Helping Consumers Apply for Lifeline

Consumer Advocate Training

August 11, 2021
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

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Objectives

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

...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

...understand:

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

• Lifeline Program Overview
• Lifeline Application
  • Apply Online
  • Apply via Paper Form
• Enhanced Tribal Benefit
• COVID-19 Relief
• Resources
• Q&A
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
  - 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 Lifeline-qualifying government programs
  • Educate consumers about Lifeline

• **Consumer Advocates**
  • Nonprofits, shelters, and foodbanks
  • Educate consumers about Lifeline
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 it to qualify for the Lifeline benefit

• Link Up: a Tribal lands one-time benefit up to $100 to cover initial set up fees at residences in specific areas
# Lifeline Program Overview

## Lifeline Benefit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobile Voice</th>
<th>Mobile Broadband</th>
<th>Home (Fixed) Broadband</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000 Minutes/month</td>
<td><strong>Speed</strong>: 3G or better; <strong>Usage Allowance</strong>: 4.5 GB/month</td>
<td><strong>Speed</strong>: 25/3 Mbps; <strong>Usage Allowance</strong>: 1024 GB/month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Lifeline Program Overview

## Lifeline Benefit

### Service Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Lifeline Support Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice (mobile or landline)</td>
<td>Voice only that meets MSS</td>
<td>$5.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadband (internet)</td>
<td>Broadband only that meets MSS</td>
<td>$9.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundled Voice</td>
<td>Voice and broadband that meets the voice MSS only</td>
<td>$5.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundled Broadband</td>
<td>Voice and broadband that meets the broadband MSS only</td>
<td>$9.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundled Voice and Broadband</td>
<td>Voice and broadband that meets both service type MSS</td>
<td>$9.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: MSS and support amounts are effective from December 1, 2020 until December 1, 2021.*
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
Additional Qualification Information

- One Lifeline benefit allowed per "independent economic household" (household)
  - Designed as a group of people who live together and share money (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 CheckLifeline.org

- 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

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
Lifeline Application
Apply with a Service Provider

• The Companies Near Me Tool can help you find companies in your area that offer Lifeline
• The tool is available on LifelineSupport.org

Companies Near Me
This tool can help you find companies in your area that offer Lifeline and/or the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB Program) service. These programs can reduce the cost of phone or internet service by providing a monthly discount.

To learn more about these programs and learn if you qualify for a discount, visit Lifeline's Do I Qualify? page or the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program's Do I Qualify? page.

EBB Program service providers may operate their own eligibility process, so consumers should contact the company for more information.

Find a Company

Enter Your Zip Code

OR

Enter Your City and State

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

• If USAC cannot verify this information, USAC will ask the consumer to submit 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
Questions?
Poll
Enhanced Tribal Benefit
Enhanced Tribal Benefit
Tribal Lands Definition

• Definition for “Tribal lands” used by Lifeline program (47 CFR 54.400(e)):
  • “Any federally recognized Indian tribe’s reservation, pueblo, or colony, including former reservations in Oklahoma
  • Alaska Native regions established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688)
  • Indian allotments
  • Hawaiian Home Lands – areas held in trust for Native Hawaiians by the state of Hawaii, pursuant to the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920 July 9, 1921, 42 Stat. 108, et. seq., as amended
  • And any land designated as such by the Commission for purposes of this subpart pursuant to the designation process in § 54.412”
Enhanced Tribal Benefit

Eligibility

- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance (BIA-GA)
- Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANF)
- Tribal Head Start (must meet qualifying income standard)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
**Enhanced Tribal Benefit**

**General**

- Low-income consumers on Tribal lands can receive a Lifeline discount of up to $34.25 per month, and up to a $100 reduction for the first-time connection charges for Lifeline service at their primary residence
Enhanced Tribal Benefit

Enhanced Monthly Support

- Low-income consumers who qualify for enhanced Lifeline support can receive a discount of up to $25 per month in addition to the standard federal benefit of up to $9.25 if they live on Tribal lands.
- Service providers must pass the full Tribal lands support amount through to the subscriber.
Enhanced Tribal Benefit
Tribal Link Up

• Link Up assistance provides a 100% reduction (up to $100) of the charge for starting telecommunications service at a Tribal Lifeline subscriber’s primary residence

• Link Up is available to subscribers who reside on rural Tribal lands and use a facilities-based service provider that receives High Cost program support
  • This is a one-time benefit per address
  • Before providing Link Up to the subscriber, check the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD) to confirm whether they have previously received a Link Up benefit at their address.
COVID-19 Relief
COVID-19 Relief
FCC Waivers Released in Response to Pandemic

- The FCC released a series of waivers to ensure that consumers have access to the connectivity services they need during the pandemic
- These temporary changes are now set to expire on September 30, 2021
COVID-19 Relief
More Flexibility for Consumers

- USAC and the FCC adjusted the income and identification documentation requirements to allow individuals recently unemployed or social distancing due to the pandemic to more easily complete their Lifeline application
COVID-19 Relief
Continued Service For Consumers

- Lifeline recertification, reverification, and general de-enrollment requirements are largely paused to ensure that many Lifeline subscribers are not involuntarily de-enrolled from the program
COVID-19 Relief
Consumers Residing in Rural Areas on Tribal Lands

- FCC temporarily waived its rules to allow Lifeline providers to begin providing service to eligible consumers residing in rural areas on Tribal lands even if those consumers have not yet submitted certain supporting information to complete their Lifeline application
- The consumer will then have 45 days to submit their information to maintain their Lifeline benefit
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 recently engaged 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, requirements**, and COVID-19 waivers
Poll
Questions?
Thank You!
Take Our Survey

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