

Docket Number: TC23-034
Subject Matter: First Data Request
Request to: West River Cooperative Telephone Company (WRCTC or Company)
Request from: South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Staff
Date of Request: July 13, 2023
Responses Due: July 27, 2023

1-1. This information is considered Confidential and is being filed under separate seal and included with this filing.

1-2. This information is considered Confidential and is being filed under separate seal and included with this filing.

- 1-3. Refer to the Lifeline/Link Up Advertising/Outreach Annual Report.
- a. Provide a copy of the Company's Lifeline/Tribal Link Up information in the Company directory.
Please see the West River PUC response 1-3 a.PDF file.
 - b. Provide a copy of the advertisements the Company made in media of general distribution.
Please see the West River PUC response 1-3 b.PDF file.
 - c. It appears the Company newsletters use old Lifeline language stating, "Lifeline provides a discount on monthly telephone and/or broadband services of \$9.25 per month". Provide an updated newsletter template that corrects this to include the language, "an eligible customer with broadband internet will receive a discount of up to \$9.25 per month" and "eligible voice only subscribers will receive a discount of \$5.25 per month".
Response: \$5.25 is paid to the carrier per month. However, the discount to the customer is \$6.50 per month.
The updated Newsletter will read as:
"How Lifeline Works
Lifeline provides an eligible customer with broadband internet a discount of up to \$9.25 per month. Eligible voice only subscribers will receive a discount of \$6.50 per month. Subscribers may receive a Lifeline discount on either a wireline or a wireless service but may not receive a discount on both services at the same time. Lifeline also supports broadband and broadband-voice bundles. FCC rules prohibit more than one Lifeline service per household."
 - d. It appears the Company website uses old Lifeline language stating, "Lifeline is a federal program that provides eligible subscribers with a credit of \$9.25 each month on voice telephone service". Correct this to include the language, "an eligible customer with broadband internet will receive a discount of up to \$9.25 per month" and "eligible voice only subscribers will receive a discount of \$5.25 per month".
Response: \$5.25 is paid to the carrier per month. However, the discount to the customer is \$6.50 per month.

The updated Website will read as:

“Lifeline provides an eligible customer with broadband internet a discount of up to \$9.25 per month. Eligible voice only subscribers will receive a discount of \$6.50 per month. The credit can be applied to only one telephone line per household. For the purposes of Lifeline, a household is an individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income or expenses. You may not receive Lifeline if you, or someone in your household, receives Lifeline on another home phone or a wireless phone. A Lifeline customer may not give his or her Lifeline discount to another person. Lifeline subscribers may also receive blocking of long distance calls on their telephone line at no charge.”

- e. It appears the customer letter uses old Lifeline language stating, “Lifeline assistance lowers the cost of basic, monthly local telephone service or internet service” and that “eligible customers can receive \$9.25 per month”. Provide an updated letter that corrects this to include the language, “an eligible customer with broadband internet will receive a discount of up to \$9.25 per month” and “eligible voice only subscribers will receive a discount of \$5.25 per month”.

Response: \$5.25 is paid to the carrier per month. However, the discount to the customer is \$6.50 per month.

The updated Engagement Letter will read as:

“Lifeline assistance provides an eligible customer with broadband internet a discount of up to \$9.25 per month. Eligible voice only subscribers will receive a discount of \$6.50 per month. Eligible residents of Tribal Lands can receive up to an additional \$25 in Lifeline support.”

Telephone Service Information - (Cont'd)

Lifeline: Affordable Telephone Service for Income-Eligible Consumers

Background

Lifeline is a government benefit program that provides discounts on monthly telephone service for eligible low-income consumers to help ensure they have the opportunities and security that telephone service affords, including being able to connect to job, family and 911 services. Lifeline is supported by the Federal Universal Service Fund (USF).

What Benefits are Available Under the Lifeline Program?

Lifeline assistance lowers the cost of basic monthly local telephone service. An eligible customer will receive a discount of \$5.25 per month. Federal rules prohibit eligible low-income consumers from receiving more than ONE Lifeline service per household. That is, eligible low-income consumers may receive a Lifeline discount on either a wireline or a wireless service, but may not receive a Lifeline discount on both services at the same time. Additionally, only ONE Lifeline service may be obtained per household. "Household" is defined as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address as one economic unit. An "economic unit" is defined as "all adult individuals contributing to and sharing in the income and expenses of a household." Lifeline support is available to eligible low-income consumers living in group living facilities. Lifeline applicants may demonstrate when initially enrolling in the program that any other Lifeline recipients residing at their residential address are part of a separate household.

Lifeline can also include Toll Limitation Service, which enables a telephone subscriber to limit the amount of long distance calls that can be made from a telephone.

Link Up provides eligible low-income consumers living on Tribal lands with a one-time discount of up to \$100 on the initial installation or activation of a wireline or wireless telephone for the primary residence. Tribal Lands Link Up also allows consumers to pay the remaining amount that they owe on a deferred schedule, interest-free. Federal rules prohibit eligible low-income consumers from receiving more than ONE Link Up discount at a primary residence. Eligible consumers may be eligible for Link Up again only after moving to a new primary residence. Link Up support is only offered to carriers who are building out infrastructure on Tribal lands so not all carriers may discount their activation fee. Enhanced benefits are provided to low-income consumers who live on a federally recognized Indian Tribe's reservation.

How Do I Qualify for Lifeline Discounts?

The Lifeline program is available to eligible low-income consumers in every state, territory, commonwealth, and on Tribal lands. You must be eligible to enroll. 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 programs:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps or SNAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit Programs

TRIBAL-SPECIFIC PROGRAMS:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANDF)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
- Head Start (if income eligibility criteria are met)

When you qualify for any of the above programs, you must complete a Lifeline Assistance Application. For more information please contact our office at 605-244-5213 or 777.

Lifeline

Receive up to \$9.25 off your phone or Internet service

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

INDIVIDUAL ELIGIBILITY

You qualify for a discount if:

- 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)

— OR —

- Your income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines

HOUSEHOLD ELIGIBILITY

A household is a group of people that share income and expenses.

- You are only allowed to get **one** Lifeline discount per household.
- If you share housing, complete the **Household Worksheet**.
- The worksheet is available on our website, **LifelineSupport.org**. You can also ask your Lifeline service provider.

THREE WAYS TO APPLY



APPLY ONLINE Find the online application at **CheckLifeline.org**.

OR



MAIL YOUR APPLICATION Print an application from **LifelineSupport.org**. Fill out and mail it with proof of eligibility to:

Lifeline Support Center
P.O. Box 7081
London, KY 40742

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.

*If you live on Tribal Lands, you may receive an additional discount toward your service.

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



Universal Service
Administrative Co.

LIFELINE SUPPORT CENTER

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

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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