How to Apply for Lifeline via Mail

Tribal Training

December 7, 2023
DISCLAIMER

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Housekeeping

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- 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 webinar panel

Please indicate if you are a Tribal leader as we will answer Tribal leader questions first.
Meet Our Team

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

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

...be trained in:

- The basic functions of the Lifeline program
- How to apply to the Lifeline program via mail using the National Verifier

...be able to:

- Assist consumers with applying for the Lifeline program
Agenda

• Program Updates
• Lifeline Program Refresher
• Lifeline Application Overview
  • Submit a Paper Application
  • Resolving Address Application Errors
• Resources
Program Updates
Program Updates
Voice-Only Phase-Out and Minimum Service Standards

• On July 7, the Bureau extended the waiver pausing both the phase-out of Lifeline support for voice-only services and the increase in Lifeline minimum service standards for mobile broadband data capacity for one additional year, until at least December 1, 2024
  • The basic Lifeline support of $5.25 remains available to eligible consumers who subscribe to voice-only service until at least December 1, 2024
  • The minimum service standard for mobile broadband data capacity will remain at 4.5 GB per month until at least December 1, 2024
Lifeline Program Refresher
USAC Overview

• The Universal Service Fund (USF): exists to ensure that all people in the United States have access to quality, affordable connectivity service

• The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) develops policies and regulations for the Lifeline program and provides oversight of the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)

• USAC administers the Lifeline program and educates stakeholders on processes, systems, and requirements

**USAC Administered Programs:**

- **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 Benefit**

- Eligible program participants can receive a discount of up to $9.25 per month, for qualifying fixed or mobile services
  - Can be applied to broadband or bundled voice and broadband services that meet the minimum service standards
- Eligible participants can receive up to $5.25 for voice-only services
- Program participants who live on qualifying Tribal lands can receive enhanced support of up to an additional $25 per month
  - Can receive up to $34.25 per month for broadband service or up to $30.25 for voice-only service
- **Link Up**: a Tribal lands one-time benefit up to $100 for initial set up fees at residences in specific areas
Tribal Partnerships

• Tribal partners include:
  • Tribal governments
  • Tribal agencies
  • Nonprofits serving Tribal communities

• Tribal partners collaborate with USAC to educate consumers about Lifeline and assist eligible consumers with Lifeline program processes.
NV System Overview
National Verifier (NV) Overview

- The NV is the centralized application system that makes eligibility determinations for the Lifeline program
  - Use of the NV is required in all 56 states and territories to determine eligibility (with the exception of the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD) opt-out states: Texas, Oregon, and California, where the NV monitors the state administrator Lifeline eligibility verification process)
- After qualifying for Lifeline, service providers must enter them in NLAD to enroll them in the Lifeline program
Application Process

**Option 1:** Apply Online
- The consumer visits [LifelineSupport.org](http://LifelineSupport.org) from any computer or mobile device to complete the electronic application and upload any required documentation

**Option 2:** Apply by Mail
- The consumer fills out a [Lifeline Application Form (Spanish version)](http://LifelineApplicationForm-Spanish)
- The consumer mails the application and supporting documentation to the Lifeline Support Center
- Service providers may assist consumers with the paper application and mail it on the consumer’s behalf

**Option 3:** Apply with a Service Provider
- The consumer may apply with the assistance of a service provider
- Service providers may submit an online application on the consumer’s behalf (only with the consumer’s consent) using the [NV service provider portal](http://NVServiceProviderPortal)
  - This is an in-person interaction, where the service provider asks the consumer questions in an interview style approach.
  - The consumer must sign and certify the application
- Consumers may also apply through the service provider’s website, if the provider has elected to use the [NV API](http://NVAPI)
Lifeline Program Review

1. Consumer qualifies for Lifeline
2. Consumer signs up with service provider
3. USAC reimburses Lifeline service provider for service provided to the consumer
Questions?
How To Apply for Lifeline via Mail
Obtaining the Paper Application

