

Helping Consumers Apply for Lifeline

Consumer Advocate Training

September 13, 2023



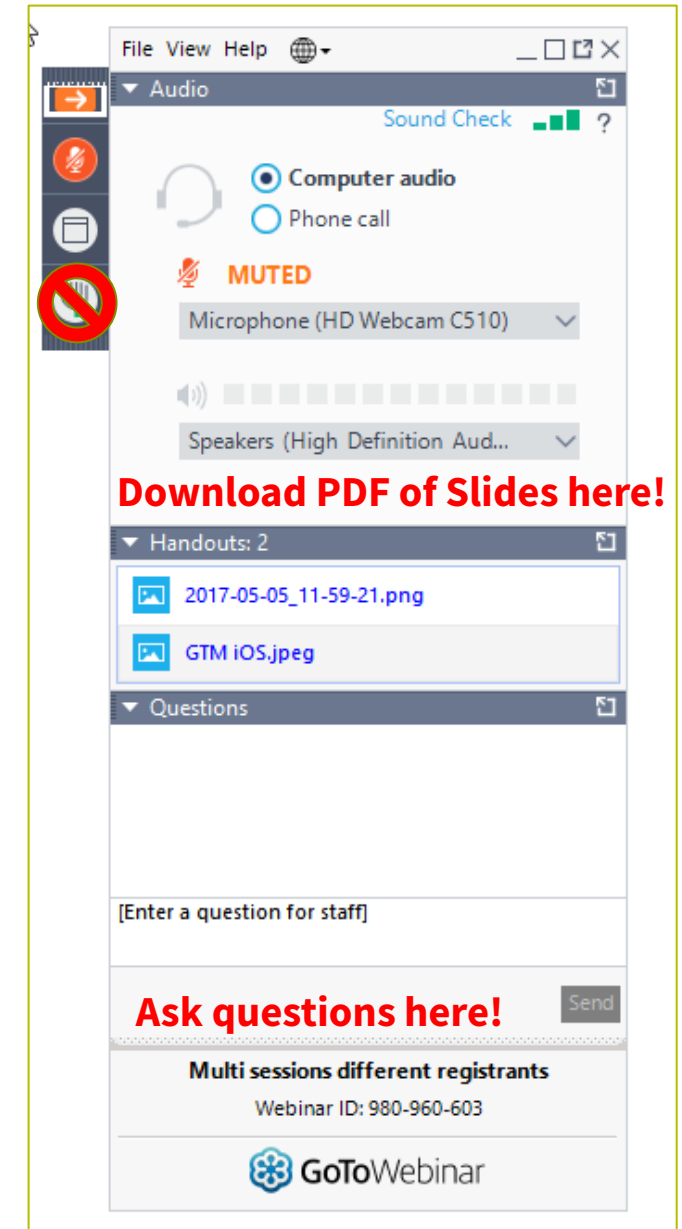
Universal Service
Administrative Co.

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 Lead Trainer



Linnita Hosten

Senior Communications Specialist | Lifeline

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

Meet Our Team



Delante Cherry

Communications Specialist
| Lifeline

Delante develops internal and external communications.



Winta Woldu

Communications Specialist
| Lifeline

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

Agenda

- Program Updates
- Lifeline Program Overview
- Lifeline Application
 - How to Apply
 - Resolving Application Errors
- Resources
- Q&A

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.

Program Update

Program Updates

FCC Response to Hawaii Wildfires

On [August 25, 2023](#), the Federal Communications Commission adopted Order [23-67A1](#) to temporarily and on a limited basis waive the Lifeline eligibility requirements in section 54.409(a)-(b) to allow consumers participating in [FEMA's Individuals and Households Program \(IHP\)](#), as a result of the Hawaii wildfires, to apply for and enroll in the Lifeline program. New enrollments are permitted through February 25, 2024.

On September 5, 2023, USAC released updates to the National Verifier service provider portal, consumer portal, and Eligibility Check API to ensure that qualifying consumers who are participating in IHP can submit appropriate documentation to apply for Lifeline consistent with the Commission's waiver.

