Helping Consumers Apply for Lifeline

Presented by HUD and the FCC

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Speakers

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Agenda

• Overview
• Application Process
  • Apply Online: Consumer Portal
  • Apply with Paper Form
• Enhanced Tribal Benefit
• COVID-19 Relief
• How to Get Help
• Live Demo
  • Companies Near Me
  • National Verifier Website
• Q&A
Overview
Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)

• The Universal Service Fund exists to ensure that all people in the United States have access to quality, affordable connectivity services

• 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
Overview
The Mission of Universal Service

USAC works to ensure that all people in the United States have access to connectivity services through these four programs:

• High Cost Program (Connect America Fund)
• Lifeline Program
• Rural Health Care Program
• Schools and Libraries Program (E-Rate)
Overview
Lifeline Program

- Lifeline offers a **monthly discount** on phone or Internet service
- All eligible consumers can receive a discount of up to $9.25 per month
- Consumers who live on qualifying Tribal lands can receive **enhanced support** of up to $34.25 per month
- Out of the seven million households that participate in Lifeline, about 274,000 of those receive enhanced support
Overview
How to Qualify for Lifeline (1/2)

Consumers can qualify for the Lifeline Program by showing that:

- Their income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines, **OR**
- They participate in at least one of the following qualifying government programs:
  - Medicaid
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
  - Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
  - Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit
Overview
How to Qualify for Lifeline (2/2)

Residents of Tribal lands can also qualify for Lifeline by showing participation in one of the following programs:

• 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)
Application Process
Application Process

Consumer completes Lifeline application

Consumer provides supporting documentation for any errors that the application received

Consumer qualifies for Lifeline and chooses Lifeline company

Consumer informs Lifeline company of qualification status to enroll in the program
Application Process
About the National Verifier

- The NV checks a consumer’s Lifeline eligibility
- After eligibility is determined by the NV, a consumer selects a Lifeline-eligible phone or Internet service in order to enroll in the program and receive service
- The map shows all states where the NV has launched

* In Texas, Oregon, and California, the NV relies on existing state eligibility processes
Application Process
Ways to Use the National Verifier

Option 1
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
- The consumer visits CheckLifeline.org from any computer or mobile device to create an account and complete the electronic application
- After the consumer qualifies for Lifeline, the consumer contacts a service provider to enroll

Option 2
Apply with Paper Form
- The consumer fills out the National Verifier Lifeline Application Form
- The consumer mails in their documentation to the Lifeline Support Center or delivers it to their service provider
- After the consumer qualifies for Lifeline, the consumer contacts a service provider to enroll

Option 3
Apply with a Service Provider
- The consumer can find service providers in their area using the Companies Near Me tool on USAC’s website
- The consumer visits a service provider store or website and the service provider will collect the consumer’s information
- After the consumer qualifies for Lifeline, the service provider enrolls the consumer
Application Process

Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Process Overview

1. Visit the National Verifier website and create a user account
2. Log in using their account username and password
3. Select the qualifying program(s) they participate in
4. Review consumer information in the Application Form

5a. Read, initial, and e-sign the certification and consent statements
5b. Follow instructions to resolve errors
6. View the eligibility result and follow directions to enroll in Lifeline

No errors found
Errors found
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Step 1: Create NV Account

CheckLifeline.org

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 query online, you can use a paper form:

Do you need to recertify?
If you already get Lifeline and received a notice that said you need to recertify, use the recertify button.
Recertify to keep Lifeline

Are you a service provider?
If you are a service provider and need to qualify your customer for Lifeline, use the service provider portal.
Sign in as a Service Provider

New consumer starts here

Returning consumer signs in here

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Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Step 1: Create NV Account

Your Information
We will use this information to find out if you qualify for the Lifeline Program.

What is your full legal name?
The name you use on official documents, like your Social Security Card or State ID. Not a nickname.

- First and last name may only consist of letters, hyphens, spaces, and single quotes
- The first name should be the consumer’s legal name, not a nickname
- The last name must be at least 2 characters

What is your date of birth?
Date of birth must be in the MM/DD/YYYY format
Apply Online: Consumer Portal

Step 1: Create NV Account

Consumers experiencing homelessness or consumers whose home doesn’t have a street number/name can input a descriptive address.

All fields must be complete before pressing “Next”.
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Step 1: Create NV Account

The consumer will create their username and password and log in to the consumer portal.

