



# Lifeline Program FAQs

## Affordable Telephone Service for Income-Eligible Consumers

**Lifeline** is a government benefit program that provides monthly discounts on ONE telephone service (wireline or wireless) for eligible low-income consumers. Lifeline service is a non-transferable benefit and is available to eligible low-income consumers in every state, territory, commonwealth, and on Tribal lands. The Lifeline Program helps low income consumers connect to the nation's communications networks, find jobs, access health care services, connect with family and their children's schools, and call for help in an emergency. You must be eligible to enroll, and you must recertify your eligibility every year. Federal rules prohibit eligible consumers from receiving more than one Lifeline service *per household*.

- Lifeline is available only to eligible consumers.
- Only one Lifeline benefit is permitted per household. Federal rules prohibit consumers from receiving more than one Lifeline service. If a consumer or his or her household currently has more than one Lifeline discounted service, they must select a single provider immediately or be subject to penalties.
- Only low-income consumers with proof of eligibility are qualified to enroll.
- **Subscribers have an obligation to recertify their eligibility every year and should respond to their Lifeline Provider's attempts to recertify eligibility.** Subscribers must verify that they remain eligible to participate in the Lifeline program once each calendar year. Subscribers who fail to recertify their eligibility will be de-enrolled from the Lifeline Program.

### Frequently Asked Questions About the Lifeline Program

**Am I Eligible?** To participate in the program, consumers must *either* have an income that is at or below 135% of the federal [Poverty Guidelines](#) OR participate in one of the following assistance programs: [Medicaid](#); [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) (Food Stamps or SNAP); [Supplemental Security Income](#) (SSI); [Federal Public Housing Assistance](#) (Section 8); [Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program](#) (LIHEAP); [Temporary Assistance to Needy Families](#) (TANF); [National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program](#); [Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance](#); [Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](#) (TTANF); [Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations](#) (FDPIR); [Head Start](#) (if income eligibility criteria are met); or State assistance programs (*if applicable*).

To see if you are eligible, use the [Lifeline Eligibility Pre-Screening Tool](#) on the Universal Service Administrative (USAC) website at [www.lifelinesupport.org](http://www.lifelinesupport.org).

**How Do I Enroll?** Apply for Lifeline through a Lifeline Program provider in your state or designated state agency. To locate a Lifeline provider in your state, go to [www.lifelinesupport.org](http://www.lifelinesupport.org).

**How Do I Verify My Eligibility?** Consumers are required to certify and provide documentation to prove that the subscriber, or a member of the subscriber's household, including dependents, participates in a qualifying program OR meets the income qualifications for Lifeline eligibility. For *program eligibility verification*, acceptable documentation includes: Current or prior year's statement of benefits from a qualifying program; notice letter of participation in qualifying program; program participation documents (or copy); or another official document of a qualifying program. For *income*



*eligibility verification*, acceptable documentation includes: the prior year's state, federal or Tribal tax return; current income statement from an employer or paycheck stub; Social Security statement of benefits; Veterans Administration statement of benefits; Retirement or pension statement of benefits; Unemployment or Workers' Compensation statement of benefits; Federal or Tribal notice letter of participation in General Assistance; or divorce decree, child support award, or other official document containing income information. The consumer must present the same type of documentation *covering 3 consecutive months* within the previous 12 months, if the documentation does not cover a full year of income.

**Do I Need to Recertify My Eligibility Every Year?** Yes, every year. Once you are enrolled in Lifeline, you must verify your continued eligibility on an annual basis. You will be contacted by your service provider to recertify that you remain eligible. If you don't recertify your eligibility, you will lose your Lifeline benefit.

If you become ineligible for the benefit for any reason, you *must contact your provider immediately to de-enroll* from the program or you may be subject to penalties.

**How Is "Household" Defined for Purposes of the Lifeline Program?** A "household" is defined as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses. Lifeline provides one discount per household. The Lifeline Eligibility Pre-Screening Tool available at [www.lifelinesupport.org](http://www.lifelinesupport.org) can help you determine who is considered to be a member of your household.

**What if I Am Receiving More Than One Lifeline Service?** Households with duplicate Lifeline services (wireless and/or wireline) *must* select a single provider and *de-enroll* from other Lifeline programs. Consumers violating the *one per household rule* may be subject to criminal and/or civil penalties.

**Does the Phone Service Have to Be in the Name of the Person Receiving the Program Benefit?** The phone service does not need to be in the name of the person receiving the benefit; however, the person who qualifies for Lifeline must be a member of the *same household* as the subscriber.

**What If I Have Free Lifeline?** If you receive Lifeline for free, you must use your service every 60 days in order to maintain the benefit.

###

*For more information about eligibility, how to apply for Lifeline benefits, or what to do if your household is receiving more than one Lifeline discount, visit the USAC website at [www.lifelinesupport.org](http://www.lifelinesupport.org). You may also call the Federal Communications Commission at 1-888-225-5322.*

*Last reviewed: 8/28/2015*

