 2023



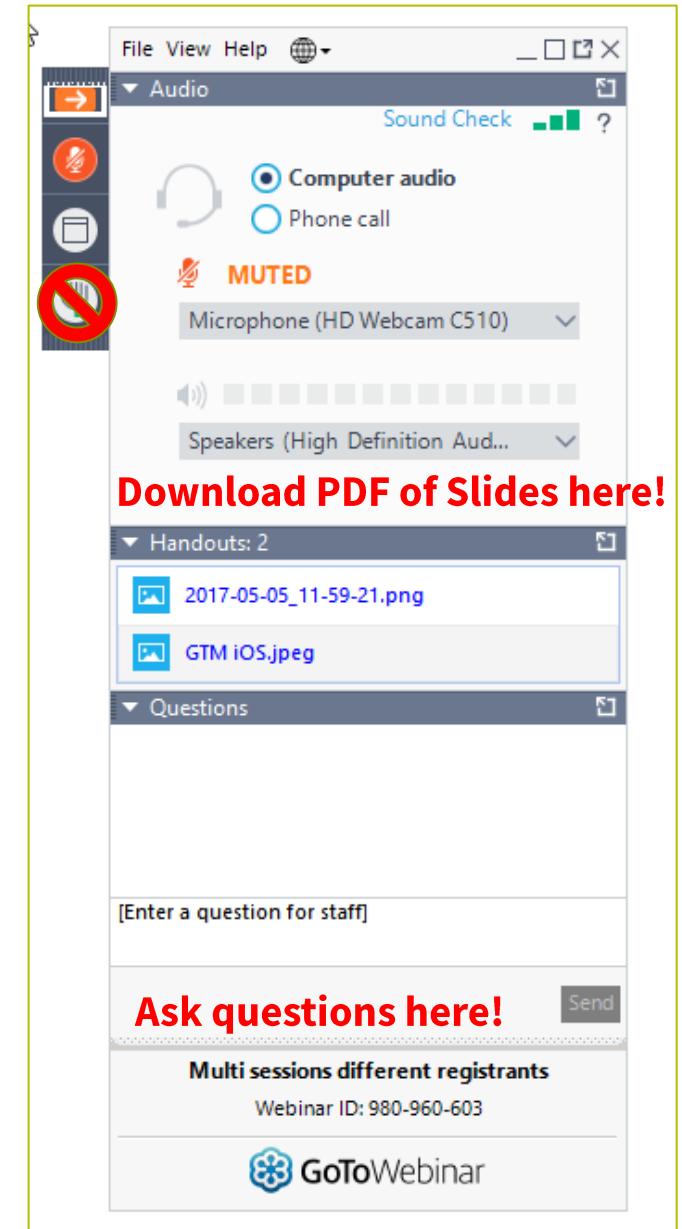
Universal Service
Administrative Co.

Disclaimer

To accommodate all attendees, real-time closed captions will be present during this presentation. We apologize in advance for any transcription errors or distractions. Thank you for your support.

Housekeeping

- Audio is available through your computer's speakers
- The audience will remain on mute
- Enter questions at any time using the “**Questions**” box
- If your audio or slides freeze, restart the webinar
- A copy of the slide deck is in the “**Handouts**” section of the webinar panel



Meet Our Team



Hannah Fofana

Communications Specialist

Hannah develops internal and external communications for Lifeline and State/Fed partners.



Winta Woldu

Communications Specialist

Winta creates website content and training for consumer advocates, consumers, and service providers.



Kara Neesen

Supervisor of Communications

Kara supervises the Lifeline communications team.

Agenda

- Announcements
- Lifeline Program Overview
- Lifeline Application
 - Apply Online
 - Apply via Paper Form
- Resolving Application Errors
- Resolving Eligibility Errors
- Resolving Address Errors
- Resources

Objectives

At the end of the session, you will...



