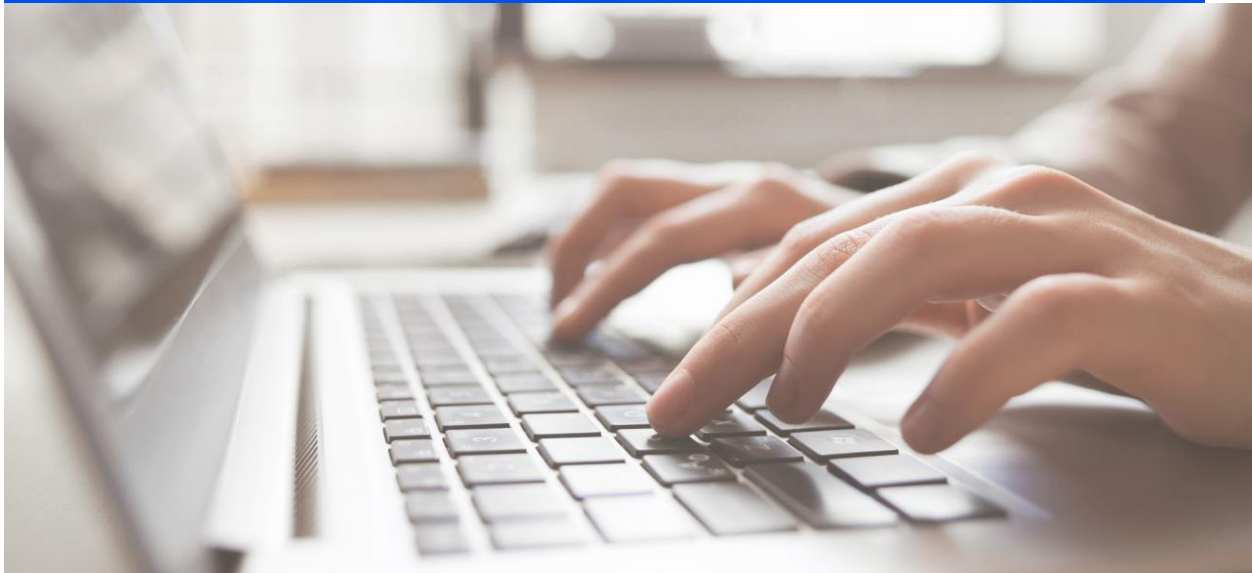




Universal Service
Administrative Co.

Lifeline Newsletter 2024 November

November 21, 2024



FCC Form 555 Due January 31, 2025

The **2024 FCC Form 555**, or Annual Lifeline Eligible Telecommunications Carrier Certification Form, is due on **Friday, January 31, 2025**. This form is used for the annual recertification process and non-usage reporting for the Lifeline program. The form must be submitted electronically to USAC via **USAC's [One Portal](#)**, which will open on December 11, 2024. USAC will notify stakeholders when the **2024 FCC Form 555** becomes available.

In preparation for the opening of the submission window, service providers should:

- Register for the FCC Form 555 [December Lifeline webinar](#).
- Ensure they have One Portal login credentials. If providers need assistance with their One Portal account, they can email CustomerSupport@usac.org.

Key Differences Between the Standard Lifeline Benefit and Survivor Benefit

On September 4, 2024, USAC updated its systems to allow qualifying survivors to enroll in Lifeline under the Safe Connections Act. Qualifying survivors can receive a discount of up to \$9.25 on voice, internet, or bundled services for up to six months. Survivors can participate in the Lifeline program if they attempt a line separation request from their mobile phone provider and can confirm they are experiencing financial hardship.

The survivor benefit is unique from the standard Lifeline benefit in a few ways:

- **Increased Voice-Only Benefit**
 - Offers up to \$9.25 on voice-only service, compared to the standard Lifeline benefit of up to \$5.25.
- **Preferred Method of Contact**
 - Survivors can choose to be contacted through their preferred method (email, phone, or mail) when applying.
- **Enhanced Data Privacy**
 - Survivor data and personally identifiable information (PII) are protected under heightened privacy measures. Only designated personnel can access survivor information and survivor addresses are masked within the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD) to ensure confidentiality.
- **Self-Certification of Financial Hardship**
 - As part of the application process, survivors may self-certify under penalty of perjury that they are experiencing financial hardship.
- **Expanded Eligibility Criteria for Survivors**
 - Survivors may qualify if: (1) they meet existing Lifeline eligibility criteria, (2) their household's income is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, OR (3) they or a child or dependent participates in one of the following government programs:
 - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC);
 - Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch or School Breakfast program, including enrollment at a Community Eligibility Provision school or school district; OR
 - Received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year.

