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Universal Service
Administrative Co.

Tribal Outreach

June 2024 USAC Tribal Nation Newsletter

June 28, 2024

Monthly Tribal Teleconference

[Universal Service Administrative Company](#)'s (USAC) July Tribal Teleconference will provide an overview of the Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program, explain how potential applicants can prepare for the application window, and offer time for questions and answers. Please join the teleconference on **Tuesday, July 9, 2024, at 4 p.m. ET** – [Register](#).

USAC and the E-Rate, Emergency Connectivity Fund, High Cost, Rural Health Care, Contributors, and Service Providers Customer Service Centers (CSCs) will be **closed** on **Thursday, July 4, 2024**.

For future planned closures, please review the [2024 USAC CSC Holiday Hours and Closures](#) calendar.

USAC System Dashboard

On June 28, USAC launched a [system dashboard](#) that program stakeholders can use to determine the status of USAC program systems. The dashboard uses a color code to identify outages, issues, and scheduled maintenance for public-facing Program systems and USAC enterprise tools including the One Portal log in process and Open Data.

The dashboard will be maintained and updated by USAC staff as information is made available. It will be updated during business hours, with additional support during high traffic times for each program.

[E-Rate](#)

Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program

On June 11, 2024, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released Order [FCC 24-63](#) establishing the Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program (Pilot Program). The Pilot Program is a three-year initiative that will provide up to \$200 million in Universal Service Fund (USF) support to eligible schools and libraries to defray the costs of eligible cybersecurity services and equipment.

The Pilot Program aims to address cybersecurity threats facing schools and libraries, including being targeted by malicious actors who seek to steal personal information, compromise online accounts, cause online harm or embarrassment, or otherwise disable/disrupt critical networks that provide broadband connectivity.

This fall, the FCC will open an application filing window for entities that are interested in participating in the Pilot Program. Potential applicants can join the [Get Ready Webinar](#) to learn more about the Pilot Program and the steps they can take to prepare for the application window.

To learn more about the Pilot Program, including its timeline and trainings, visit the [Cybersecurity Pilot Program](#) webpage and sign up for [Pilot Program emails](#).

Request a Service Delivery Deadline Extension by June 30

To be eligible for E-Rate program discounts for special construction charges, special construction must be completed in time for the fiber to be lit or in use by the end of the relevant funding year (i.e., June 30, 2024, for funding year (FY) 2023). This applies to leased lit fiber, leased dark fiber, or self-provisioned networks involving another technology. If this June 30 deadline is not met and you have not received an extension, the special construction

charges will not be eligible for support under program rules and a waiver will be needed from the FCC.

If you sought support for special construction related to leased lit fiber, leased dark fiber, or self-provisioned networks for FY2023, you may request a one-year extension of the June 30 deadline by demonstrating that construction was unavoidably delayed due to weather or other reasons, or by the late issuance of a Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL). You must demonstrate that the reason or reasons have unavoidably delayed special construction in a manner that prevents the fiber from being lit (or a self-provisioned network using another technology from being in use) by the June 30 deadline.

Applicants must file an [FCC Form 500](#) by June 30 to request this one-year extension. Go to [FAQS: Eligible Fiber Services](#) for additional information regarding deadlines and extensions related to non-recurring special construction charges.

If you have not received your FCDL and you need to request an extension of this deadline, file a customer service case in EPC and attach a completed [FY2022 Special Construction Deadline Extension Request](#) (SCDER) to the case on or before June 30, 2024.

If you need assistance, you can open a customer service case in [EPC](#) or call the E-Rate CSC at (888) 203-8100.

Get Ready for Invoicing

After USAC has processed your [FCC Form 486](#) (Receipt of Service Confirmation and Children's Internet Protection Act Certification Form), you or your service provider can begin the process of invoicing USAC for the discounted share of your approved eligible equipment and services (see [Filing the FY2024 FCC Form 486](#) in May's E-Rate News Brief). USAC can process invoices from either the applicant or the service provider after the following have occurred:

- USAC has issued an FCDL with a positive funding commitment
- Services have started (USAC can process invoices for progress payments after review of the contract if it includes a specific payment schedule)
- The applicant has submitted, and USAC has successfully processed, an FCC Form 486
- The service provider has filed an [FCC Form 473](#) (Service Provider Annual Certification (SPAC) Form) for the relevant funding year

To learn more about responding to E-Rate review questions, the summer deferral period, and the FCC Form 486, please review the [June 2024 E-Rate News Brief](#).

[Rural Health Care \(RHC\)](#)

FY2023 HCF Participant Annual Report Due September 30, 2024

Per FCC Order 19-78, all Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) participants receiving RHC program funding are required to submit an annual report to USAC using the provided Excel template to supplement information collected in RHC program application forms. The reports for funding year 2023 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024) are due September 30, 2024. **This means that any health care provider (HCP) who received funding in FY2023 in the HCF Program is required to submit the annual report by September 30, 2024.**

All HCF Program participants, both individual and consortia, must submit an annual report for each funding year in which they received HCF Program support and for the life of a supported facility or service for which the program participant received large upfront payments. Email the completed report to RHC-Outreach@usac.org by September 30, 2024.

For instructions on how to complete and submit the FY2023 Annual Report, please visit the [Submit Annual Report](#) webpage.

Upcoming Webinars

Please join the RHC Outreach team for the following webinar:

- FY2025 Kick-Off Webinar on **Wednesday, July 17, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET** - [Register](#).