Create Your Account
Making an account will let us keep your information safe. It will also let you save it and can come back to it any time.

Choose your username.
Choose something that you can easily remember. If it helps, use your name in some form.

Username

Choose your password.
Make sure it is something you can remember. It has to follow the requirements below.

Password

Password Requirements
1) At least 8 letters or numbers long
2) At least 1 capital letter
3) At least 1 number (0-9)
4) At least 1 special character (!@#$%^&*)

Confirm Password
Type the same password again.

The consumer will see the username and password requirements and they will be notified if:

1) A username is unavailable
2) A username does not meet requirements and/or
3) A password does not meet requirements
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Step 1: Create NV Account

Consumers will then be asked to provide answers to the security questions to help the consumer reset their password and / or username in the future, if necessary.

The consumer selects and provides answers to three security questions.
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Step 1: Create NV Account

Sign In To Your Account

• If a consumer forgets their username or password, they can reset them by clicking these links

• They enter in their email to recover their username or answer security questions to reset their password

Note: Consumers will need to complete a CAPTCHA when they log in
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Step 2: Log in to the Consumer Portal

Welcome Jane Mary Smith
Lifeline is a federal program that lowers the cost of phone or internet services.

My Applications
Here are all your applications from the last 180 days. You can start a new application when your last one expires.

Apply or Transfer Your Service
Complete a new application if you'd like to sign up for Lifeline again or want to transfer your benefits to a different company.

Update Your Address
If you already get Lifeline but have moved recently, update your address here and let your company know as soon as possible.

Find a Company Near Me
Lifeline is a federal benefit. If you are not happy with your Lifeline service, you can move to another phone or Internet company.

Submit new application
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Step 3: Select Qualifying Program(s)

Tell Us Which Program You Are In
To qualify for Lifeline, we need to know which government assistance program you are in.

The consumer should check the box next to **all** the programs that they 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)
- [ ] 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.
Apply Online: Consumer Portal

Step 4: Review the Application Form

Review Your Information

Before we check if you qualify for Lifeline, make sure your information is right.

Double check the information below.

Full Legal Name: Jane Mary Smith
Date of Birth: March 10, 1959
Last 4 Numbers of SSN: 1234
Address: 123 Main Street, Apt 206 Chicago, IL 56789

The information you gave us will be used to check if you qualify for Lifeline. Please confirm that it is okay.

☐ By checking this box you are consenting that all of the information you are providing may be collected, used, shared, and retained for the purposes of applying for and/or receiving the Lifeline program benefit.

The consumer can edit information if needed

The consumer will need to read and check the box for the statement in order to proceed to the next page
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Step 5a: Initial Statements and E-Sign

- A person assisting a consumer cannot initial or enter the e-signature for the consumer.
- The benefit recipient must be the one to enter their initials, even when applying with a benefit qualifying person (BQP).

Agreement
You are almost done qualifying. Please initial next to each statement and sign this form to finish the process.

I understand that it is against the law to lie on this form and agree, under penalty of perjury, to the following statements:

Initial

I (or my dependent or other person in my household) currently get benefits from the government program(s) listed on this form or my annual household income is 125% or less than the Federal Poverty Guidelines (the amount listed in the Federal Poverty Guidelines table on this form).

Your Signature
Type your full legal name (the same as you gave us before) below.

Jane Mary Smith

I understand this is a digital signature, and is the same as if I signed my name with a pen.

Submit
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Step 6: Qualified, Next Steps | Follow Instructions to Enroll

You Qualify for Lifeline

Sign up for Lifeline by Apr 30, 2018 (Based on US Eastern Time)
You have 90 days from today to sign up for Lifeline with a phone or internet company.

How to sign up

1. Choose a company
   Find one using the list of service providers near you.

2. Tell them you qualified for Lifeline online, and ask them to sign you up.

   Bring the following with you:
   • A form of identification (like a driver's license)
   • Your confirmation number: 188-201-2354

3. After they sign you up, you will start getting your phone or internet service.

   If you do not sign up by Apr 30, 2018 (Based on US Eastern Time) you will need to come back to this site and fill this form out again.