For more information about the survivor benefit, service providers can refer to our [Safe Connections Act](#) page and consumer advocates can refer to our [Survivor Benefit](#) page.

Service providers and consumer advocates are encouraged to inform

consumers about the survivor benefit. USAC has released a digital [Survivor Benefit flyer](#) that can be used as a resource to inform consumers about the survivor benefit.

Disaster Relief Waivers Expiring Soon

Hurricane Helene Waiver Expiring November 30

On **October 1, 2024**, the Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) adopted an Order ([DA 23-805](#)) that temporarily waived the non-usage, de-enrollment for non-usage, and annual recertification requirements for participants requiring federal disaster assistance in areas affected by Hurricane Helene. These disaster areas include parts of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

The waiver period under this order is in effect until November 30, 2024. Lifeline's non-usage rules will be reinstated beginning December 1, 2024, at which time impacted consumers residing in the affected disaster areas will have 30 days to use their Lifeline service. If a consumer does not use their Lifeline service during the 30-day period, they will be de-enrolled from the program following the 15-day notice period, which begins on December 31, 2024.

Hurricane Milton Waiver Expiring December 15

On **October 9, 2024**, WCB adopted an Order ([DA 24-1509](#)) that temporarily waived the non-usage, de-enrollment for non-usage, and annual recertification requirements for participants requiring federal disaster assistance in parts of Florida affected by Milton Weather Events.

The waiver period under this order is in effect until December 15, 2024. Lifeline's non-usage rules will be reinstated beginning December 16, 2024, at which time impacted consumers residing in the affected disaster areas will have 30 days to use their Lifeline service. If a consumer does not use their Lifeline service during the 30-day period, they will be de-enrolled from the program following the 15-day notice period, which begins on January 15, 2024.

Support Center: Operating Schedule Through Year-End

The Lifeline Support Center will be closed on the following days: November 28 and December 25, 2024, and January 1, 2025. Additionally, Lifeline applications requiring manual review will not be reviewed and approved on these days.



Lifeline Program Compliance Reminder: Consumer Qualification for Lifeline

Consumers can qualify for the Lifeline program based on their household income or participation in certain federal or state assistance programs. In addition, consumers living on qualifying Tribal lands may qualify through participation in certain Tribal assistance programs.

A “qualifying assistance program” is defined as any federal or Tribal programs the participation in which, under [47 C.F.R. § 54.409](#) (a) or (b), qualifies a consumer for Lifeline service. To maintain eligibility, recipients must be enrolled in one of the approved assistance programs or meet the income-based eligibility criteria. Service providers should help inform consumers that they can only qualify for the Lifeline benefit through either their household income or participation in one of the qualifying government assistance programs. Consumers that no longer qualify for the Lifeline program based on their household income or participation in certain federal or state assistance programs are no longer permitted to receive Lifeline benefits.

November Webinar: FCC Form 555 and Upcoming NLAD System Enhancements

Join us on **Wednesday, December 11 at 3 p.m. ET** for our next Lifeline program webinar to learn how to complete and submit the FCC Form 555. A portion of the session will also cover upcoming NLAD enhancements to the address update workflow. Register for the December 2024 monthly webinar.

Recordings of previous webinars are available on our [Lifeline Learn: Webinars](#) page.

[Register](#)



November Maintenance Schedule

As part of continual system improvements, USAC conducts regular system maintenance. Scheduled maintenance dates are available on the [NLAD Maintenance Schedule](#) and the [National Verifier Maintenance Schedule](#) pages.

System Maintenance

December 20

National Verifier, NLAD, Lifeline Claims System (LCS), Affordable Connectivity Claims System (ACCS), and Representative Accountability Database (RAD) will be unavailable due to a scheduled monthly maintenance from Friday, December 20 at 10 p.m. until 3 a.m. ET on Saturday, December 21.

Need Help? Contact Us!

For questions about Lifeline, including technical issues and program resources or rules, email LifelineProgram@usac.org. Review all appropriate program contacts on USAC's Lifeline [Contact Us](#) webpage.

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