• Visit LifelineSupport.org to download and print a copy; or

• Contact USAC’s Lifeline Support Center to request a paper application in the mail
  • Email: LifelineSupport@usac.org
  • Call: (800) 234-9473
Completing Paper Application

• Consumers must complete all sections of the application (excluding page 7)
• Write clearly, using black ink and capital letters
• Consumers enter the same information they would include on the online application
Paper Application: Page One

- Page one is informational and contains:
  - An overview of the Lifeline program and Lifeline program rules
  - More about the application process
Paper Application: Page Two

• Page two asks for:
  • First and last legal name
  • Phone number (if available)
  • Date of birth
  • Email address (if available)
  • The last four digits of the Social Security Number or Tribal Identification Number
  • Method consumer wants USAC to use to contact them
Paper Application: Page Three

- Page three asks for:
  - Home address (physical address)
  - If the home address is temporary
  - If the consumer lives on Tribal lands
  - Mailing address (if it’s different than the home address)
Paper Application: Page Four

- Page four asks for:
  - Dependent’s information if the consumer qualifies for Lifeline through a dependent

- If qualifying through themselves, the consumer can leave page four blank
Paper Application: Page Five

• Page five asks for how the consumer qualifies for Lifeline, either through participation in government programs or through income

• Check all that apply
Paper Application: Page Six

- Page six asks that consumers:
  - Read each statement carefully
  - Write their first and last initial next to each statement
  - Sign and date the application

- Consumer cannot use checkmarks or X’s here
Paper Application: Page Seven and Eight

• Page Seven:
  • Consumers may leave this page blank if completing the application by themselves
  • Lifeline companies are required to fill out page seven if they are helping the consumer complete the application
• Page eight:
  • Includes information about the federal application
Submit Documentation to Streamline

- USAC recommends that consumers submit copies of the following documentation along with their application to reduce processing time:
  - Lifeline Household Worksheet
  - Proof of eligibility, identity, or address
Examples of Program Eligibility Documentation

• Documentation to verify the consumer’s eligibility through a government program must include:
  • Their name, or the name of the benefit qualifying person
  • The name of the Lifeline-qualifying program, such as SNAP
  • The name of the government or Tribal agency that issued the document
  • An issue date within the last 12 months or a future expiration date that aligns with the benefit period
• The documentation typically cannot be expired or from a period in the past
Examples of Income Eligibility Documentation

• Documentation to verify the consumer’s **eligibility through income** must typically:
  • Cover a full year of income OR
  • The consumer must submit the same type of documentation covering three consecutive months of income within the previous 12 months
• USAC recommends that consumers include their **household size on income documentation**
Examples of Identity Documentation

• Documentation to verify the consumer’s **identity** should include:
  • A copy of an official, unexpired document with the consumer’s first name, last name, and last four digits of the Social Security Number or Tribal Identification Number

• A copy of an official, unexpired document with their first name, last name, and date of birth (e.g., birth certificate, driver’s license, state or Tribal ID)
Examples of Address Documentation

- Documentation to verify the consumer’s **address** should include:
  - A map that shows the consumer’s physical address or location, including, latitude and longitude coordinates, which is an important option for applicants living in areas with addressing obstacles
  - Official document that shows the consumer’s first name, last name, and address such as a Driver’s License, valid government, state, or Tribal ID, utility bill excluding wireless phone bills (within last 30 days), W-2 or tax return, or mortgage or lease

**NOTE:** To qualify for the enhanced Lifeline benefit (of up to $25), the consumer’s address must be confirmed by USAC to be located on Tribal lands
Completed Application

• Mail completed applications and proof documentation to:

  Universal Service Administrative Company
  Lifeline Support Center
  PO Box 9100
  Wilkes-Barre, PA 18773
Application Timeline and Contact from USAC

• After USAC’s Lifeline Support Center reviews the application, the consumer will receive a letter from USAC letting them know the status of their application
  • Consumers should receive eligibility decisions within 7 and 10 business days
  • Consumers can call the Lifeline Support Center to check their application status at (800) 234-9473
• If an error is discovered or additional information is required while processing the application, we will notify the consumer by mail
Sign Up with a Lifeline Company

• Once the consumer receives a letter from USAC letting them know that they qualify for the Lifeline program, they should contact a Lifeline company to get signed up.