The consumer’s “Qualified” eligibility result will expire in 90 days so they must sign up with a service provider by the listed date.
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Step 5b: Resolve Errors

If a consumer receives any of the following errors, they can resolve them by submitting documentation or additional information (the online system will also walk consumers through the process to submit more information):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Document/Proof Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMS (Address Management Service Error)</td>
<td>Address validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplicate Address</td>
<td>Duplicate address flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>Proof of emancipated minor status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPIV (Identity Verification Error)</td>
<td>Proof of identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Eligibility</td>
<td>Proof of program/income eligibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apply Online: Consumer Portal
Step 5b: Resolve Errors - AMS

• If a consumer entered a descriptive address (e.g., consumer experiencing homelessness) or another address that cannot be verified, they will need to provide more information using this mapping tool
• The map will try to locate where the consumer resides based on the information originally entered
  • The latitude and longitude fields will automatically populate
• The consumer can move the pin around to locate where they live
Application Process

Apply with Paper Form
Apply with Paper Form

Required Fields

- 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
Apply with Paper Form
Resolve Errors: AMS

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 (such as Google maps) to drop a pin where they live

- Consumers may take a screenshot of the mapping tool (the image should include the dropped pin and the consumer’s latitude and longitude coordinates) and print it out

Option 2: A consumer may use a map from their community (i.e., from a gas station or if their phone/Internet company or, if applicable, Tribal government)

- The consumer must circle where they live
- If coordinates are known, the consumer should write them on the map
Apply with Paper Form
Resolve Errors: AMS

**Option 3:** Consumers may hand draw a map to show where they live
- This map should include cross roads, identifiable landmarks, and distances
- If coordinates are known, the consumer should write them on the map

**Option 4:** Several other documents are acceptable to resolve an AMS error
USAC strongly recommends that consumers seeking the enhanced Tribal benefit use options 1 - 3
Apply with Paper Form Submission

- Consumers mail completed applications to:
  
  USAC Lifeline Support Center
  P.O. Box 7081
  London, KY 40742

- USAC will send an eligibility decision via mail from the Lifeline Support Center
  
  - If a consumer’s application receives an error and they need to submit more information, the consumer will also be notified via mail

- Consumers should receive eligibility decisions within 7 and 10 days

- Consumers can call the Lifeline Support Center to check their application status at (800) 234-9473
Apply with Paper Form

Tips

• If consumers have access to email, we encourage them to include their email address on their application

• Include copies of eligibility and identity documents as well as the Independent Economic Household (IEH) Worksheet to reduce processing time
  • The IEH Worksheet and information on what documentation is needed to resolve specific errors can be found on LifelineSupport.org
Enhanced Tribal Benefit
Federally Recognized Tribal Lands

Legend:
- State Outline
- County Outline
- Tribal Lands - consumers residing in these areas can receive enhanced support and Link Up, and they can apply using a Tribal form.

Lower 48

AK and HI

For more information about the Lifeline Tribal Enrollment Transparency Initiative visit: www.usac.org/TribalLandsMap


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Eligibility
Tribal Residents

- Do you live on federally-recognized Tribal lands and do you, a child, or dependent participate in any of the following government programs?
  - 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)

- Are you starting service at this address for the first time?
  - If so, you may be eligible for Link Up, a Lifeline benefit for Tribal residents which reimburses consumers up to $100 for starting their Lifeline service with certain carriers
  - You will need to confirm with your Lifeline carrier that they offer Link Up
COVID-19 Relief
COVID-19 Relief

The FCC and USAC have taken action, effective through August 31, 2020, to ensure that consumers have access to the communications services they need during the pandemic:

• **Continued service**: The FCC temporarily waived certain rules to ensure consumers are not involuntarily de-enrolled from the Lifeline Program during the pandemic.

• **More flexibility**: The FCC temporarily adjusted income eligibility documentation requirements to allow people who are recently unemployed to prove Lifeline eligibility.
COVID-19 Relief

• **Additional support**: USAC is temporarily accepting driver’s licenses or state identification cards that have recently expired when needed to complete a Lifeline application.

• **Relief for rural, Tribal consumers**: The FCC temporarily waived its rules so that Lifeline providers may elect to begin providing Lifeline service to consumers living in rural areas on Tribal lands even if those consumers have not yet submitted certain supporting documentation to complete their Lifeline application.

  • Consumers who enroll through this waiver process will have 45 days to provide the required documentation.

