

The Lifeline Program: Tribal Toolkit

A Federal Discount for Eligible Consumers' Phone or Internet
Service

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Background and Audience

What is the enhanced Lifeline discount for Tribal consumers?

Lifeline is a federal program dedicated to making phone and Internet service more affordable to low-income households, and low-income households on Tribal lands. This benefit generally provides eligible consumers with a monthly discount of up to \$9.25. Tribal consumers living on Tribal lands¹ are eligible for an enhanced discount of up to \$34.25 per month.

What is Link Up?

Link Up is a one-time benefit per Tribal address. Subscribers can request Link Up once for each change of their primary residential (home) address.

Link Up assistance provides a 100% reduction (up to \$100) of the charge for starting service at a Tribal Lifeline subscriber's primary residence. For service initiation charges of up to \$200, Link Up also provides a deferred, no-interest payment plan to the subscriber for up to one year.

The Link Up benefit is available to subscribers who reside on Tribal lands and use an eligible company.² Consumers can check with their Lifeline provider to see if they offer Link Up.

How do I use the Tribal Toolkit?

The purpose of this Tribal toolkit is to provide Tribal communities with the Lifeline resources they need to educate the stakeholders listed below about the program. The content included may be used as templates for informational material or posted directly as is.

Tribes are encouraged to translate the following information to their communities' indigenous languages to share more widely.

Who is this information for?

Low-income individuals who reside on Tribal lands, including individuals who:

- Have income at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines;
- Participate in SNAP, Medicaid, SSI, FPHA, Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit; or
- Participate in Tribal programs like Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance or TTANF.

¹ Lifeline's Tribal lands is defined in [47 CFR §54.400 \(e\)](#).

² Link Up is available through facilities-based phone or Internet companies that receive High Cost Program Support. Go to usac.org for more information.

Those who serve Tribal clients, such as:

- Case workers
- Caregivers and senior advocates
- Federal government agencies
- Health and social service agency staff
- Service providers (carriers)
- Tribal college student support centers
- Tribal community centers
- Tribal government departments or divisions
- Tribal housing authorities
- Tribal leadership
- Veteran groups

Lifeline Resources

Lifeline Article for Blog or e-Newsletter

Use: Standard information for a Lifeline program article to educate consumers and stakeholders about the program.

Title: Get Discounted Phone or Internet Service with Lifeline

Access to affordable voice and Internet service is vital to stay connected in today's world. People need these services to connect with healthcare providers, potential employers, educational programs, and loved ones. Yet affordable service remains a challenge for low-income consumers living on Tribal lands. The federal Lifeline program helps close the gap for these consumers by offering a monthly discount of up to \$34.25 off a qualified household's phone or Internet bill.

A household is a group of people who share income and expenses. Consumers who live with another person already receiving the Lifeline benefit, but do not share income and expenses, may still be eligible for the discount.

Consumers may qualify for Lifeline through their income or if they can provide proof of enrollment in one of the nine Tribal or federal Lifeline qualifying government programs.

Households with income at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines are eligible for Lifeline. Consumers enrolled in one of the following government programs qualify for Lifeline as well:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP),
- Medicaid,
- Federal Public Housing Assistance,
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or

- Veterans Pensions Survivors Benefits.

Consumers living on Tribal lands may also qualify if they take part in one of the following Tribal government programs:

- Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Tribal TANF),
- Tribal Head Start,
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, or
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).

Consumers have several options to apply. They may visit a Lifeline phone or Internet company in their area. Lifeline's [Companies Near Me](#) tools allows consumers to search for Lifeline companies in their area by typing in their zip code or city and state. Consumers also have the option to submit an [online application](#) or mail in a [paper application](#) to the Lifeline Support Center.

USAC's Lifeline Support Center serves as a resource for prospective and current Lifeline participants. Consumers may submit questions via [email](#), or by calling (800) 234-9473. More information is available on the [Lifeline Support](#) website.