...understand:

- The mission of the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)
- The criteria and the process to qualify and apply for the Lifeline program



...be able to:

- Support consumers with applying for the Lifeline program using the National Verifier
- Support consumers with applying for the Lifeline program using the paper form
- Access additional Lifeline learning materials

Announcements

Announcements

Voice-Only Phase-Out and Minimum Service Standards

- On July 1, 2022, the Bureau extended the waiver pausing both the phase-out of Lifeline support for voice-only services and the increase in Lifeline minimum service standards for mobile broadband data capacity for one additional year, until at least December 1, 2023.
 - The basic Lifeline support of \$5.25 remains available to eligible consumers who subscriber to voice-only service until at least December 1, 2023.
 - The minimum service standard for mobile broadband data capacity will remain at 4.5 GB per month until at least December 1, 2023.
 - The minimum service standard for fixed broadband has increased to 1280 GB per month until at least December 1, 2023

Announcements

COVID-19 Relief for Tribal Subscribers Extended

- On [January 30, 2023](#), the Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) released a waiver order that further extends the waiver of Lifeline recertification and reverification requirements for subscribers residing on Tribal lands through April 30, 2023. WCB anticipates that this will likely be the final extension of these waivers.
 - This order also extends the waiver of the Affordable Connectivity Program's (ACP) recertification for Tribal subscribers that participate in Lifeline and ACP. ACP recertification will commence for these subscribers after they have had an opportunity to complete the Lifeline recertification process.

Announcements

FCC Form 555 Deadline has passed

- The FCC Form 555 was due last week on Tuesday, January 31, 2023.
- The FCC Form 555 needed to be submitted electronically via USAC's [E-File \(One Portal\)](#).
- Service providers must also file a copy of their FCC Form 555 in the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System, Docket 14-171, with their state regulatory commission, and relevant Tribal governments.
- For details on the FCC Form 555, review the FCC Form 555 [Supplemental Information](#).

Lifeline Program Overview

Lifeline Program Overview

Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)

- The Universal Service Fund (USF) exists to ensure that all people in the United States have access to quality, affordable connectivity service
- USAC is an independent, not-for-profit organization designated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as the permanent administrator of the Universal Service Fund and its four programs



Lifeline Program

Discounted phone and internet service to eligible low-income consumers.



High Cost Program

Reduced rates for telecom and broadband services in eligible high-cost areas.



E-rate Program

Funding for broadband services to eligible schools and libraries.



Rural Health Care Program

Funding for telecom and broadband services for eligible rural health care providers.

Lifeline Program Overview

- **Federal Communications Commission (FCC)**
 - Develops policies and regulations for the Lifeline program and provides oversight of USAC
- **Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)**
 - Lifeline administrator responsible for confirming consumer eligibility, recertifying subscribers, and managing the Lifeline Support Center
 - Educates stakeholders on processes, systems, and rules and requirements

Lifeline Program Overview

Program Stakeholders

- **Service Providers**
 - Provide subscribers with Lifeline-supported services
 - Comply with program rules and requirements
- **Lifeline Subscribers**
 - Receive Lifeline-supported services
 - Keep information up to date
- **Lifeline Eligible Consumers**
 - Individuals eligible for the benefit
 - Not yet completed the application or enrolled in the program

Lifeline Program Overview

Program Stakeholders

- **Tribal Partners**
 - Tribal governments, agencies, and nonprofits serving Tribal communities
 - Educate consumers about Lifeline
- **State and Federal Partners**
 - Public utility commissions and agencies that provide Lifeline-qualifying government programs
 - Educate consumers about Lifeline
 - Facilitate data sharing with USAC

Consumer Advocates

- Nonprofits, shelters, and foodbanks
- Educate consumers about Lifeline
- Share feedback with USAC/FCC to further program goals

Lifeline Program Overview

Lifeline Benefit

- Monthly discount up to **\$9.25**
- Tribal lands, monthly discount up to **\$34.25**
- Discount may apply to qualifying fixed **or** mobile services
 - Can be applied to voice, broadband, or bundled services that meet minimum service standard requirements
 - A designated Lifeline eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) must offer the service in order for the service to qualify for the Lifeline benefit

