



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

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September 6, 2011

The Honorable Paula Pechonick
Chief, Delaware Tribe of Indians
220 NW Virginia Avenue
Bartlesville, OK 74003

Dear Chief Pechonick:

Hesci! Greetings! I am writing to share information about two programs of great importance to Tribal communities and Native households – Lifeline and Link Up. These programs help to provide telephone service to low-income consumers living on Tribal lands for as little as \$1 a month. Lifeline and Link Up, run by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), help eligible low-income consumers establish and maintain telephone service by discounting services provided to them by wireline and wireless providers. These programs are part of the Federal Universal Service Fund, or USF. I would like to share some important news and new developments about these programs with you.

The Office of Native Affairs and Policy (ONAP) is your official, one-stop point of contact at the FCC for all of your questions about communications services, including traditional wireline telephone service, wireless telephone service, broadband service, and radio and television licensing. The FCC established ONAP in August of 2010 to promote the deployment and adoption of communications services and technologies throughout Tribal lands and Native communities. My staff and I are available to help you with all of your questions.

Background on the Lifeline and Link Up Programs

There are additional Lifeline and Link Up discounts available to low-income consumers living on Tribal lands. That is, enhanced Lifeline and Link Up benefits are provided to low-income consumers who live on a Federally recognized Indian Tribe's reservation, pueblo, or colony; on a former reservation in Oklahoma; within an Indian allotment; or within an Alaskan Native region established by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Enhanced Lifeline for Tribal Lands provides qualified telephone subscribers living on Tribal lands with discounts of up to \$35 per month on basic monthly telephone charges. As a result, qualified subscribers on Tribal lands may receive basic local phone service for as little as \$1 per month. ***Enhanced Link Up for Tribal Lands*** provides qualified low-income subscribers 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.

Eligibility for Enhanced Lifeline and Link Up for Tribal Lands

There are two ways to qualify for Enhanced Lifeline and Link Up for Tribal Lands – based either on household income or on participation in one of a number of income assistance programs. A low-income consumer living on Tribal lands wishing to qualify based on household income must have an income that is at or below 135 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. The 2011 Federal Poverty Guideline information appears below.

135% of the 2011 Federal Poverty Guidelines¹

Persons in Family or Household	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$14,702	\$18,360	\$16,929
2	\$19,859	\$24,813	\$22,856
3	\$25,016	\$31,266	\$28,782
4	\$30,173	\$37,719	\$34,709
5	\$35,330	\$44,172	\$40,635
6	\$40,486	\$50,625	\$46,562
7	\$45,644	\$57,078	\$52,488
8	\$50,801	\$63,531	\$58,415
For each additional person, add	\$ 5,157	\$ 6,453	\$ 5,927

A low-income consumer living on Tribal lands wishing to qualify for Lifeline and Link Up based on programs must participate in one of the following income assistance programs:

- Medicaid;
- Food Stamps;
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8);
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP);
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF);
- The National School Lunch Program's free lunch Program;
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance;
- Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANF);
- Head Start (if income eligibility criteria are met); or
- State assistance programs (if applicable).

Restrictions on the Lifeline and Link Up Programs

Qualifying low-income consumers, whether living on Tribal or non-Tribal lands, may receive a Lifeline and Link Up discount on *either wireline or wireless phone service, but they may not receive discounts on both kinds of service at one time*. That is, Federal government rules prohibit qualifying low-income consumers from receiving more than one Lifeline and Link Up discount at the same time.

This has been the rule for a long time, but the FCC is just starting to launch a new initiative to eliminate duplicates going to the same person. I wanted to make you aware of this new initiative and I am asking for your help in getting the word out to your community. Here is how the new initiative is going to work:

- The FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, or USAC, are working together to implement this new initiative. USAC is the non-profit company that administers the Universal Service Fund, of which Lifeline and Link Up are a part. USAC works for the FCC.
- The FCC and USAC have identified 12 states in which many customers appear to be receiving duplicate Lifeline discounts. Those 12 states are: Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

¹ Source: www.usac.org/res/documents/li/pdf/Income_Requirements.pdf.

- The FCC has put USAC in charge of notifying consumers who are found to have more than one Lifeline discount and making sure that they receive only the one discount they are allowed to receive. Here is how the process will work if a consumer is found to have more than one Lifeline discount:
 - USAC will send a letter to the consumer, who will be given 35 days to select one of their current carriers to be their only Lifeline provider.
 - USAC will send a postcard reminder 10 days later, and the consumer may also receive a phone call if they fail to make a selection.
 - If the consumer still does not make a selection, USAC will randomly assign the consumer to one of their current carriers. The consumer will then be de-enrolled from the Lifeline program of their other carrier. ***This means that the consumer will continue receiving a Lifeline discount from one carrier only and will stop receiving a Lifeline discount from any other carrier.***

Even if your Tribe is not located within one of the 12 states targeted for this new initiative, it is still very important for the members of your community to understand the Lifeline and Link Up rules. These important programs are critical to communications services in Indian Country. Every eligible consumer needs to be aware of them. ***And everyone needs to understand that they may receive only one Lifeline and Link Up discount at the same time.***

Lifeline Awareness Week

I also want to make you aware of Lifeline Awareness Week, which will take place this year from September 12th – 17th. During Lifeline Awareness Week, the Federal, Tribal, and state governments focus their attention on making all eligible consumers aware of the benefits of the Lifeline and Link Up programs. While Lifeline Awareness Week is an important initiative, we need your help in getting the word out about these vitally important programs during all 52 weeks of the year.

Here are some suggestions for helping to increase awareness of the Lifeline and Link Up programs:

- Have information about Lifeline and Link Up posted at your Tribal offices and all of the Tribe's social service offices.
- Have information about Lifeline and Link Up posted at Tribal schools, colleges, and health care providers.
- Have your local radio station air a public service announcement about Lifeline and Link Up.
- Have your local newspaper publish stories or ads about the programs.
- Inform your members at community gatherings and events.

Again, ONAP is here to ensure that your voices are heard and your concerns are addressed. Please feel free to contact me and my staff at 202-418-2930 or native@fcc.gov.

Mvto (Thank You) and Best Regards,



Geoffrey C. Blackwell
Chief, Office of Native Affairs and Policy
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Federal Communications Commission