



Lifeline Program Compliance

Lifeline Program

September 9, 2026

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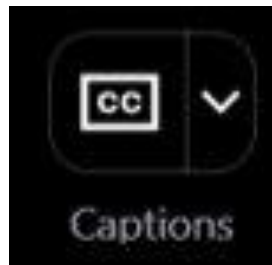
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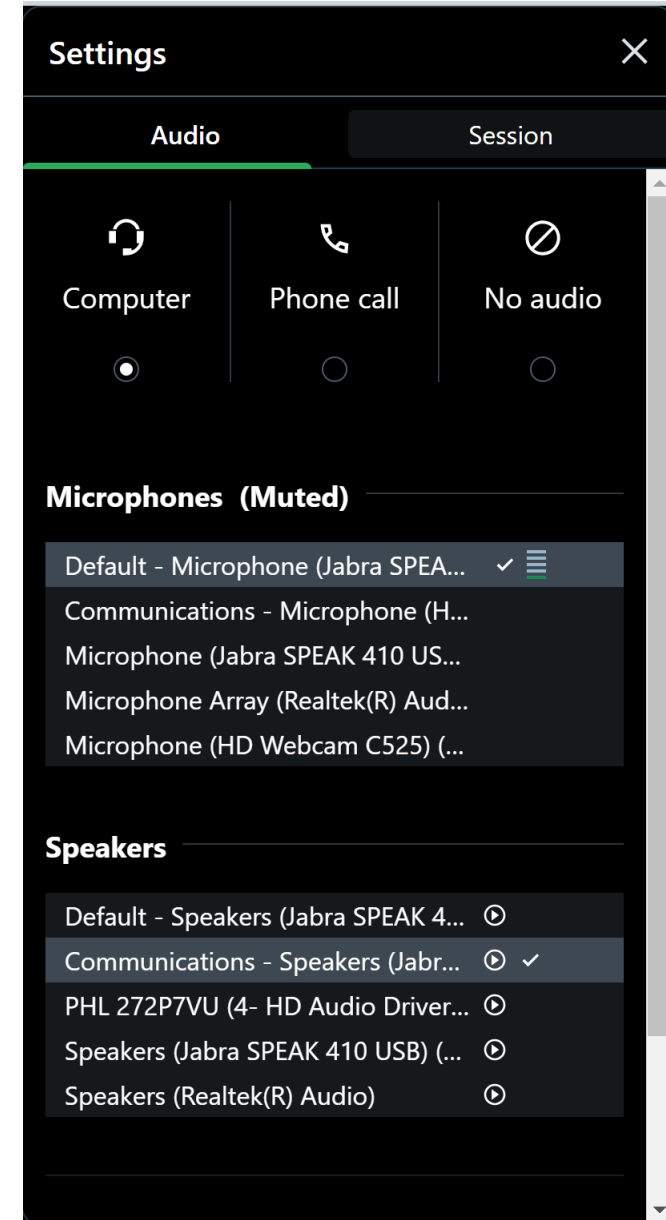


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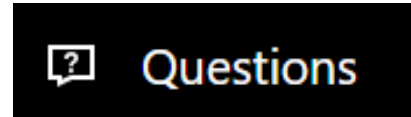
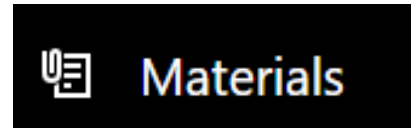
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Questions

×

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Meet Our Team

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Agenda

- Announcements
- Overview
- Lifeline Program Rules
- Common Audit Findings
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Resources

Relief to Lifeline Participants Affected by Bavi Weather Events

- On July 8, 2026, the Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released an [Order](#) that temporarily waives the non-usage, de-enrollment for non-usage, and recertification requirements under the Lifeline rules for participants located in the areas affected by Super Typhoon Bavi and its immediate aftermath in Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (“Affected Disaster Areas”).
- The waiver period under this Order ran through August 31, 2026.
- Subscribers residing in the Affected Disaster Areas and who are subject to the non-usage rule, as of September 1, 2026, will have 30 days to use their Lifeline service. If the subscriber does not use their service during the 30-day period, the 15-day notice period will begin on October 1, 2026, and end on October 15, 2026.
- See the [July 9, 2026](#), bulletin for more information.