Lifeline Program Overview

Lifeline Benefit



Current Minimum Service Standards (MSS)

Mobile Voice	Mobile Broadband	Home (Fixed) Broadband
1000 Minutes/month	Speed: 3G or better; Usage Allowance: 4.5 GB/month	Speed: 25/3 Mbps; Usage Allowance: 1,280 GB/month

Lifeline Program Overview

Lifeline Benefit

Service Options

Service Type	Description	Lifeline Support Amount
Voice (mobile or landline)	Voice only that meets MSS	\$5.25
Broadband (internet)	Broadband only that meets MSS	\$9.25
Bundled Voice	Voice and broadband that meets the voice MSS only	\$5.25
Bundled Broadband	Voice and broadband that meets the broadband MSS only	\$9.25
Bundled Voice and Broadband	Voice and broadband that meets both service type MSS	\$9.25

***Note:** MSS and support amounts are effective from December 1, 2022 until December 1, 2023.

Lifeline Program Overview

Eligibility

- Consumer's income is at or below **135% of the federal poverty guidelines**
- Consumer participates in at least one of the following **government programs**:
 - Medicaid
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
 - Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit

Lifeline Program Overview

Eligibility: Tribal Lands

Consumers living on qualifying Tribal lands can get Lifeline if their household income is at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, or if they participate in:

- Any of the federal assistance programs listed on the previous slide
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance (BIA-GA)
- Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Tribal Head Start (must meet qualifying income standard)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

Lifeline Program Overview

Additional Qualification Information



- One Lifeline benefit is allowed per "independent economic household" (household)
 - Defined as a group of people who live together and share income and expenses (even if they are not related to each other)



- Benefit qualifying person (BQP): If an individual is not eligible for Lifeline but has a dependent that is eligible (e.g., a child), the individual may qualify for Lifeline based on the status of their dependent

Lifeline Application

Lifeline Application

National Verifier: Centralized Application System



- Online – Apply at nv.fcc.gov/lifeline



- By Mail – Print [application](#) ([Spanish version](#))




- Through a Service Provider – Find a company using the [Companies Near Me](#) tool

Lifeline Application


Apply Online

Returning consumers
sign in below

 An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know](#) ✓

FC Federal Communications Commission **National Verifier**

Choose your language **English** | Español **Consumer Sign In**


 On this site you can apply for Lifeline and the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which help low-income households pay for internet service and internet connected devices. Visit [AffordableConnectivity.gov](#) to learn more about ACP and visit [LifelineSupport.org](#) to learn more about Lifeline.


[Instructions](#) to complete the ACP Application online are available in English and 9 other languages.

Qualify for Lifeline!

Lifeline is a federal benefit that lowers the monthly cost of phone or internet service. Qualifying is the first step to getting your Lifeline Benefit.

What is your state or territory?

Choose 

Get Started If you do not want to qualify online, you can use a [paper form](#). 

New consumers start by
selecting where they live

Lifeline Application

Apply with Paper Form

- Consumers must complete all sections of the [application](#) (excluding page 7)
- USAC recommends that consumers write clearly, using black ink and capital letters

The image displays three overlapping copies of the FCC Form 5629, Lifeline Program Application Form. The forms are from the OMB Approval Edition 3060-0813. The visible sections include:

- Section 2: Your Information** (Page 2 of 8):
 - What is your full legal name? (First, Middle (optional), Last)
 - What is your phone number (if you have one)?
 - What is your date of birth? (Month, Day, Year)
 - What is your email address?
 - What are the last 4 numbers of your Social Security Number (SSN)?
 - What is the best way to reach you? (email, text, etc.)
- Section 2 (continued):**
 - What is your home address? (Street Number and Name, Apt., Unit, etc., City, State, Zip Code)
 - Is this a temporary address? (Yes/No)
 - Check if you live on Tribal Lands? (Yes/No)
 - Check if you are qualifying through a child or dependent in your household. If so, answer the following questions:
 - What is their full legal name? (First, Middle (optional), Last, Suffix (optional))
 - What is their date of birth? (Month, Day, Year)
 - What are the last 4 numbers of their Social Security Number (SSN)?
 - If they do not have a SSN, what is your Tribal Identification Number?