The Lifeline program is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), under the oversight of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Lifeline Radio/Public Service Script

Use: Standard language for Lifeline program radio script or other public service announcements.

Title: Tribal Land Residents May Qualify for a Federal Discount off Phone or Internet Service

30 Seconds - 68 Words

The federal Lifeline program makes voice and Internet service more affordable for low-income households.

Consumers living on Tribal lands may qualify for a monthly discount of up to thirty four dollars and twenty five cents off their phone or Internet bill if they meet income guidelines or participate in one of nine Tribal or federal programs.

Visit [Lifeline Support \[dot\] org](#) for more information or call 800 234-9473.

One minute - About 170 Words

Have you heard of Lifeline? The federal program provides up to thirty four dollars and twenty five cents off a Tribal lands resident's phone or Internet bill every month.

We at [enter radio station or organization] believe access to affordable voice and Internet service is vital for our people here on [enter Tribal land]. Lifeline can help you afford phone or Internet service to stay connected to your family, emergency services, and the workforce.

Here is what you need to know about the program:

- Qualify by showing you are in one of the nine eligible programs such as Tribal TANF, SNAP, or Medicaid.
- Reside on Tribal lands to receive the enhanced benefit, or if you don't reside on Tribal lands you may still be eligible to receive a discount of up to nine dollars and twenty-five cents a month.
- You can apply online, in-person, or mail in your application directly to the Lifeline Support Center.

Visit Lifeline Support [dot] org for more information or call 800 234-9473.

Lifeline Social Media Posts

Use: Standard language for Lifeline social media posts.

1. Do you live on Tribal lands? Eligible, low-income consumers can qualify for up to a \$34.25 monthly discount off their phone or Internet bill through the federal Lifeline program. Lifeline also provides a one-time reimbursement for the cost to set up phone or Internet service with a qualifying Lifeline provider, known as Link Up.

Learn more: <https://www.lifelinesupport.org/additional-support-for-tribal-lands/>
Apply today: CheckLifeline.org

2. Lifeline is a federal program that will help make your phone or Internet services more affordable. Visit Lifelinesupport.org to learn more about this monthly discount.

Learn more here: LifelineSupport.org

3. Access to affordable voice and Internet service is a vital resource to make sure YOU can stay connected to your loved ones, health care clinics, and workforce opportunities. The federal Lifeline program's goal is to increase access to these services for Tribal consumers by offering a monthly discount of up to \$34.25 off your phone or Internet service bill. For more information on the program and how to sign up, visit Lifelinesupport.org.



4. Have you heard about Link Up for residents of Tribal lands? Ask your phone or Internet company! You may qualify for reimbursement of up to \$100 on the cost of setting up phone/Internet service at your home through certain companies that participate in the federal Lifeline program. Find out what companies near you provide Lifeline service by clicking the link below.

Link: <https://data.usac.org/publicreports/CompaniesNearMe/Download/Report>

5. You, a family member, or friend may be eligible for a federal discount off your monthly phone or Internet bill. Learn more about the Lifeline program at LifelineSupport.org!

Additional Information for Service Providers

Service providers can only claim reimbursement through Link Up for the difference between the customary connection/interest charge and the actual charge.

Before providing Link Up to the subscriber, check the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD) to confirm whether they have previously received a Link Up benefit at their address.

Tribal Lifeline

Consumers living on Tribal lands*
can receive up to **\$34.25** off phone or Internet service.

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

ELIGIBILITY

You may qualify for a discount if you live on Tribal lands* **AND** can provide proof for any **ONE** of the following:

- Your income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines, **OR**
- You participate in any **ONE** of these government benefit programs:
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Medicaid
 - Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
 - Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
 - Tribal Head Start (income based)
 - Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Tribal TANF)
 - Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations Assistance

WHAT IS A HOUSEHOLD?

You can have multiple households at one address, for example:

- Four adult family members that live at the same address, but do not share income and expenses, may each have their own Lifeline benefit.
- If you share housing with someone who already receives Lifeline, complete the **Household Worksheet** that is available on our website, or through your phone or Internet company.