• Find Lifeline companies using Lifeline’s Companies Near Me tool available from LifelineSupport.org

Lifeline Program Application Notice
ED-1001
APPLICATION_ID
[LETTER_DATE]

FIRST_NAME LAST_NAME
ADDRESS
CITY STATE ZIP_CODE

You Qualify for Lifeline! It’s Time to Sign Up.

Dear FIRST_NAME LAST_NAME,

Your Lifeline application is approved! If you haven’t already done so, the next step is to sign up with a participating phone or internet company in the next 90 days from your application.

If you do not sign up in the next 90 days, you will need to reapply for Lifeline.

How to Sign Up
Companies Near Me Tool

- Consumers can type in their zip code or city and state to find a list of Lifeline companies

- They must sign up with a Lifeline company within **90 days** of completing the application
Poll
Questions?
Resolving Address Application Errors via Mail
When Address Errors Occur

- A consumer will receive an address error when USAC cannot verify the consumer’s address against USPS's Address Matching System (AMS)
  - This often occurs because a consumer submits a descriptive address or lives at an address that is not yet recognized by the USPS
  - The consumer can submit information that verifies where they live
Verify Address via Mail

• **Option 1**: If a consumer has access to the internet but does not want to submit an online application, USAC recommends that they use a mapping tool (e.g., Google maps) to drop a pin where they live
  • Take a screenshot of the mapping tool (include the dropped pin and the consumer’s coordinates) and print it
• Consumers must mail this information and the completed cover sheet to USAC’s Lifeline Support Center within 45 days of initially submitting their application
Verify Address via Mail

• **Option 2:** Consumer uses a map from their community (e.g., from a gas station, phone or internet company, or Tribal government)
  • The consumer must circle their home
  • If coordinates are known, the consumer should write them on the map
• Consumers must mail this information and the completed cover sheet to USAC’s Lifeline Support Center within 45 days of initially submitting their application
Verify Address via Mail

- **Option 3**: Consumer draws a map
- This map should include crossroads, identifiable landmarks, and distances
- If coordinates are known, the consumer should write them on the map
- Consumers must mail this information and the completed cover sheet to USAC’s Lifeline Support Center within 45 days of initially submitting their application
Tips to Confirm Address through Mail

- USAC needs a way to obtain the consumer’s coordinates to verify they are eligible for the enhanced Tribal benefit
  - Options 1 – 3 allow USAC to do so, even if the consumer does not include the coordinates on their submission
  - If the consumer does not include coordinates, it may take longer for USAC to verify the consumer’s address
- If a consumer applies through the mail with a descriptive address, they should include one of these options with the application submission to reduce processing time
Resources
Lifeline Tribal Webinars

• Review previous Tribal training slides:
  • Tribal Q1 2023 Webinar: Lifeline 101
  • Tribal Q2 Webinar: How to Resolve Application Errors
  • Tribal Q3 Webinar: How to Apply for Lifeline
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

• More information can be found on the National Verifier section of our website:
  • NV Maintenance Schedule

• Contact LifelineProgram@usac.org for technical questions, assistance, and general NV inquiries.
Resources
Consumer Educational Material

- How to Apply Flyer
- How to Apply [Spanish] Flyer
- Manage Your Benefit Flyer
- Manage Your Benefit [Spanish] Flyer
- Tribal Flyer
- Consumer Toolkit
- Tribal Toolkit
Resources
USAC Tribal Liaison

For Tribal Partners

• If you do not know where to direct your inquiry for any USAC program
  • The USAC Tribal Liaison can help guide you to public resources, call centers, or program teams.
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
Thank You!