



ETC Designation Training

Tribal Training

March 11, 2025

Housekeeping

- Use the “Audio” section of your control panel to select an audio source and connect to sound
 - Turn on your computer’s speakers, or
 - Use the call-in instructions in your confirmation email
- All participants are on mute
- Use the “**Raise Your Hand**” button to be unmuted and ask a question to the team

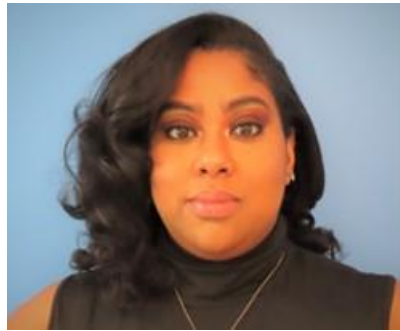
Disclaimer

To accommodate all attendees, real-time closed captions will be present during this presentation

We apologize in advance for any transcription errors or distractions and appreciate your understanding

Please be aware that this webinar will be recorded

Meet Our Team



Winta Woldu

Communications Specialist | Lifeline



Gem Shandiin Labarta

Tribal Liaison | Shared Services

Agenda

- Announcements
- Introduction
 - USAC Overview
- Join Lifeline as an ETC
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Resources

Announcements

Announcements

California Wildfires Relief

- On **January 16, 2025**, the Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released an [Order](#) that temporarily waives the annual recertification requirements and de-enrollment for failed recertification under the Lifeline rules for households receiving **broadband-only Lifeline service** in Affected Disaster Areas
- “Affected Disaster Areas” are defined as areas covered by the California Wildfires Event Declarations and any other Emergency Declarations or Major Disaster Declarations pertaining to the wildfires, including declarations that were issued in relation to recent California wildfires after release of this Order

Announcements

California Wildfires Relief (Continued)

- If USAC has already conducted recertification outreach, USAC will not conduct de-enrollments for any subscriber who would have been de-enrolled, and was not actually de-enrolled, after January 13, 2025
- **The waiver period under this order is through March 17, 2025**
- After this period, USAC will resume recertification efforts
- WCB also encourages the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to implement similar relief under the terms of this waiver for other Lifeline services that are not administered by USAC (i.e., qualifying bundled and voice-only services)
- As a reminder, California is an NLAD opt-out state, where USAC administers a broadband-only benefit
- Visit the Lifeline NLAD [opt-out states](#) page for more information

Introduction

Introduction

USAC Overview

- The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) is an independent, not-for-profit organization designated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as the permanent administrator of the Universal Service Fund (USF) and its four programs
 - The USF aims to ensure that all people in the United States have access to quality, affordable connectivity service
 - The FCC develops policies and regulations for all four programs and provides guidance to USAC
 - USAC administers the programs and educates stakeholders on processes, systems, and rules and requirements



Lifeline Program

Discounted phone and internet service to eligible low-income consumers.



E-Rate Program

Funding for broadband services to eligible schools and libraries.



Rural Health Care Program

Funding for telecom and broadband services for eligible rural health care providers.



High Cost Program

Reduced rates for telecom and broadband services in eligible high-cost areas.

Introduction

Lifeline Overview

The Lifeline program is a federal benefit program that helps low-income households pay for phone or internet service

- Eligible households can receive:

\$9.25 Standard Discount

Up to \$9.25/month discount for internet or bundled services or up to \$5.25/month for phone service that meets the [minimum service standards](#)

\$34.25 Tribal Discount

Up to \$34.25/month discount for households on [qualifying Tribal lands](#)

\$100 Link Up Discount

A one-time discount of up to \$100 off the initial setup fees at addresses on qualifying Tribal lands receiving voice service from certain service providers

\$9.25 Survivor Benefit

A \$9.25/month discount for phone, internet, or bundled services for up to 6 months for [survivors who qualify](#)

- The Lifeline benefit is limited to one monthly service discount per household

Questions?