Program Updates

NV Service Provider and Consumer Portal Changes

Qualifying Program Updates

Eligible consumers participating in IHP can now select *FEMA's Individuals and Households Program (IHP) due to Hawaii Wildfires* as their qualifying program when completing the Lifeline application.

Tell Us Which Program You Are In

To qualify for Lifeline, we need to know which government assistance program you are in.

Are you in any of these?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) or Food Stamps ?
- ☐ Medicaid
- ☐ Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- ☐ Federal Public Housing Assistance
- ☐ Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit Programs
- ☐ Tribal Specific Program (only choose if you live on Tribal lands)
- ☐ FEMA's Individuals and Households Program (IHP) due to Hawaii Wildfires ?
- ☐ I don't participate in one of these programs, I want to qualify through my income
- ☐ I am not in any of these, but my child or dependent is in one of these programs

You may be asked to submit documents about the program(s) you select.

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You may be able to participate in the Lifeline program if you have been impacted by the Hawaii wildfires (DR-4724-HI).

Program Updates

NV Service Provider and Consumer Portal Changes

Proof of Eligibility Updates

If USAC is unable to automatically confirm the consumer's eligibility, the applicant will be asked to select the program they qualify through before uploading proof of eligibility.

This page has been updated so affected consumers can now select *FEMA's Individuals and Households Program (IHP) due to Hawaii Wildfires* before getting to a unique document upload page.

We Could Not Confirm That You Are in One of These Programs

To qualify for Lifeline, you need to give us more information.

Which program do you want to qualify through?

You will need to show proof that you are in the program you choose.

Choose one.

- ☐ SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) or Food Stamps [?](#)
- ☐ Medicaid
- ☐ Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- ☐ Federal Public Housing Assistance
- ☐ Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit Programs
- ☐ Tribal Specific Program (only choose if you live on Tribal lands)
- ☐ FEMA's Individuals and Households Program (IHP) due to Hawaii Wildfires [?](#)
- ☐ I don't participate in one of these programs, I want to qualify through my income.
- ☐ I am not in any of these, but my child or dependent is in one of these programs. [?](#)

You will have until 10/15/2023 to provide more documents so we can determine whether you qualify for Lifeline. If we don't receive this information by then, you will need to come back to this site and fill this form out again.

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Program Updates

NV Service Provider and Consumer Portal Changes

Proof of IHP

Consumers will see a new page when providing documentation to confirm their participation in IHP.

This new document upload page helps affected consumers understand the document requirements and examples of acceptable documentation, how to upload a document, and what to do if the consumer does not have proof.

Share proof that you are in FEMA's Individuals and Households Program (IHP)

Your document must include:

1. Your name
2. The name of the program
3. Approval for you to receive assistance because of the Hawaii wildfires

Here are common examples:

- A FEMA award notice (copy of letter or email accepted)
- Assistance approval from [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.disasterassistance.gov) (screenshot accepted)

How to add your photo or scanned copy

Please attach a picture or scanned copy of your document. Files must be less than 10 MB and one of the following file types: jpg, jpeg, png, pdf, or gif.

- Make sure your image is not blurry
- Make sure your document is not cut off and we can see all four sides
- Make sure you have good lighting