Page 2 of 8

Universal Service Administrative Company | www.USFISupport.org
Need help? Call the Lifeline Support Center at 1-800-234-9473

Lifeline Application

Apply with a Service Provider

- The Companies Near Me tool can help consumers find companies offering Lifeline in their area
- The tool is available on LifelineSupport.org

Companies Near Me

This tool can help you find companies in your area that offer [Lifeline](#) and the [Affordable Connectivity Program \(ACP\)](#) service. These programs can reduce the cost of phone or internet service by providing a monthly discount.

ACP service providers may have their own application process, so consumers should contact their preferred service provider for more information. Consumers may also be eligible for a one-time discount on a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet through ACP. Ask your service provider if they offer devices or use this tool to see a list of providers who offer discounted devices.

Find a Company

Enter Your Zip Code

Example: 12345

OR

Enter Your City and State

Select A Program:

☐ ACP

☐ Lifeline

Search

[Clear Results](#)

Lifeline Application Components

- During the application process, consumers will submit their:
 - First and last legal name
 - Date of birth
 - Physical address
 - Last four digits of their social security number or Tribal ID
 - How they qualify for Lifeline
- The information above is required for online and mailed applications as well as applications submitted with the assistance of a service provider
- Online application and paper forms are available for consumers in English and Spanish

Lifeline Application

Additional Information

- The consumer will include contact information on their application (i.e., mailing address, phone number, and/or email address as well as an alternate email address if they chose to do so)
 - The consumer may include someone like a caseworker or family member as their alternate contact. Consumers should not include service provider representatives as their alternate contacts
 - The alternate contact will receive any status or application updates the consumer receives

What is your home address?
The address where you will get service. Do not use a P.O. Box.

Street Number and Name	Apt, Unit, etc.	
<input type="text" value="123 Street Road"/>	<input type="text"/>	
City	State	Zip Code
<input type="text" value="Your City or Town"/>	<input type="text" value="Choose"/>	<input type="text" value="00000"/>

Do you qualify for Lifeline or the [Affordable Connectivity Benefit](#) through your child or a dependent?

If you do not qualify on your own, you can sign up for Lifeline or the [Affordable Connectivity Benefit](#) through your child or dependent if they participate in any of the qualifying programs.

☒ No, I qualify by myself. ☐ Yes, I qualify through my child or dependent.

Lifeline Application

Automated Database Connections

- The National Verifier is Lifeline's centralized application system. The system is an automated database with state and federal connections to verify a consumer's eligibility for the Lifeline program.
- The National Verifier has connections to:
 - **United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** - verifies participation in federal housing assistance programs
 - **Veteran Affairs (VA)** - verifies participation in Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit programs
 - **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)** - verifies participation in Medicaid
 - **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** - verifies participation in SNAP
 - **Several automated state connections**
- If a consumer is not found in an automated database, they will need to provide documentation for manual review. USAC notifies the consumer that more information or documentation is needed to resolve the error.
- Documentation can be submitted online through the consumer or service provider portal or mailed to the Lifeline Support Center.

Lifeline Application

Submitting Documentation

- Documentation can be submitted online through the consumer or service provider portal or mailed to the Lifeline Support Center



- **Service providers can help the consumer** submit required documents directly through the **NV Service Provider Portal, or by mail.**



- Submitting documentation to resolve application errors initiates a manual review process by agents at the Lifeline Support Center.