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Overview

- An Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) is a service provider authorized to offer Lifeline-supported services to qualifying consumers and can receive reimbursement for providing such services
- Service providers must be designated as an ETC by their respective [State Public Utility Commission \(PUC\)](#) **or** by the FCC
- Providers who are designated as ETCs may offer qualifying services to consumers who reside on qualifying Tribal lands, if the designation order states that the provider has been authorized to operate as a Tribal provider for the specified service area

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Introduction

To participate in and offer Lifeline-supported services, a service provider must:



- If applicable, submit and obtain approval from the FCC
- Outline compliance plan with Lifeline rules
- Submit application to the FCC or State Public Utility Commission (PUC)
- Upon approval, the FCC or State PUC publishes the official order designating the provider as an ETC
- Send an email to LifelineProgram@usac.org to request a Study Area Code (SAC)
- USAC issues one SAC per state per designation order
- Request a 498 ID/SPIN or review existing 498 ID/SPIN

Note: All ETCs must comply with Lifeline [program rules](#)

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Step 1: Create and Submit a Compliance Plan (1/2)

- ETCs who will not provide service across their own facilities are required to submit a compliance plan with the FCC
 - The Wireline Competition Bureau's Lifeline Compliance Plan Guidance [Public Notice](#) outlines compliance plan requirements
- Providers that are facilities-based or offer a combination of facilities-based and non-facilities-based services may not be required to have a compliance plan approved by the FCC

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Step 1: Create and Submit a Compliance Plan (2/2)

- The compliance plan must include the following information about the service provider and the Lifeline plans it intends to offer:
 - The names and identifiers used by the service provider, its holding company, operating company and all affiliates
 - Detailed information demonstrating that the service provider is financially and technically capable of providing the supported Lifeline service
 - Geographic locations of the service provider's current service offerings if the service provider currently offers service
 - Terms and conditions of each Lifeline service plan offering, including rates, the number of minutes provided, and additional charges
 - All other certifications required under newly amended section [54.202](#) of the FCC's rules

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Step 2: Become an ETC (1/3)

- To offer Lifeline-supported services, service providers must be designated as an ETC by their State PUC **or** by the FCC
 - This designation is required for every state where the provider plans to offer Lifeline
- Service providers should contact their [State PUC](#) to initiate the ETC designation process, where the state provides this designation
- In states where the State PUC does not designate Lifeline ETCs, service providers must apply directly with the FCC for designation

Note: The same steps apply for Tribally operated or owned providers

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Step 2: Become an ETC (2/3)

- To obtain ETC designation from the FCC, a company must file a petition that:
 1. Demonstrates ETC designation jurisdiction rests with the FCC (or, in the case of Tribal service providers, argues where jurisdiction properly belongs)
 2. Certifies the company will comply with all service requirements for Lifeline, including that the company:
 - a) Acts as a common carrier offering voice telephony services meeting Lifeline requirements
 - b) Makes the supported service available to qualifying low-income consumers
 - c) Offers the supported service through its own facilities or a combination of its own facilities and resale of another carrier's services (or else provides a compliance plan warranting forbearance from this requirement)
 - d) Advertises the availability of services and related charges using generally distributed media
 - e) Agrees to comply with the FCC's document retention and reporting requirements
 3. Provides a detailed description of the service area for which the company requests designation
 4. Demonstrates the company's ability to remain functional in emergency situations

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Step 2: Become an ETC (3/3)

- In addition, the company's petition for ETC designation must:
 1. Demonstrate the company will satisfy applicable consumer protection and service quality standards
 2. Certify that neither the company, nor any party to the application, is subject to a denial of federal benefits pursuant to the [Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988](#)
- If the company is seeking Lifeline-only designation, the petition must also:
 1. Demonstrate the company is financially and technically capable of providing the Lifeline service in compliance with FCC rules
 2. Submit information describing the terms and conditions of any voice telephony plans offered to Lifeline subscribers

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Step 3: Obtain a Study Area Code (SAC)