Overview

USAC Overview

- The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) is an independent, not-for-profit organization designated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as the administrator of the Universal Service Fund (USF) and its four programs.
 - The USF aims to ensure that all people in the United States have access to quality, affordable connectivity service.
 - The FCC develops policies and regulations for all four programs, including Lifeline, and provides guidance to USAC.
 - USAC administers all programs, including Lifeline, and educates stakeholders on processes, systems, and rules and requirements.



Lifeline Program

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



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.



High Cost Program

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

Lifeline Overview

The Lifeline program is a federal benefit program that helps low-income households pay for phone or internet service.

- Eligible households can receive:

\$9.25 Standard Discount

Up to \$9.25/month discount for internet or bundled services or up to \$5.25/month for phone service that meets the [minimum service standards](#).

\$34.25 Tribal Discount

Up to \$34.25/month discount for households on [qualifying Tribal lands](#).

\$100 Link Up Discount

A one-time discount of up to \$100 off the initial set up fees at addresses on qualifying Tribal lands receiving voice service from certain service providers.

\$9.25 Survivor Benefit

Monthly discount of up to \$9.25 for up to six months on phone, internet, or bundled service for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or related crimes.

- The Lifeline benefit is limited to one monthly service discount per household.

USAC Assessments and Reviews Overview

- Lifeline program assessments include:
 - Payment Quality Assurance ([PQA](#)) in which USAC provides the FCC with information about improper payments to program beneficiaries.
- Lifeline program reviews include:
 - Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) reviews – an ongoing effort to combat fraud, waste, and abuse and to ensure Lifeline participants adhere to program rules by conducting comprehensive risk-focused reviews.

Lifeline Program Rules

Lifeline Program Rules

- Lifeline program requirements are primarily based on the FCC rules in [47 C.F.R. Sections 54.400-423](#).
- The FCC also releases [Orders](#) to clarify program requirements.
- As the Lifeline administrator, USAC is responsible for the following:
 - Confirming consumer eligibility
 - Recertifying subscribers
 - Managing the Lifeline Support Center
 - Educating stakeholders on processes, systems, rules, and requirements

Role of a Lifeline Service Provider

- Service providers are responsible for complying with [program rules](#), including:
 - Registering for Representative IDs in the [Representative Accountability Database \(RAD\)](#) to perform applicable transactions.
 - Ensuring Lifeline eligible consumers have qualified through the [National Verifier](#) where applicable.
 - Enrolling Lifeline qualified consumers in the [National Lifeline Accountability Database \(NLAD\)](#), ensuring that enrolled subscribers are not currently enrolled with another service provider, and keeping NLAD up-to-date.
 - Submitting claims to receive reimbursement in the [Lifeline Claims System \(LCS\)](#).
 - Preparing forms and annual filings ([FCC Form 555](#) and [FCC Form 481](#)).

Role of a Lifeline Service Provider (cont.)

- Providing Lifeline subscribers with Lifeline-supported services in their designated service area that meet Lifeline's minimum service standards.
- Advertising Lifeline to their consumers.
- Providing USAC and auditors with correct information and documentation in response to program integrity, Payment Quality Assurance (PQA) assessments, and audit requests.
- Tracking Lifeline subscriber's usage.
- De-enrolling ineligible consumers.
- Documenting compliance with FCC and state requirements.
- Avoiding distributing financial incentives to enrollment representatives (including third-party agents).

Questions?

Common Audit Findings

Subscribers Outside of Designated Service Area

Providers receiving reimbursement for subscribers who reside outside the service area designated to offer Lifeline ([47 C.F.R. § 54.201\(b\)](#)).

Example

Subscriber addresses fall outside of the designated service area for their respective Study Area Code (SAC).

Prevention

Providers should ensure they have adequate processes in place to ensure claimed support is only for eligible subscribers who reside within designated service areas.