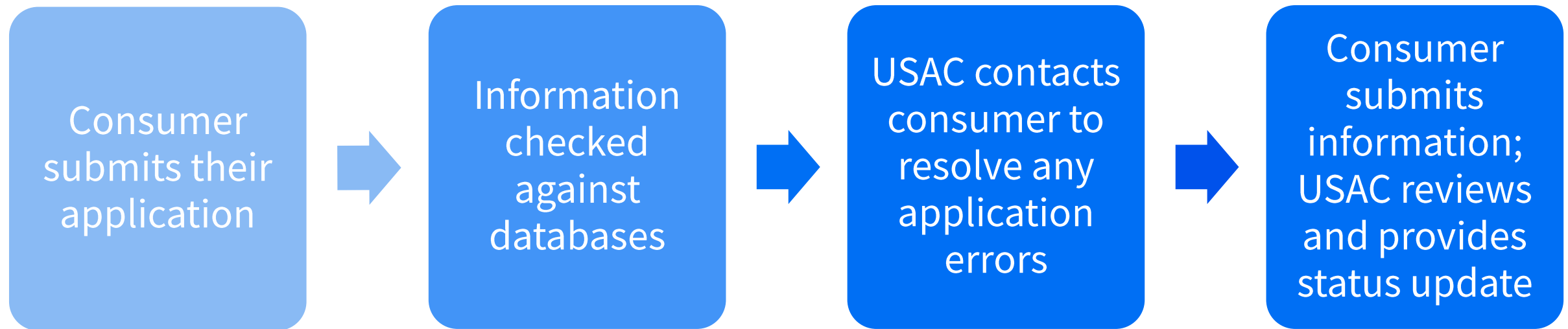
- Consumers can **check their application status** or **enrollment status** online through the consumer portal, by contacting the Lifeline Support Center, or by checking with their service provider through whom they initially submitted their application.

Poll

Resolving Application Errors

Resolving Application Errors

High-Level Document Submission Overview



Resolving Application Errors

Application Error Codes

Error	Information Required
Identity	Proof of identity
Address	Proof of address
Duplicate address	Household worksheet
Under 18	Proof of emancipated minor
Eligibility	Proof of program or income
Deceased	Proof of life

* **Note:** Visit our [Resolving Application Errors page](#) for more information on document requirements.

Resolving Application Errors

Documentation Submission Follow Up



- USAC will contact the consumer based on how they applied (mail or online)
- The consumer will also provide contact information on the application, which USAC may use to provide application status updates
 - The consumer may provide a mailing address, phone number, and/or email address as well as an alternate email address if they choose to do so
 - The consumer may include someone like a caseworker or family member as their alternate contact
 - The alternate contact will receive any status or application updates that the consumer receives

Resolving Application Errors

Notification and Submission Process

	Online	Mail (Paper Applications)
How does USAC notify the consumer if more information is needed?	A screen will populate asking the consumer to provide additional information to qualify for Lifeline	Consumers will receive a letter in the mail: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining what information is needed to qualify for Lifeline • The cover sheet • A pre-paid envelope
How to submit additional information?	Click the “upload” button on the screen and attach any documentation that meets the requirements or complete the prompts that appear	In the pre-paid envelope the consumer should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send copies of the requested documents/complete form if requested • Complete and send the cover sheet
Manual review timeline (conducted by USAC Lifeline Support Center)	Reviewed in order of receipt, typically within minutes if submitted during business hours (9 a.m. – 9 p.m. ET)	Review decision sent via US Mail within 7 – 10 business days

Resolving Application Errors

Additional Submission Requirements



- The consumer must submit all information requested by USAC within 45 days of starting their application or the application will expire
- If the consumer needs to submit documentation to resolve application errors, the consumer should **always submit copies** of the documentation
 - Consumers should never submit original documentation

Questions?