[Affordable Connectivity Program \(ACP\)](#)

ACP Wind-Down

Due to a lack of additional funding from Congress, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) has ended for now. Effective June 1, 2024, households will no longer receive an ACP discount. ACP households are encouraged to consult their internet company to learn more about how the end of the ACP will impact their internet service and bill.

If the ACP receives additional funding from Congress, the FCC and USAC will provide guidance to providers and households.

ACP households may also be eligible for the FCC's Lifeline program, which helps to lower the monthly cost of phone and/or internet service. The ACP and Lifeline are separate programs, and not all households that were previously in ACP will qualify for Lifeline.

For additional information and updates relating to the ACP wind-down, please visit [AffordableConnectivity.gov](https://affordableconnectivity.gov) or fcc.gov/acp. Consumers can visit [LifelineSupport.org](https://lifelinesupport.org) to apply for Lifeline and learn more about the program and eligibility requirements.

Lifeline

Safe Connections Act Background and Upcoming System Changes

On November 15, 2023, the FCC issued a Report and [Order](#) implementing the Safe Connections Act (SCA) of 2022 to help survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and related crimes. Under the SCA, survivors of domestic violence experiencing financial hardship will be able to qualify and receive emergency Lifeline support for up to six months.

Lifeline Support for Survivors

Survivors experiencing financial hardship will be able to apply for emergency support starting in August 2024 (exact timing is still to be determined). Qualifying survivors can receive a discount of \$9.25 on voice or internet service for up to six months. After six months, they may apply for the standard Lifeline benefit of up to \$9.25 for qualifying internet service or \$5.25 per month for voice service.

Survivors can confirm their financial hardship status based on the [existing Lifeline program qualification requirements](#), or they can receive emergency support from Lifeline under the SCA can demonstrate or self-certify that their household income is at or below [200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines](#) (FPG). Survivors can also qualify for emergency support if they participate in any of the following additional eligibility programs:

- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC),
- Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch or School Breakfast Program, including enrollment at a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school or school district, or
- Received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year.

Survivors will also need to provide valid documentation from their phone company proving they made a completed line separation request to receive emergency support from Lifeline. Once a survivor asks their phone company to separate their line, the phone company has two business days to comply and must respond with either an email, text message, or letter acknowledging the survivor's request. The line separation document must include the survivor's name, a date from within the last twelve months, and the name of the phone company. The request to separate a line does not need to be successfully completed by the phone company, who may be unable to complete the request because of some technical infeasibility, but proof of the request itself must be provided to qualify for emergency communications support.

Upcoming System Changes

USAC is making system updates in the National Verifier, National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD), and Lifeline Claims System (LCS) to flag and protect survivors' entries and treat survivors' information with greater sensitivity. Only a limited group of designated personnel will have access to survivors' information. Key system changes include:

- National Verifier: When survivors apply, they will be able to decide how USAC can reach them – either by mail or email. Consumers will only be able to apply through the consumer portal and mail at this time.

- NLAD: After a successful enroll, transfer, or update transaction, providers will see a new “SCA Status” field to identify whether a subscriber is a current SCA recipient, former SCA recipient, or not SCA eligible. This status is determined by the consumer’s National Verifier application. Primary and mailing address information will be masked in NLAD throughout the User Interface and masked in reports for all subscribers identified as survivors.
- LCS: Providers will see a new “SCA Subscriber” field on original claims and revision templates. If a subscriber is currently enrolled as a current SCA recipient, the “SCA Subscriber” field value will be set to 1 and can be claimed up to \$9.25 or up to \$34.25 (for those living on Tribal lands) for voice-only service. The value will be set to 0 for all other subscribers. Primary and mailing address information will also be masked on original claims and revision templates.

On July 9, USAC will update the [staging environments](#) for the National Verifier and NLAD, to allow providers to test how survivors will apply and get enrolled.

Upcoming Webinars

Please join the Lifeline Outreach team for the following webinars:

- Avoiding Common Audit Findings Webinar on **Wednesday, July 10, 2024, at 3 p.m. ET** - [Register](#).
- Information session for Service Providers on Survivors Under the Safe Connections Act on **Tuesday, July 30, 2024, at 3 p.m. ET** - [Register](#).

Recordings of previous webinars are available on the [Lifeline Webinars](#) page.

Key Dates and Trainings

E-Rate

2024 In-Person E-Rate Trainings:

- **September 17, 2024**, from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. CT in **Dallas, Texas** – [Register](#).
- **October 7, 2024**, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET in **Washington, DC** – [Register](#).
- **October 29, 2024**, from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. CT in **Fayetteville, Arkansas** – [Register](#).
- **Tribal-Focused E-Rate Training**: November 12, 2024, in Palm Springs, California. This Tribal-focused training will be held in conjunction with the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, & Museums' (ATALM) annual conference. To attend the E-Rate training, you must be registered for ATALM. To learn more, visit [ATALM's Annual Conference](#) page.

RHC

- **Wednesday, July 17, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET** – FY2025 Kick-Off Webinar - [Register](#).

Lifeline

- **Wednesday, July 10, 2024, at 3 p.m. ET** – Avoiding Common Audit Findings – [Register](#).
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USF Program Technical Assistance

The USAC Customer Service Center (CSC) provides customer service for all USF programs. Visit the [Contact USAC](#) page to get in touch with specialized agents trained to answer your program-specific questions.

Questions or Suggestions?

If you have questions or suggestions about Tribal universal service support, you may contact USAC’s Tribal Liaison,

Gem Labarta, at TribalLiaison@usac.org.

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