

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

December 9, 2002

ALL-COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO.: I-89-02

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL IHSS PROGRAM MANAGERS
ALL APS PROGRAM MANAGERS

Reason For This Transmittal

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order or Settlement Agreement
- Clarification Requested by one or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

SUBJECT: INFORMATION ON THE "GET CONNECTED: AFFORD-A-PHONE"
CAMPAIGN FROM THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Attached is information that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) provided to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on their "Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone" campaign. The information provided describes two federal programs, "Lifeline" and "Link-Up", which are administered by the FCC. These programs offer telephone discounts to low-income consumers, including discounts on telephone hook-up charges and on monthly basic phone service. The attached information explains who qualifies for these programs and how people can apply.

Currently only 30 percent of eligible consumers take advantage of these programs. The focus of the FCC's campaign is to increase participation in these programs through increased public awareness. Your assistance in getting information out to people in your community who may qualify for these programs would be greatly appreciated.

The attached "Materials Order Form" allows counties to order additional copies of these publications directly from the FCC at no cost. These publications are also available electronically on the FCC's website at www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected.

We hope this information is beneficial to the applicants/recipients that you assist in the day-to-day operation of the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program and we thank you in advance for your assistance in providing this information to the consumers served by the programs we administer.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact your assigned analyst in the Adult Programs Branch, Program Operation Bureau, at (916) 229-4000.

Sincerely,

***Original Signed by
Donna L. Mandelstam***

DONNA L. MANDELSTAM
Deputy Director
Disability and Adult Programs Division

Attachments



NEWS

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20554

News media information 202 / 418-0500-
TTY 202 / 418-2555
Fax-On-Demand 202 / 418-2830
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>
<ftp.fcc.gov>

This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 388 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 22, 2002

NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:
Rosemary Kimball at (202) 418-0511
e-mail: rkimball@fcc.gov

**FCC KICKS OFF CAMPAIGN TO EDUCATE CONSUMERS ABOUT PHONE
SERVICE PROGRAMS FOR LOW-INCOME CONSUMERS**
Lifeline and Link-Up Programs Provide Discounted Phone Service to Eligible Consumers

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced the kickoff of “**Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone**,” a national public education campaign to educate consumers about the Lifeline Assistance (Lifeline) and Link-Up America (Link-Up) programs. The announcement was made by the Chief of the FCC’s Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, K. Dane Snowden, at a ceremony in Washington, DC, sponsored by the D.C. Public Service Commission, on Friday, July 19, and during a joint radio appearance on July 20 with District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams.

The Lifeline and Link-Up programs provide discounts on initial telephone installation and basic monthly telephone service to qualifying low-income consumers.

The FCC’s “**Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone**” campaign is providing information to potential Lifeline and Link-Up subscribers through federal, state, tribal and local governments, and social service, community, and faith-based organizations. Low-income consumers are encouraged to contact their local phone companies to see if they are eligible to receive Lifeline and Link-Up discounts. Consumer questions can be directed to the FCC by writing Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone, FCC, Washington, DC 20554, calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322)-voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322)-TTY, or visiting the Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected.

These programs are components of the Universal Service Fund.

Snowden said, “Lifeline and Link-Up are designed to ensure that everyone in this country has access to basic telephone service. Phone service is not only a convenience, but a necessity. It is our link to emergency services, the way we look for jobs and the way we stay in touch with our families. By launching the ‘**Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone**’ campaign, the FCC is committed to making sure eligible families are aware of the Lifeline and Link-Up programs.”

It has been our nation’s policy to promote telephone service to all households since this service began in the 1930s. Since 1984, Lifeline has promoted universal service by providing low-income individuals with monthly discounts on the cost of receiving telephone service. The Commission established Link-Up to help low-income individuals pay the initial costs of getting

telephone service. In June 2000, the FCC expanded the Lifeline and Link-Up programs to provide additional discounts to qualifying individuals living on tribal lands.