Resolving Eligibility Errors

Resolving Eligibility Errors

Overview



- A consumer will receive an eligibility error when USAC cannot verify how the consumer qualifies for Lifeline
- The consumer can submit documentation online or by mail to prove participation in a qualifying program or to prove their income meets Lifeline's criteria

Resolving Eligibility Errors

Confirm Program Eligibility

- Documentation for **qualifying programs** must include:
 - The consumer's name, or the name of the consumer's benefit qualifying person (BQP),
 - Name of Lifeline-qualifying program, such as SNAP,
 - Name of the government or Tribal agency that issued the document, and
 - An issue date within the last 12 months or a future expiration date
- Examples of **qualifying program** documentation:
 - Award letter
 - Screenshot of government application or website showing eligibility
 - Benefit or case portal screenshot

Resolving Eligibility Errors

Confirm Income Eligibility

- Documentation for **income** must include:
 - The consumer's name, or the name of the consumer's BQP, and
 - Cover a full year of income or documentation covering three consecutive months of income within the previous 12 months

Resolving Eligibility Errors

Confirm Income Eligibility

- Examples of income documentation:
 - Prior year's state, federal, or Tribal tax return
 - Current income statement from an employer or paycheck stub
 - Social Security statement of benefits
 - Veterans Administration statement of benefits
 - Retirement/pension statement of benefits
 - Unemployment/worker's compensation statement of benefits
 - Federal or Tribal notice letter of participation in General Assistance
 - Divorce decree, child support award, or other official document containing income information

Resolving Address Errors

Resolving Address Errors

When Address Errors Occur



- A consumer will receive an address error when USAC cannot verify the consumer's address against USPS's Address Matching System (AMS)
 - This often occurs because a consumer submits a descriptive address or lives at an address that is not yet recognized by the USPS
- The consumer can submit information that verifies where they live

Resolving Address Errors

Examples of Descriptive Address

- Consumers may enter a **descriptive address** or the intersection near where they reside if they don't have a street number and/or name

What is your home address?
The address where you will get service. Do not use a P.O. Box.

Street Number and Name	Apt, Unit, etc.	
<input type="text" value="Red House in the Middle Of Town"/>	<input type="text"/>	
City	State	Zip Code
<input type="text" value="Sample Town"/>	<input type="text" value="WA ✓"/>	<input type="text" value="12345"/>

[Clear All](#) [Next >](#)

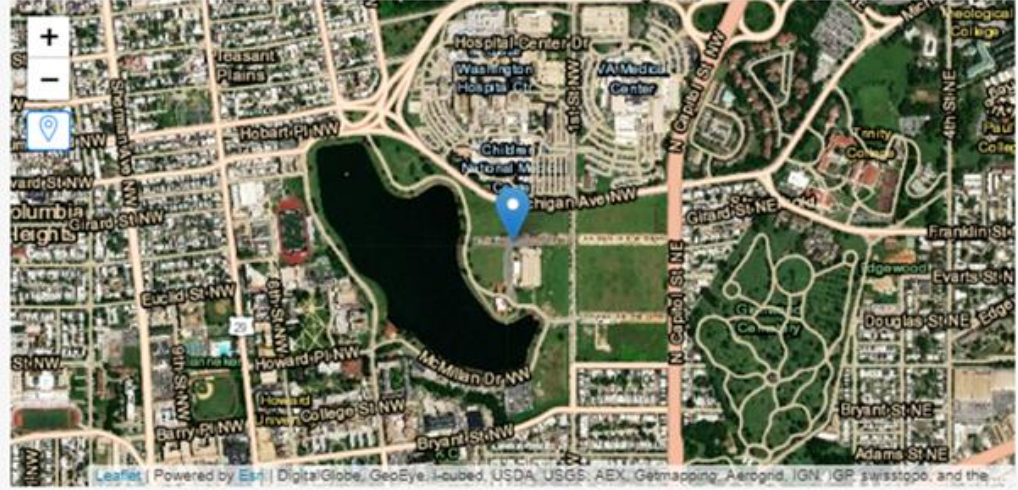
Resolving Address Errors

Verify Address Online

- The consumer will use the mapping tool
- The map will try to locate the consumer's home
 - The consumer can move the pin around to locate where they live
 - The coordinates automatically populate

Note: USAC recently added an instructional video to demonstrate how to utilize the mapping tool located inside the National Verifier

We need to confirm where you live on the map below. Please double click on the map or use the (+) button on the top left to zoom in on the map. You can drop a pin once you have found your address on the map.