- A Study Area Code (SAC) is a unique number that USAC assigns to ETCs that identifies the provider based on the service area where they are designated to offer the Lifeline services
- ETCs are issued one SAC per service area where they are designated to operate
- USAC uses the following information to complete a SAC request:
 1. The approved compliance plan (if applicable)
 2. The ETC's designation order
 3. Terms and conditions of Lifeline program service, including service plans
 4. 498 ID/SPIN and company contact information
 5. Any other supporting documentation asserting that the provider is approved to participate in Lifeline

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Step 4: Obtain a 498 ID/SPIN (1/2)

- A 498 ID, also known as Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN), is required to participate in Lifeline (and any of USAC's other programs)
 - This number is unique and assigned to each service provider by USAC
- The FCC [Form 498](#) collects service provider contact, billing, and collection information
 - Service providers register for a 498 ID/SPIN by visiting [E-File](#) in One Portal and completing the FCC Form 498
- For more information on how service providers can obtain and manage a 498 ID/SPIN, service providers can refer to our [Register for a 498 ID](#) page

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Step 4: Obtain a 498 ID/SPIN (2/2)

- To begin registration, service providers must register in [One Portal](#) and create an account
- To create an account, select “Service Provider – 498 ID” and then “Register Your Company”
- Once an account is created, SP’s register their company
- The FCC Form 498 will be saved in E-File and USAC will be notified to review the submission
- Once the registration is complete and approved, USAC will issue the 498 ID/SPIN

ETC Responsibilities

All Lifeline ETCs are responsible for complying with the Lifeline [program rules](#), including:

- Registering for Representative IDs in RAD to perform applicable transactions
- Ensuring Lifeline-eligible consumers have qualified through the National Verifier
- Enrolling Lifeline-qualified consumers in the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD)
- Preventing duplicate enrollments by ensuring that enrolled subscribers are not already enrolled by another service provider and keeping NLAD up to date
- Providing Lifeline subscribers with Lifeline-supported services that meet Lifeline's minimum service standards
- Submitting claims to receive reimbursement in the Lifeline Claims System
- Advertising Lifeline to their consumers

Frequently Asked Questions

Tips for ETC Designation

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How can Tribal-owned providers get designated for Lifeline?

If a service provider consults with its state's PUC and determines that the state does not have the authority to designate it as an ETC, it must seek designation through the FCC. If there is ambiguity about whether a state has jurisdiction over a Tribally owned service provider, they may petition the FCC for a determination of jurisdiction.

2. What is a 498 ID and how it is used for a SAC request?

A 498 ID (also known as SPIN) is required for all parties that participate in any of the four universal service programs and receive payment directly from USAC. This ID is a unique number assigned to each service provider by USAC and helps to ensure that approved reimbursement is directed to the correct service provider.

3. Can a non-ETC participate in Lifeline and receive a SAC?

No, only designated ETCs can participate in Lifeline and receive a SAC.

4. Do you need SAC to register for a 498 ID?

Yes, providers will need a SAC from USAC before they can sign up for a [498 ID/SPIN](#). Learn more about how to obtain a [SAC](#).

Questions?

Resources

Resources (1/2)

- Visit usac.org/lifeline for general information on Lifeline
- Becoming an ETC Resources:
 - The [Join Lifeline as an ETC](#) page to learn more about becoming a Lifeline ETC
 - [Lifeline Compliance Plan Guidance](#)
 - FCC
 - [State PUCs](#)
- Email LifelineProgram@usac.org for technical support and additional information on processes, rules, and requirements

Resources (2/2)

- [Tribal Flyer](#)
- [Tribal Toolkit](#)
- For general USAC Tribal information, visit the [Tribal Nations webpage](#)
- USAC's Lifeline website for service providers, state and federal partners, consumer advocates, and Tribal partners: usac.org/lifeline
 - Lifeline webpage for Tribal partners: [Enhanced Tribal Benefit Page](#)

Thank You

