

# LifeLine

(Western Study Area 391688)

**SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
LIFELINE/TRIBAL LINK UP ADVERTISING/OUTREACH  
ANNUAL REPORT  
JULY 1, 2015**

Company: Western Telephone Company\_\_\_\_\_

Address: 218 Commercial Ave\_\_\_\_\_

PO Box 157\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: 605-852-2224\_\_\_\_\_

Company contact: Janelle Jessen\_\_\_\_\_

Study Area Code: 605\_\_\_\_\_

**Lifeline/Tribal Link Up Advertising/Outreach Activities:**

- Advertise in media of general distribution.\* (See attached advertisement(s).)
- Letter to existing and new customers regarding the availability of Lifeline/ Tribal Link Up.\* (See attached letter.)
- Company's Lifeline/Tribal Link Up information in directory.
- Company's Lifeline/Tribal Link Up information available on Company website. ((www.venturecomm.net))
- Company's information posted on USAC website.
- Other (describe): Newsletter and Press Release\_\_\_\_\_

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## Lifeline

**Tribal Lifeline and Toll Blocking** support is available from Venture Communications. These programs provide discounts to eligible low-income consumers to help them establish and maintain telephone service.

**Lifeline** assistance lowers the cost of basic, monthly local telephone service. Eligible consumers can receive \$9.25 per month in discounts. In addition, the Federal Universal Service Charge is not assessed to consumers participating in Lifeline.

**Toll Blocking** prevents the placement of all long distance calls for which a subscriber would be charged. Toll Blocking is available to eligible consumers at no cost.

Customers are eligible if they, one of their dependents or their household participate in one of the following programs:

- Low-Income Home Energy assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), f/k/a Food Stamps
- Medicaid
- National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

In addition, consumers are eligible if their household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines.

Venture Communications voice service is a Lifeline-supported service. Only eligible consumers may enroll in the Lifeline program. Lifeline applicants must present documentation demonstrating eligibility either through participation in one of the qualifying federal assistance programs or through income-based means. Lifeline recipients are required to recertify their eligibility every year. The Lifeline program is limited to one benefit per household, consisting of either wireline or wireless service. A household is defined for purposes of the Lifeline program, as an individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses. Lifeline is a government benefit program, and consumers who willfully make false statements in order to obtain the benefit can be punished by fine or imprisonment or can be barred from the program.

To apply for this low-income assistance, please contact Venture Communications at 1-800-824-7282, 605-852-2224 or by going to our website at [venture@venturecomm.net](mailto:venture@venturecomm.net).

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

### TO APPLY FOR NEW SERVICE OR CHANGE YOUR SERVICE

Venture Communications Cooperative  
1-605-852-2224 or Toll Free 1-800-824-7282

#### Trouble Shooting Tips:

Trouble with your telephone may come from any of three sources:

1. The telephone set
2. Wiring inside your home or business
3. The telephone line

#### To check:

Test your modular phone by unplugging the one with the problem and try another phone. If this corrects the problem, it is probably a problem with your telephone itself. Have the phone repaired or replaced.

If you have determined that the telephone is not the problem, check the phone at the phone jack nearest to where your phone line comes into your home or business. If the phone works here but not in another place in your house, the problem is most likely in the inside wiring. If the inside wiring appears to be the problem or you cannot identify what is causing the problem, contact the telephone office at 611 or 1-800-824-7282.

#### To Report Trouble:

When reporting trouble to our service desk or off-hours answering service, please provide the following information:

1. Your full name and street address.
2. Your telephone number.
3. What the trouble is and if you are having trouble with all of your telephones or just one.
4. If possible, a telephone number where you can be reached.

#### Customer Assurance Plan

Nobody likes to worry about what might happen. That's why we have developed our *Customer Assurance Plan* to protect you in case of the unexpected. If you have trouble with the telephone wiring or installed jacks inside your home or business, our technicians will repair the problem at no cost to you. Without this protection, a problem in the wiring within your house will cost you time and materials, which can quickly run into a large sum of money. Don't wait!! Call our office today at 611 or 1-800-824-7282 to have our *Customer Assurance Plan* placed on your line.

## LIFELINE & ENHANCED LIFELINE DISCOUNTS

Venture Communications offers a program to its low-income subscribers that results in a rate reduction on monthly services. Subscribers who participate in any of the following programs also qualify for participation in our Lifeline program:

- Medicaid (e.g. Title XIX/Medical, State Supplemental Assistance)
- Food Stamps program
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program
- National School Lunch (NSL) free lunch program

In addition, a subscriber may qualify for this program if their household income is at or below 135 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

Participation in any of the above programs as well as some tribal assistance programs will qualify a subscriber living on tribal lands for the Enhanced Lifeline program.

For additional information and applications forms, please contact our office at 800-824-7282.

## Lifeline Link-up Program Offers Savings...

With the current economic conditions causing challenges for many of us on a monthly basis, we want to remind you of the financial benefit that is offered through the **Lifeline Link-Up Program**.

Venture Communications is proud to have helped many customers this past year thru the Federal Communications Commission's Lifeline Link-Up Program, providing discounted installation and monthly telephone service to qualifying consumers.

### LIFELINE PROGRAM:

You may be eligible for the Lifeline Program and its \$9.25 monthly savings if you're a participant in at least one of the following programs: Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps), Federal Public Housing Assistance, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, or the National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program.