Lack of Documentation – Usage

Inadequate documentation or data retention procedures to ensure the proper retention of subscriber usage records ([47 C.F.R. § 54.417\(a\)](#)).

Example

- A provider's usage records are summarized on a monthly level but unable to retrieve usage records on a daily level.
- A provider does not have any usage records for a subscriber they have claimed.

Prevention

Service providers must implement an adequate system to document qualifying usage activities for subscribers who are eligible to be claimed for Lifeline support.

Lack of Documentation – Usage (cont.)

Example

- A provider was unable to provide sufficient documentation demonstrating that subscribers met the applicable qualifying usage requirements before claiming in the Lifeline Claims systems (LCS).
- The provider claimed Lifeline support for subscribers but could not provide qualifying usage records during the applicable period.

Prevention

Service providers should maintain adequate documentation and internal controls to verify that subscribers claimed for Lifeline support have satisfied applicable qualifying usage requirements.

Improper – Non-Usage

Providers claiming reimbursement for subscribers who have not cured their non-usage during their 15-day cure period. Subscribers in the cure period are not eligible for claim. (See [47 C.F.R. § 54.407\(c\)](#)) and the May 23, 2024 [Public Notice](#)).

Example

A subscriber's last qualifying usage activity is listed 31 to 44 days prior to the support claim.

Prevention

Service providers must have controls to identify subscribers in their cure period who have not completed qualifying usage and exclude those subscribers from their claims.

Improper Pass-Through of Lifeline Support

The amount disbursed by the Lifeline program to a service provider exceeds the amount passed through to subscribers (See [47 C.F.R. § 54.403\(a\)](#)) and the May 23, 2024 [Public Notice](#)).

Example

- A service provider submits a claim in LCS that exceeds the amount passed through to the subscriber.

Prevention

Providers should ensure procedures are in place to verify that it passes through the accurate amount of Lifeline program support to its eligible Lifeline subscribers.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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Question

How far back can service providers be audited?

Answer

Service providers can be audited for any year for which the provider received reimbursement for offering lifeline-supported services to eligible subscribers.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Question

If a consumer contacts Lifeline directly to apply for the Lifeline benefit, how would a service provider keep documentation showing the consumer is approved?

Answer

Service providers must maintain documentation for processes they own. Documentation maintained by the National Verifier does not need to be separately maintained by the provider. However, service providers remain responsible for enrollment activities, including suspicious documentation trends linked to them.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Question

If a consumer was not required to show proof of eligibility when applying in the National Verifier, does the service provider still need to keep eligibility documentation?

Answer

Documentation needs to be maintained by service providers for processes that are owned by the service provider. If the service provider did not collect documentation to demonstrate program eligibility (if eligibility was determined by National Verifier), it is not the service provider's responsibility to maintain the eligibility documentation.

Questions?

Resources

Resources

- To learn more about Lifeline program rules and how to comply, visit the following webpages:
 - [Get Started](#)
 - [Common Audit Findings](#)
 - [Beneficiary and Contributor Audit Program \(BCAP\)](#)
 - [Rules and Requirements](#)
 - [Orders](#)
- Contact auditinquiry@usac.org to connect with USAC's audit team or LifelineProgram@usac.org for general program questions.

October Webinar

Register for the next Lifeline webinar.

- **Date:** October 14, 2026
- **Time:** 3 p.m. ET – 4 p.m. ET
- **Topic:** How to Apply to Lifeline

Webinars

Join us to learn about Lifeline program updates, including Lifeline program rules and orders, guidance about compliance and filings, the National Verifier (NV), and the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD).

[Sign up](#) for the Lifeline program newsletter to receive webinar announcements via email.

Upcoming Trainings

How to Apply for Lifeline



📅 October 14, 2026 ⌚ 03:00 pm – 04:00 pm ET

Intended Audience: Consumers & Consumer Advocates

This webinar provides consumers and consumer advocates with step-by-step guidance on how to apply for the Lifeline benefit.

Additional topics covered include:

- Guidance on submitting additional documentation to complete an application, if required
- An overview of consumer education materials available to support the application process

Register

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