

Helping Consumers Apply for Lifeline

Consumer Advocate Training

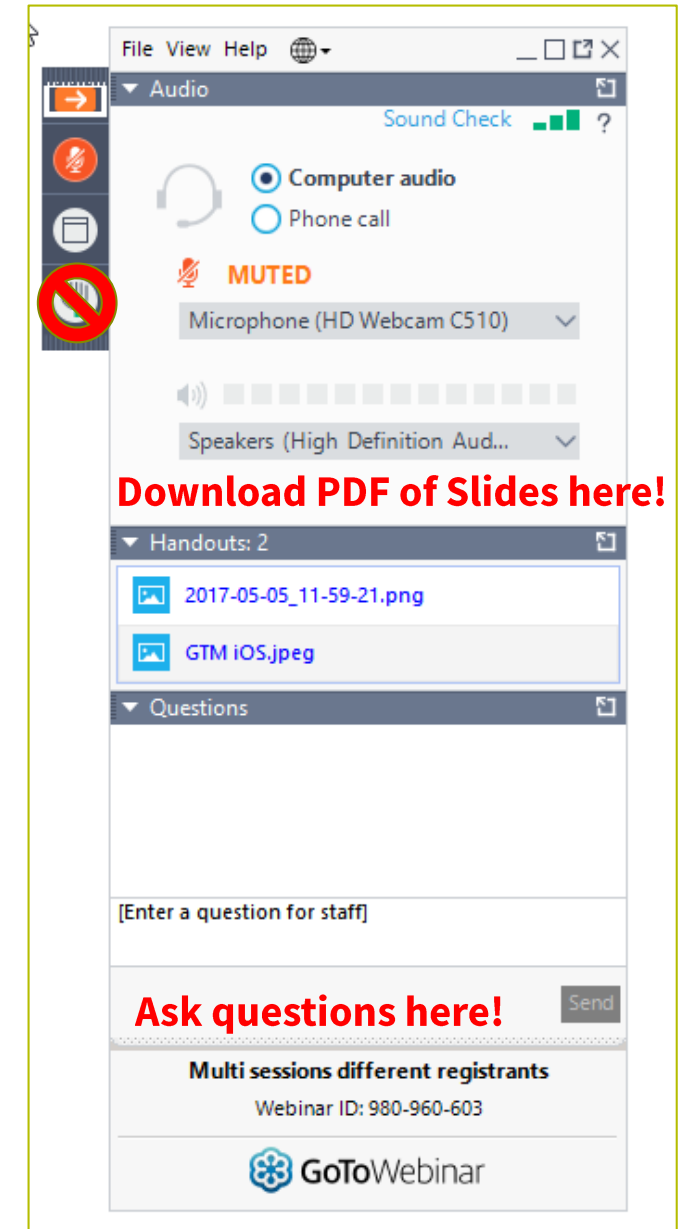
August 11, 2021



Universal Service
Administrative Co.

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



Linnita Hosten

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Linnita develops external communications and creates content about Lifeline systems and program changes

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Delante develops internal and external communications

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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



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: 1024 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, 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](https://www.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


Lifeline National Verifier


English | Español **Consumer Sign In**

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): This section requires the applicant to provide their full legal name (First, Middle, Last), phone number, date of birth, email address, and the last 4 digits of their Social Security Number (SSN). It also includes a checkbox for Tribal Lands.
- Section 2 (continued)** (Page 4 of 8): This section continues the information gathering, asking for the applicant's home address (Street Number and Name, Apt., Unit, etc., City, State, Zip Code), whether it is a temporary address, and if they live on Tribal Lands. It also includes a checkbox for qualifying through a child or dependent in the household and asks for the full legal name and date of birth of the child or dependent.

The forms are branded with the FCC logo and the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) logo. The footer of the forms includes the text: "Universal Service Administrative Company | www.lifelinesupport.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 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

Example: 12345

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

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

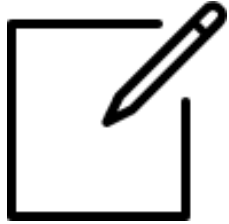
Poll

Questions?

Thank You!



Take Our Survey



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



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