Choose a file

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Program Updates

National Verifier Legacy URLs

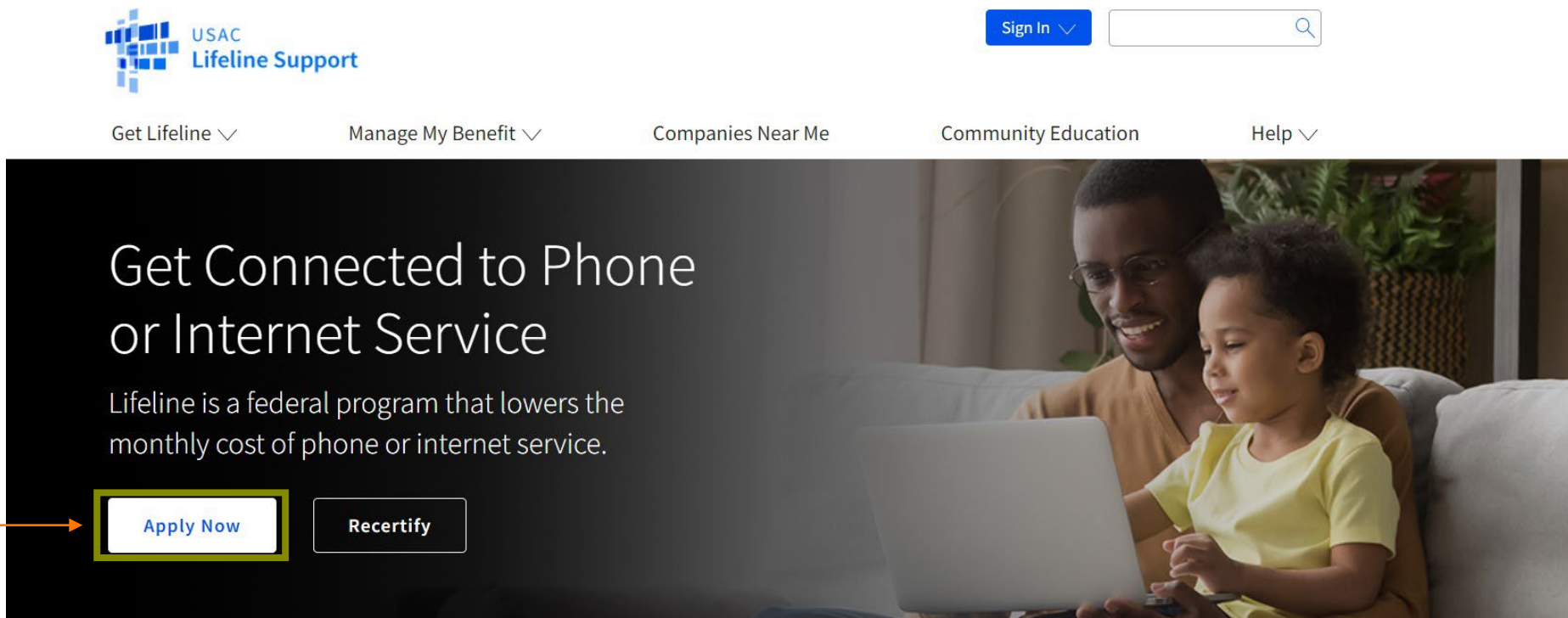
On May 4, 2023, USAC transitioned the National Verifier portal from nv.fcc.gov to GetInternet.gov.

At the end of August, USAC retired legacy National Verifier URLs for the Lifeline Program and Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) online applications.

Program Updates

National Verifier Legacy URLs

- Consumers can access the online application for the Lifeline program directly at LifelineSupport.org using the “Apply Now” button.



Lifeline Program Overview

Lifeline Program Overview

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 FCC as the permanent administrator of the USF and its four programs. The FCC develops policies and regulations for the Lifeline program and provides oversight of USAC.



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

- **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**

- State and federal agencies responsible for Lifeline-qualifying government programs.
- Educate consumers about Lifeline.
- Establish database connections with USAC to facilitate data sharing.

Consumer Advocates

- Nonprofits, shelters, foodbanks, and community-based organizations.
- 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.
- **Link Up:** 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.

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: The basic Lifeline support of \$5.25 remains available to eligible consumers who subscribe to voice-only service through at least December 1, 2024

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
 - FEMA's Individuals and Households Program (IHP)

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

How to Apply



- Online – Visit lifelinesupport.org and select *Apply Now*.



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



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

Lifeline Application

How to Apply Online

[Get Lifeline](#) ▾[Manage My Benefit](#) ▾[Companies Near Me](#)[Community Education](#)[Help](#) ▾

Returning consumers
sign in below.

