

**SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
LIFELINE/TRIBAL LINK UP ADVERTISING/OUTREACH
ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 1, 2018**

Company: Western Telephone Company

Address: 218 Commercial Ave
PO Box 157

Telephone number: 605-852-2224

Company contact: Janelle Jessen

Study Area Code: 391650

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 within 1st 30 days of service.* (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):

Article Annually in our company newsletter.

*Required

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 (SNAP)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- Supplemental Security Income
- Medicaid
- Veterans Pension or Survivors Pension

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 (SNAP)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- Supplemental Security Income
- Medicaid
- Bureau of Indian Affairs general assistance program
- Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Tribal Head Start (meeting income qualifying standards)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

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	\$16,389
2	\$22,221
3	\$28,053
4	\$33,885
5	\$39,717
6	\$45,549
7	\$51,381
8	\$57,213

For each additional person, add \$5,832.



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

Wk. of April 16, 2018 | Insert Updated Lifeline ad in newspapers

Onida Watchman

Bowdle Pioneer

Roscoe Hosmer Independent

Langford Bugle & Britton Journal

Rosholt Review

True Dakotan - Wessington Springs

Faulk Co Record

The Selby Record

Sisseton Courier

Potter County News

Highmore Herald

Miller Press

West beadle Cty Echo

The Hoven Review

Sota Iya Ye Yapi (tribal paper)

Lifeline

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:

- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), f/k/a Food Stamps
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Veteran's Pension or Survivors Pension

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.

Tribal Lifeline and Link Up

Customers on Indian Reservations or Tribal Lands

Tribal Lifeline, Tribal Link Up 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.

Tribal Lifeline assistance lowers the cost of basic, monthly local telephone service.

Tribal Link Up reduces the cost of initiating new telephone service.

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:

- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), f/k/a Food Stamps
- Medicaid
- Veteran's Pension or Survivors Pension
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANF)
- Tribal Head Start (income eligible)
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

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.

Tribal Lifeline and Link Up

Customers on Indian Reservations or Tribal Lands

Tribal Lifeline, Tribal Link Up 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.

Tribal Lifeline assistance lowers the cost of basic, monthly local telephone service.

Tribal Link Up reduces the cost of initiating new telephone service.

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:

- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), f/k/a Food Stamps
- Medicaid
- Veteran's Pension or Survivors Pension
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANF)
- Tribal Head Start (income eligible)
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

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.

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 service may come from any of three sources:

1. The equipment inside your home (TV, Computer, Phone)
2. Wiring inside your home or business
3. The telephone line

To check:

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

If you have determined that the device is not the problem or you cannot identify what is causing the problem, contact the office at 605-852-2224 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.
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 605-852-2224 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.



Find out how you can benefit!

Lifeline Link-up Program Offers Savings

Venture Communications is proud to have helped many customers this past year through 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), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8), or Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit.

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 Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

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 2017 range from \$16,038 for a single person household to \$55,202 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, our office in Sisseton, or online at 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.



Venture Communications Cooperative Statement of Nondiscrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audio-tape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.