Lifeline and Link-Up are available to qualifying consumers in every U. S. state, territory and commonwealth. Qualifications for participation vary by state. States with their own programs have their own criteria. In states that rely solely on the federal program, the subscriber must participate in one of the following programs: Medicaid, food stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance, or the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

The Lifeline program provides certain discounts on monthly service for qualified telephone subscribers. These amounts vary, depending on the state. Link-Up helps qualified low-income consumers to connect, or hook up, to the telephone network. This federal program offsets one-half of the initial hook-up fee, up to \$30.00, for qualified households. The program also includes a plan to encourage local telephone companies to offer low-income telephone subscribers a deferred payment schedule for these charges.

Residents of American Indian and Alaskan Native tribal lands may qualify for an additional \$25 of enhanced Lifeline support monthly and up to \$70 of expanded Link-Up support beyond current levels. An individual living on tribal lands may also qualify for Lifeline and Link-Up discounts if he or she participates in one of the following federal programs: Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Head Start (income qualifying standard), or the National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program.

Phone companies support Lifeline, Link-Up and other Universal Service programs through contributions paid into the Universal Service Fund. The contribution is based on a percentage of their interstate and international revenues. Companies often recover their contributions to the fund by adding a line item on their phone bills called "Universal Service."

-FCC-

Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau contact: Janice Wise at (202) 418-8165 (voice), (202) 418-0200 (TTY), or e-mail jwise@fcc.gov.

Note to Editors: Materials for the "Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone" campaign can be found at www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected.

For electronic updates on this and other FCC consumer topics, click on www.fcc.gov/cgb/emailservice.html.

News about the Federal Communications Commission can also be found on the Commission's Web site, www.fcc.gov.

Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone Facts

-  The **Lifeline and Link-Up** programs provided more than \$550 million in support to qualified low-income consumers in 2002.
-  More than 5 million consumers benefit from **Lifeline and Link-Up** discounts each year.
-  More than 1,500 telephone companies in the United States and U.S. territories participate in **Lifeline and Link-Up**.
-  Both wireline and wireless companies participate in **Lifeline and Link-Up**. Contact your local wireless or wireline phone company for more information.



For more information on programs to help you afford phone service, contact the Federal Communications Commission by phone or visit our Web site, www.fcc.gov/cgb



Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone



A Publication of the
Federal Communications Commission
1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice
1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY
www.fcc.gov/cgb

Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone

What are Lifeline and Link-Up?

Lifeline and Link-Up are federal programs offering telephone discounts to low-income consumers in all U.S. states and territories. The discounts cover both wireline and wireless phones.

Those who qualify may receive discounts of up to \$30 on telephone hook-up charges (Link-Up) and between \$6.75 and \$9.50 on monthly basic phone service (Lifeline), depending on where you live. Additionally, some states give matching discounts, so you may save even more.

Who Qualifies?

Different states have different rules about eligibility, but generally, if you receive one of the following, you may qualify: Medicaid, food stamps, Supplemental Security Income, federal public housing assistance, or Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP). Call your local telephone company or state regulatory agency (like the Public Utilities Commission) to see if you qualify.

How Can I Sign Up?

To apply for Lifeline and/or Link-Up, call your local telephone company. For more information, contact the FCC at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY, or by mail at FCC, 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20554. You may also visit the FCC's Web site, www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected.

*"I'm on Supplemental Security. I found out that **Lifeline** could save me \$9.50 a month. That would really help!"*



*"Our school gave us a computer. Because of **Lifeline and Link-Up**, our parents were able to get a phone. Now we can use the Internet to help with our homework."*

*"I called the number in my state to find out if I qualify for **Link-Up**. It helped pay for my phone hook-up."*



*"I needed a phone for my family's health and safety. Now I can afford phone service through **Lifeline and Link-Up**."*

Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone

For more information about **Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone**, visit our Web site at:

[www.fcc.gov/cgb/
getconnected](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected)

Or call or write us at:

1-888-CALL-FCC
(1-888-225-5322) voice
1-888-TELL-FCC
(1-888-835-5322) TTY

FCC Get Connected
445 12th Street, SW
Washington DC 20554.

For questions about eligibility or participation, contact your local telephone company or your state's regulatory agency, like the Public Utilities Commission.