[Sign In](#) ▾

Get Connected to Phone or Internet Service

Lifeline is a federal program that lowers the
monthly cost of phone or internet service.

[Apply Now](#)[Recertify](#)

New consumers start by selecting
"Apply Now."

Lifeline Application



How to 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.

FCC FORM 5629

**Lifeline Program
Application Form**

OMB APPROVAL EDITION 3060-0819

Universal Service
Administrative Co.

1. About Lifeline

Lifeline is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program that provides a monthly phone or internet service discount for qualifying low-income consumers.

Rules

If you qualify, your household can receive a monthly Lifeline benefit of up to \$9.25 to lower the costs of phone or internet service and up to \$34.25 for qualifying households on Tribal lands.

- If you get Lifeline for phone service, you can get the benefit for one mobile phone or one home phone, but not both.
- If you get Lifeline for internet service, you can get the benefit for your mobile phone or your home connection, but not both.
- If you get Lifeline for bundled phone and internet service, you can get the benefit for your mobile phone bundled service or your home bundled service, but not both.

Your household cannot get Lifeline from more than one phone or internet company. You are only allowed to get one Lifeline benefit per household, **not per person**.

What is a household?

A household is a group of people who live together and share income and expenses (even if they are not related to each other). Complete the Lifeline household worksheet to determine if more than one qualifying household is located at your address. If more than one person in your household participates in Lifeline, you are breaking the FCC's rules and will lose your benefit.

Do not give your benefit to another person

Lifeline is non-transferable. You cannot give your Lifeline benefit to another person, even if they qualify.

Be honest on this form

You must give accurate and true information on this form and on all Lifeline-related forms or questionnaires. If you give false or fraudulent information, you will lose your Lifeline benefit (i.e., de-enrollment or being barred from the program) and the United States government can take legal actions against you. This may include (but is not limited to) fines or imprisonment.

You may need to show other documents

If the Lifeline Program Administrator is not able to validate that you or someone in your household qualify by checking available electronic resources (including eligibility databases for the FCC's government agency partners), you may need to provide additional documents. For example, you may need to provide an official document that proves your participation in a qualifying government assistance program, your income, or your identity. Please include copies of your proof documentation when you submit your application to speed up processing time.

Apply

To apply for a Lifeline benefit, fill out the required sections of this form, initial every agreement statement, and sign on page 6. You can also apply online at nv.fcc.gov for fastest processing.

Mail the form to this address:

**USAC
Lifeline Support Center
P.O. Box 9100
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18773**

Lifeline Application

How to 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

Not all offer the Lifeline discount.

To find a Lifeline provider in your area, use the Companies Near Me tool. You can search using your zip code or your city and state. If you would like to see the full list of options, click on “See the list of companies in your state” underneath the search results.

Search Providers

Note: The search results may not show every company that is near you. A company may still offer Lifeline even if it is not on this list. Please ask the service provider if they offer Lifeline in your area.

More About the Data

The Companies Near Me tool is powered by USAC’s Open Data initiative. This initiative allows the public to explore and analyze information submitted by universal service program participants.

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.

Your Contact Information

What is your email address?
We will use your email to send you important reminders and information about your application and enrollment.

☒ I want to provide an alternate email.

What is your alternate email address? (Optional)
Use this option for a secondary contact person such as a caseworker or family member. Make sure the person whose email address is provided is aware. You agree that any communications sent to your primary email will also be sent to this alternate email.

What is your phone number? (Optional)

By providing a phone number, you consent to letting USAC contact you at that phone number via artificial or prerecorded voice message or text for important reminders and updates about your Lifeline or ACP benefit. For text messages, message and data rates may apply. Text STOP to end messages.

☒ I have a mailing address that is different than my home address.

Mailing 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"/>

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.
 - **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)** – verifies participation in Medicaid.
 - **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** – verifies participation in SNAP.
 - **United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)** – verifies participation in VA.
 - **Several automated state connections**
- If USAC is unable to verify a consumer's eligibility through its automated database check, USAC will notify the consumer that more documentation is needed, and upon receipt of the documentation, will perform a manual review to determine the consumer's eligibility.