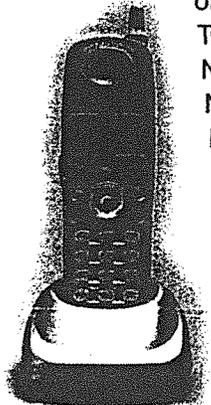
### ENHANCED LIFELINE PROGRAM:

The Enhanced Lifeline Program provides telephone service to anyone who lives on tribal lands. It expands the eligibility requirements listed under the Lifeline Program to also include participation in: Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance programs, Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Tribal Head Start, or the Tribal National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program.

In addition, you may be eligible for the monthly savings if your household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines. Qualifying income levels for the year 2015 range from \$15,512 for a single person household to \$53,501 for a family of eight.

### LINK-UP PROGRAM:

Another Federal Program, Link-Up, provides for financial assistance with no connection charges for new customers living on tribal land. If you meet the eligibility requirements, you can obtain an application from our main office in Highmore, the office in Sisseton, or online at [www.venturecomm.net](http://www.venturecomm.net). When you no longer participate in any of the qualifying public assistance programs, you are no longer eligible for Lifeline or Link-Up. You are obligated by law to notify Venture Communications when you are no longer eligible. If you have any questions about Lifeline or Link-Up, please contact us at 852-2224 for more information.



Register your number by phone or online!

## Customer Do-Not-Call Notification...

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) have established a national Do-Not-Call Registry that applies to all telemarketers (with the exception of certain non-profit and political organizations) and covers both interstate and intrastate telemarketing calls. Commercial telemarketers are not allowed to call you if your number is listed on the registry.

You may register your phone number free, and it will remain on the national Do-Not-Call Registry. You may remove your name from the list at any time. The Do-Not-Call Registry will not prevent all unwanted calls. It does NOT cover the following:

- calls from organizations with which you have established a business relationship
- calls for which you have given prior written consent
- calls which are not commercial or do not include unsolicited advertisements
- calls by or on behalf of tax-exempt non-profit organizations

Consumers may register their residential telephone number, including wireless cellular numbers, on the national Do-Not-Call Registry at no cost by telephone or on the Internet. To register by telephone, consumers may call 1-888-382-1222. For the hearing impaired, TTY call 1-866-290-4236. You must call from the phone number you wish to register. You may also register over the Internet at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov). Inclusion of your telephone number on the national Do-Not-Call Registry will be effective three months following your registration.

REGISTER at  
[www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov)  
or call 888.382.1222

# Need help paying your phone bill?

Many low-income families qualify for assistance with phone charges, but don't realize that this help is available. You are allowed only one Lifeline discount per household. You cannot transfer your Lifeline discount to someone else, even if he or she is eligible.

Lifeline is a federally funded program created to provide every customer the opportunity to have affordable telephone service. Lifeline provides qualified customers with a monthly discount if you are enrolled in one of the following:

- Food Stamps
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance
- Supplemental Security Income
- National School Lunch free lunch program
- Medicaid
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program

Individuals who live on a federally recognized reservation or trust land may qualify for a discount if they receive assistance from one of the following:

- Food Stamps
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance
- Supplemental Security Income
- National School Lunch free lunch program
- Medicaid
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program
- Bureau of Indian Affairs general assistance program
- Tribally or State Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Head Start (meeting income qualifying standards)

If you do not participate in one or more of the programs listed above, you may qualify for Lifeline if your household income does not exceed 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (see table below).

Number in Residence	135% Guideline (Annual)
1	\$15,755
2	\$20,939
3	\$26,717
4	\$32,198
5	\$37,679
6	\$43,160
7	\$48,641
8	\$54,122
<i>For each additional person after 8, add \$5,481 to the annual guideline.</i>	

**venture**  
communications  
cooperative

**Call Venture Communications  
at 852-2224 and  
visit with a local reliable  
person to get signed up today.**

## Low Income Assistance Available to Telephone Subscribers

In response to concerns about the affordability of telephone service for low-income citizens, Venture Communications is authorized to offer Lifeline to our customers. Lifeline is a federal telephone assistance program. To be eligible for this program, the applicant must participate in at least one of the following public assistance programs: food stamps, federal public housing assistance, low-income home energy assistance, Medicaid, or supplemental security income (SSI).

To be eligible for the Enhanced Lifeline or the Link-Up programs, the applicant must live on tribal land and participate in at least one of the following public assistance programs: food stamps, federal public housing assistance, Head Start (meeting income qualifying standards), low-income home energy assistance, Medicaid, national school lunch program's FREE lunch program, supplemental security income (SSI), tribally administered temporary assistance for needy families or Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) general assistance program.

Lifeline provides eligible subscribers with a credit of \$9.25 each month on the basic service portion of their telephone bill. The discount applies on the main home telephone line listed in the name of the eligible telephone company subscriber. Lifeline subscribers may also receive blocking of long distance calls on their telephone line at no charge.

Enhanced Lifeline provides subscribers expanded eligibility opportunities and additional telephone service discounts. They may also receive long distance blocking on their telephone at no charge. Eligible subscribers for Enhanced Lifeline must live on Tribal Land

If you meet the eligibility requirements, you can obtain an application from our main office in Highmore or the office in Sisseton and return it to either location. You may also print off an application from our website at [www.venturecomm.net](http://www.venturecomm.net). When you no longer participate in any of the qualifying public assistance programs, you are no longer eligible for Lifeline or Link-Up. Each household is only able to receive one Lifeline discount. You are obligated by law to notify Venture Communications and advise us of your ineligibility. If you have any questions about Lifeline or Link-Up, please contact us at 852-2224 for more information.