To find out how to reach your state's regulatory agency, visit the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners' Web site at:

www.naruc.org



NEWS

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The Lifeline and Link-Up programs provide discounts on initial telephone installation and basic monthly telephone service to qualifying low-income consumers.

The FCC’s “**Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone**” campaign is providing information to potential Lifeline and Link-Up subscribers through federal, state, tribal and local governments, and social service, community, and faith-based organizations. Low-income consumers are encouraged to contact their local phone companies to see if they are eligible to receive Lifeline and Link-Up discounts. Consumer questions can be directed to the FCC by writing Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone, FCC, Washington, DC 20554, calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322)-voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322)-TTY, or visiting the Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected.

These programs are components of the Universal Service Fund.

Snowden said, “Lifeline and Link-Up are designed to ensure that everyone in this country has access to basic telephone service. Phone service is not only a convenience, but a necessity. It is our link to emergency services, the way we look for jobs and the way we stay in touch with our families. By launching the ‘**Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone**’ campaign, the FCC is committed to making sure eligible families are aware of the Lifeline and Link-Up programs.”

It has been our nation’s policy to promote telephone service to all households since this service began in the 1930s. Since 1984, Lifeline has promoted universal service by providing low-income individuals with monthly discounts on the cost of receiving telephone service. The Commission established Link-Up to help low-income individuals pay the initial costs of getting

telephone service. In June 2000, the FCC expanded the Lifeline and Link-Up programs to provide additional discounts to qualifying individuals living on tribal lands.

Lifeline and Link-Up are available to qualifying consumers in every U. S. state, territory and commonwealth. Qualifications for participation vary by state. States with their own programs have their own criteria. In states that rely solely on the federal program, the subscriber must participate in one of the following programs: Medicaid, food stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance, or the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

The Lifeline program provides certain discounts on monthly service for qualified telephone subscribers. These amounts vary, depending on the state. Link-Up helps qualified low-income consumers to connect, or hook up, to the telephone network. This federal program offsets one-half of the initial hook-up fee, up to \$30.00, for qualified households. The program also includes a plan to encourage local telephone companies to offer low-income telephone subscribers a deferred payment schedule for these charges.

Residents of American Indian and Alaskan Native tribal lands may qualify for an additional \$25 of enhanced Lifeline support monthly and up to \$70 of expanded Link-Up support beyond current levels. An individual living on tribal lands may also qualify for Lifeline and Link-Up discounts if he or she participates in one of the following federal programs: Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Head Start (income qualifying standard), or the National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program.

Phone companies support Lifeline, Link-Up and other Universal Service programs through contributions paid into the Universal Service Fund. The contribution is based on a percentage of their interstate and international revenues. Companies often recover their contributions to the fund by adding a line item on their phone bills called "Universal Service."

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News about the Federal Communications Commission can also be found on the Commission's Web site, www.fcc.gov.

Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone

A Lifeline Assistance and Link-Up America Outreach Campaign

What Are Lifeline and Link-Up?

The Lifeline telephone discount program, also known as "Lifeline Assistance," gives people with low incomes a discount on the basic monthly service for either their wireline or wireless phone. The Link-Up America program pays for a portion of your wireline or wireless installation or activation fee excluding the handset.

How Much Are the Discounts?

Federal Lifeline discounts on phone bills range from \$6.75 to \$8.50 per month, depending on your state of residence. Some states give matching discounts, so you may save even more, depending on where you live. The federal Link-Up America program pays for one-half of your wireline or wireless installation or activation fee, not including the handset, up to \$30. Consumers living on tribal lands may qualify for additional Lifeline and Link-Up discounts.

Who Qualifies to Receive Lifeline and Link-Up Discounts?

Qualifications to participate in these two programs can vary by state. Some states have their own Lifeline program and criteria. For those states that rely solely on the federal Low-Income program, applicants must participate in one of the following programs: Medicaid, food stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), federal public housing assistance, or in the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Additionally, consumers living on tribal lands may qualify for further discounts if they receive Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a Head Start (income-qualifying standard) subsidy, or participate in the National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program.

How Can I Sign Up?