  • For more information, visit USAC’s Lifeline [COVID-19 Response](#) page.
How to Get Help
How to Get Help
Consumer Resources

Lifeline Support Center

• (800) 234-9473
• LifelineSupport@usac.org
• 9 a.m.–9 p.m. ET, 7 days a week

LifelineSupport.org

• Videos on the application process
• Information on how to resolve errors
• Specific information for Tribal residents (including information on Tribal Link Up)
• Companies Near Me
How to Get Help
Consumer Resources

Downloadable Flyers
How to Get Help
Consumer Resources

Downloadable Flyers

**Lifeline**
Lifeline is a federal program that helps lower the cost of your monthly phone or Internet bill.

**HOW TO KEEP YOUR BENEFIT**
USE IT OR LOSE IT
If your mobile phone or Internet is free, use it at least once every 30 days to keep the benefit.

RECERTIFICATION
Each year, Lifeline will conduct a check to ensure you still qualify for the benefit. We will review databases that can verify your participation in qualifying programs.
We will send you a letter asking you to renew your benefit. If you do not respond within 30 days, your benefit may be canceled.

What to do if asked to renew:
- Call (855) 350-4368
- Complete the form online at CheckLifeline.org
- Complete the Renewal form and mail it to:
  Lifeline Support Center
  P.O. Box 7064
  London, KY 40742

You may check your Lifeline Benefit status anytime by calling the Lifeline Support Center, (800) 234-9473.

**LIFELINE SUPPORT CENTER**
(800) 234-9473
9 AM-9 PM ET 7 DAYS PER WEEK
LifelineSupport@usac.org | www.LifelineSupport.org

Contact your phone or Internet company about your phone, Internet service, or bill.

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**Lifeline**
Lifeline es un programa federal que puede reducir el costo mensual de su cuenta de teléfono o Internet.

**MANTENER SUS BENEFICIOS**
ÚSALO O PERDERLO
Si su teléfono móvil o intranet es gratis, úselo al menos una vez cada 30 días para mantener su beneficio.

RECERTIFICACIÓN
Cada año, Lifeline realizará una verificación para asegurarse de que sigue calificando para el beneficio. Verificaremos las bases de datos que pueden confirmar su participación en programas de certificación.
Le enviaremos una carta pidiéndole que renueve su beneficio SI NO respondemos confirmar que aún es elegible.

¿Qué hacer si se le pide renovar?
- Llame al (855) 350-4368
- Complete el formulario en línea en CheckLifeline.org
- Complete el formulario de renovación y envíelo por correo a:
  Lifeline Support Center
  P.O. Box 7064
  London, KY 40742

Puede verificar su estado de beneficios Lifeline en cualquier momento llamando al Lifeline Support Center, (800) 234-9473.

**LIFELINE SUPPORT CENTER**
(800) 234-9473
9 AM-9 PM ET 7 DÍAS DE LA SEMANA
lifelineSupport@usac.org | www.lifelineSupport.org

Comuníquese con su compañía de teléfono o de Internet si tiene preguntas sobre su teléfono, servicio de Internet e Internet.

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How to Get Help
Glossary (1/2)

- **National Verifier (NV)**: The national application system that consumers in most states can use to apply for the program.
- **Service provider portal**: The NV online system that phone and Internet companies may use to help their consumers submit an application for Lifeline.
- **Consumer portal**: The NV online system that consumers may use on their own to submit an application for Lifeline.
How to Get Help
Glossary (2/2)

• **Benefit qualifying person (BQP):** If an individual is not eligible for Lifeline, but has a child or dependent that is eligible, the individual qualifies for Lifeline based on the status of their child/dependent.

• **Independent economic household (IEH):** Only one Lifeline benefit is allowed per household, which is defined as a group of people that share income and expenses.
  - If a consumer lives with other people that receive Lifeline but do not share income and expenses (e.g., nursing home, homeless shelter, roommates), then they may still be eligible.

• **IEH Worksheet:** The IEH Worksheet (or [Lifeline Household Worksheet](#)) is the form a consumer must complete to self-certify that they do not share income and expenses with another Lifeline subscriber if they share the same address.
Live Demo
Thank You

• Thank you for joining us!
• Keep watching the consumer web page for more updates
  • www.LifelineSupport.org
• Want to stay up to date on Lifeline?
  • Sign up for the Lifeline newsletter
• Need help? Contact us!
  • LifelineProgram@usac.org