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.

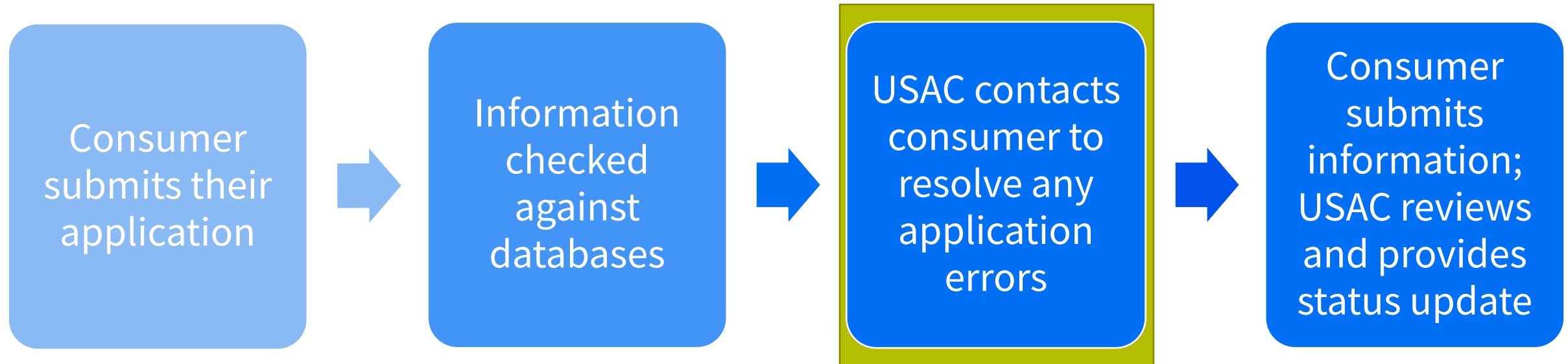


- Consumers can **check their application status** or **enrollment status** online through the consumer portal, by contacting the Lifeline Support Center, or by checking with their service provider through whom they initially submitted their application.

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

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

Resolving Application Errors

Documentation Submission Follow Up



- USAC will contact the consumer via mail or online (based on how they applied) to provide application status updates.
- 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

How does USAC notify the consumer if more information is needed?

Online	Mail (Paper Applications)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">A screen will populate asking the consumer to provide additional information to qualify for Lifeline.	<p>Consumers will receive a letter in the mail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Explaining what information is needed to qualify for LifelineThe cover sheetA pre-paid envelope

Resolving Application Errors

Notification and Submission Process

How to submit additional information?

Online	Mail (Paper Applications)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Click the “upload” button on the screen and attach any documentation that meets the requirements or complete the prompts that appear.	<p>In the pre-paid envelope, the consumer should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Send copies of the requested documents/complete form if requested.Complete and send the cover sheet.

Resolving Application Errors

Notification and Submission Process

Manual review timeline (conducted by USAC Lifeline Support Center)

Online	Mail (Paper Applications)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reviewed in order of receipt, typically within minutes if submitted during business hours (9 a.m. – 9 p.m. ET).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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?

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

Consumer Educational Material



Hawaii Wildfires Special Relief Flyer – [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 provide assistance in English and Spanish.
 - USAC offers a translation services vendor to provide assistance in an additional 200 languages where needed.

Resources

Lifeline Program Team

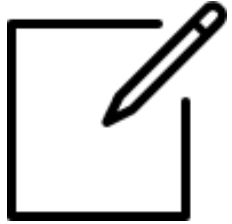
- Service providers, state and federal partners, consumer advocates, and Tribal partners who need assistance beyond helping consumers with the application process should **email** LifelineProgram@usac.org to connect with a program analyst about:
 - **Technical issues** or system questions
 - **Processes,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

Questions?

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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