*Lifeline's Tribal Lands is defined in 47 CFR §54.400 (e). Go to LifelineSupport.org and select "Tribal Lands" for more information.



Universal Service
Administrative Co.

THREE WAYS TO APPLY



APPLY ONLINE Find the online application at CheckLifeline.org.

OR



MAIL YOUR APPLICATION Print an application from LifelineSupport.org.

OR



CONTACT A PHONE OR INTERNET COMPANY
Find a company that provides Lifeline at LifelineSupport.org.
Click *Companies Near Me*.

If you live in **CA** (CaliforniaLifeline.com), **OR** (Lifeline.Oregon.gov), or **TX** (TexasLifeline.org), visit the website for your state to find out how to apply.

HOW TO SHOW YOU ARE ELIGIBLE

You may need to show proof that you qualify for Lifeline, such as:

- **A copy of your SNAP or program letter** **OR**
- **A copy of your pay stub or tax return** to prove your income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines.

TIPS FOR APPLICANTS ON TRIBAL LANDS

- Check the "Tribal Lands" Box.
- Provide a Tribal ID Number if a SSN is unavailable.
- Your Lifeline company can help determine whether your address is on Tribal lands.
- Ask your service provider about *Tribal Link-Up*. You may be able to get up to \$100 toward your connection to home service.

NOTE: An applicant living at a residence without an identifiable address will be asked to provide Geo-coordinates for the physical location. If you don't have this information, you can provide USAC a map that identifies the location of the residence, landmarks, and distances.

LIFELINE SUPPORT CENTER

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

Lifeline

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

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 recertify your benefit **ONLY** if we are unable to confirm you are still eligible.

What to do if asked to recertify:

- Call (855) 359-4299 **OR**
- Complete the form online at CheckLifeline.org **OR**
- Complete the recertification form and mail it to:
Lifeline Support Center
P.O. Box 7081
London, KY 40742

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

If you live in **CA** (CaliforniaLifeline.com), **OR** (Lifeline.Oregon.gov), or **TX** (TexasLifeline.org), visit the website for your state to find out how to recertify.



TRANSFER YOUR BENEFIT

You may change the phone or Internet company registered with Lifeline at any time.

To do so:

- Talk to your new company to make the switch—some companies may have transfer costs.
- Reapply to Lifeline to confirm you are still eligible.
- Search for a phone or Internet company at LifelineSupport.org. Click *Companies Near Me*.

LIFELINE SUPPORT CENTER

(800) 234-9473 | 9 AM-9 PM ET | 7 DAYS PER WEEK

LifelineSupport@usac.org | LifelineSupport.org

If you have a disability and need assistance with your application, contact the Lifeline Support Center.

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

Lifeline is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program to help make communications services more affordable for eligible consumers. The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) administers the Lifeline program. USAC is responsible for helping you apply for the program, understand eligibility requirements, and keep your benefit current through an annual recertification process.



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Available for Public Use



Universal Service Administrative Co.

The **Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)** is an independent not-for-profit designated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to administer the Universal Service Fund (USF).

USAC collects and delivers funding, under the guidance of FCC policy, through four programs focused on places where broadband and connectivity needs are critical. Almost \$10 billion is available annually to make universal service possible for people in rural, underserved, and difficult-to-reach areas.



The Lifeline program offers a monthly benefit of up to \$9.25 towards phone or internet services for eligible consumers (up to \$34.25 for those living on Tribal lands).



The E-rate program provides funding towards eligible services for schools and libraries to keep students and library patrons connected to broadband services.



The Rural Health Care program supports healthcare facilities in bringing world class medical care to rural areas through increased connectivity.



The High Cost program provides funding to eligible service providers through 11 active funds to build out infrastructure or provide service to communities that currently receive little or no communication services.

For more information about the Lifeline program, contact:
LifelineProgram@usac.org | 800.234.9473 | www.usac.org