Note: If you have not zoomed in far enough on the map, you will not be able to drop a pin on the map.

Latitude	Longitude
<input type="text" value="38.92529"/>	<input type="text" value="-77.01403"/>

[Back](#)[Next](#)

Resolving Address Errors

Verify Address by Mail

- **Option 1:** If a consumer has access to the internet but does not want to submit an online application, USAC recommends that they use a mapping tool (e.g., Google maps) to drop a pin where they live
 - Take a screenshot of the mapping tool (include the dropped pin and the consumer's coordinates) and print it
- Consumers must mail this information to USAC's Lifeline Support Center and the completed cover sheet within 45 days of initially submitting their application

Resolving Address Errors

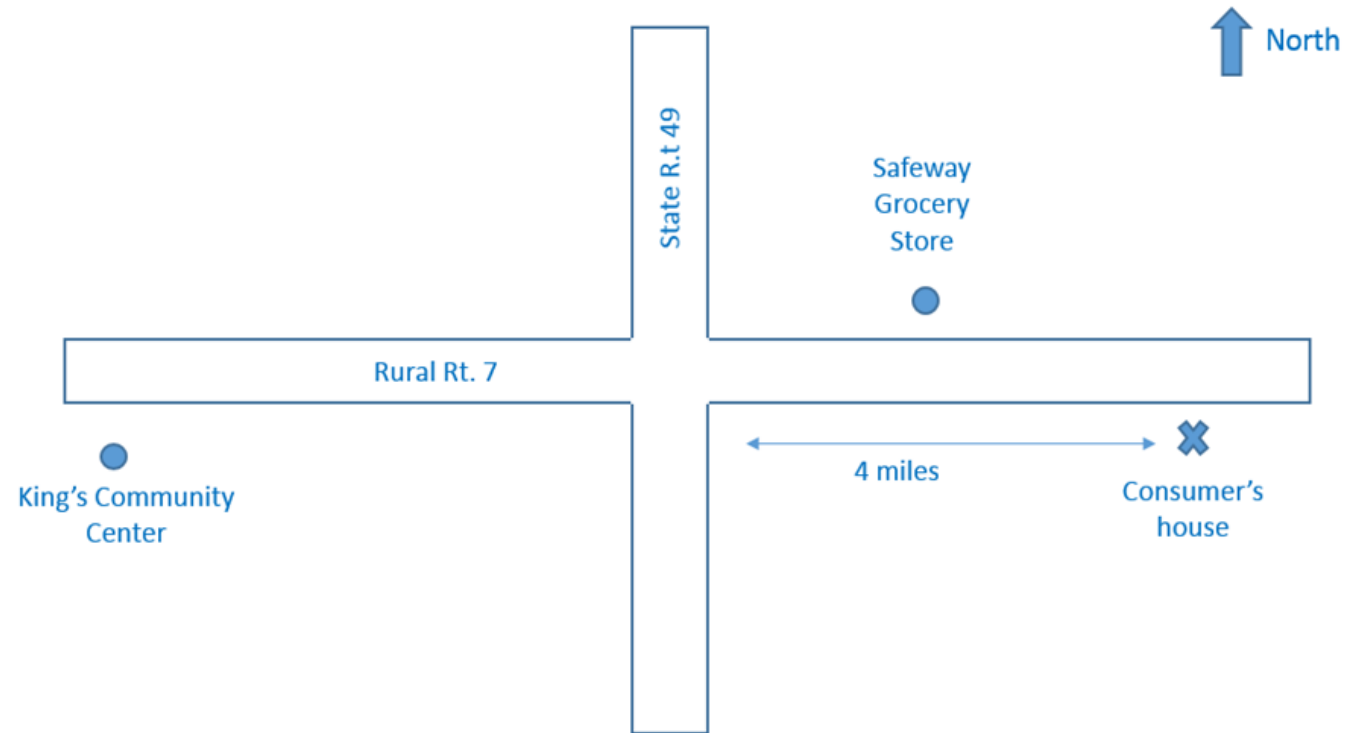
Verify Address by Mail

- **Option 2:** Consumer uses a map from their community (e.g., from a gas station, phone or internet company, or Tribal government)
 - The consumer must circle their home
 - If coordinates are known, the consumer should write them on the map
- Consumers must mail this information to USAC's Lifeline Support Center and the completed cover sheet within 45 days of initially submitting their application

Resolving Address Errors

Verify Address by Mail

- **Option 3:** Consumer draws a map
- This map should include cross roads, identifiable landmarks, and distances
- If coordinates are known, the consumer should write them on the map
- Consumers must mail this information to USAC's Lifeline Support Center and the completed cover sheet within 45 days of initially submitting their application



Resolving Address Errors

Tips to Confirm Address through Mail



- USAC needs a way to obtain the consumer's coordinates to verify they are eligible for the enhanced Tribal benefit
 - Options 1 – 3 allow USAC to do so, even if the consumer does not include the coordinates on their submission
 - If the consumer does not include coordinates, it may take longer for USAC to verify the consumer's address
- If a consumer applies through the mail with a descriptive address, they should include one of these options with the application submission to reduce processing time

Poll

Resources

Resources

USAC's Websites

- USAC has two websites available:
 - Lifeline's consumer website: LifelineSupport.org
 - USAC's Lifeline website for service providers, state and federal partners, consumer advocates, and Tribal partners: usac.org/lifeline

Resources

Consumer Educational Material



How to Apply – [Click to View](#)

How to Apply [Spanish] – [Click to View](#)



Manage Your Benefit – [Click to View](#)

Manage Your Benefit [Spanish] – [Click to View](#)

Resources

Consumer Educational Material



Tribal Flyer – [Click to View](#)



Tribal Toolkit – [Click to View](#)

Resources

Lifeline Support Center



- **Email:** LifelineSupport@usac.org



- **Call:** (800) 234-9473 (press 1 for English; press 2 for Spanish)

Resources

Lifeline Support Center

- **Hours:** 7 days a week, from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET
- **Support:**
 - Consumers with disabilities who need help submitting a Lifeline application may contact the support center for assistance
 - Consumer support representatives are able to provide assistance in English and Spanish
 - USAC offers a translation services vendor to provide assistance in up to an additional 200 languages in instances where the service is needed

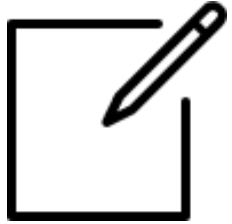
Resources

Lifeline Program Team

- Service providers, state and federal partners, consumer advocates, and Tribal partners who need assistance outside of helping consumers with the application process should **email** LifelineProgram@usac.org to connect with a program analyst about:
 - **Technical issues** or system questions
 - **Processes, rules, and requirements.**

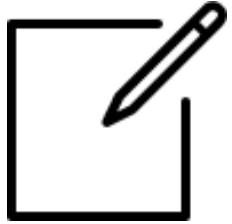
Questions?

We'd love your feedback



- We want to hear what topics you'd like the Lifeline Communications team to cover in future webinars this year.
- Please provide your responses to the questions box now.
- Thank you!

Take Our Survey



- We want to hear about your webinar experience
- Expect an email from invites@mailersurveygizmo.com with a unique survey link in 1-2 business days
- We appreciate your feedback

Thank You!





Universal Service
Administrative Co.