You can sign up for Lifeline and/or Link-Up by contacting your local telephone company. If you run into any problems, contact your telephone company, your state regulatory agency, and/or the FCC. The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners Web site, www.naruc.org, includes all state public service commissions. To contact the FCC, call 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322)-voice, or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322)-TTY, or write FCC, 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20554.

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Telephone Discount Programs...Get Connected!

**Can't afford telephone service?
A discount on your phone bill may help!**

Savings on hook-up charges and basic monthly phone bills are available in all U.S. states and territories. If you receive Medicaid, food stamps, Supplemental Security Income, federal public housing assistance, or Low-Income Home Energy Assistance, you may qualify. To see if you are eligible for the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Link-Up America and the Lifeline Assistance Program, call your local phone company or contact the FCC at 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20554, 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322), voice; 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322), TTY; or visit the Commission's Web site at:

www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected

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Sample Newsletter Article

Getting Connected May Be a Phone Call Away

Few can argue that having a telephone is considered one of life's necessities, yet not everyone has the ability to pay for this staple of modern American life. So what is being done to make telephone service more accessible to low-income consumers?

The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Universal Service Fund includes a Low-Income Program that provides discounts on telephone installation and monthly telephone service to qualifying consumers. Link-Up America and the Lifeline Assistance Program are the two components of this program. Here's what each provides:

Link-Up America: help for qualified low-income consumers to connect (or hook up) to the telephone network by offsetting one-half of the initial hook-up fee, up to \$30.00 for qualified households.

Lifeline Assistance Program: discounts on basic monthly service for qualified subscribers. These amounts range from \$6.75 to \$8.50 per month, depending on the consumer's state regulatory authority.

Qualifications to participate in these two programs can vary by state. Some states have their own Lifeline program and criteria. For those states that rely solely on the federal Low-Income Program, applicants must participate in one of the following programs: Medicaid, food stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), federal public housing assistance, or in the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Additionally, consumers living on tribal lands may qualify for further discounts if they receive Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a Head Start (income-qualifying standard) subsidy, or participate in the National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program.

As K. Dane Snowden, Chief of the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau said, "Link-Up America and the Lifeline Assistance Program ensure that everyone in this country has affordable telephone service – a vital link to 911, the way we look for jobs and how we stay in touch with our families and friends."

If you are a low-income consumer, getting connected may be a phone call away. Call your local telephone company or state regulatory agency to see if you qualify for discounts under Link-Up America and the Lifeline Assistance Program. The telephone number for your state regulatory agency can be found on the Web site of the National Association of Regulatory Commissioners at www.naruc.org. You can also contact the FCC's Consumer Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322)-voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322)-TTY, write the FCC at 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20554, or check their Web site at www.fcc.gov for more information.

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Op ed Article

Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone

by

K. Dane Snowden

Chief, Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Federal Communications Commission

Telephones are a critical part of everyone's life, yet a small segment of the U.S. population actually has no access to telephone service of any kind. Some people may be living on incomes too limited to permit the cost of hooking up a telephone or paying even the basic monthly service fees.

To combat this problem, there are two programs available to qualified consumers, Link-Up America and the Lifeline Assistance Program.

Administered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), these programs complement similar efforts in most states to ensure that low-income consumers, including seniors living on a modest income, receive discounts on telephone installation and basic monthly telephone service.

There's no longer any need to do without basic, "lifeline" telephone service.

First, the "Link-Up America" program helps qualified low-income consumers to connect to the telephone network by offsetting one-half of the initial hook-up fee, up to \$30.00. The program also includes a plan to encourage local telephone companies to offer low-income telephone subscribers a deferred payment schedule for the consumer's discounted hook-up fee, whatever that might be.

Second, the "Lifeline Assistance Program" provides certain discounts on basic monthly service for qualified telephone subscribers. These amounts range from \$6.75 to \$8.50 per month, depending on whether the consumer's state has a similar program.

Qualifications for participation in these programs vary by state, and some states have their own State Lifeline programs and their own criteria for qualification. In states relying solely on the Federal program, an applicant must participate in one of the following programs: Medicaid, food stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), federal public housing assistance, or the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Additionally, consumers living on tribal lands may qualify for further discounts if they receive Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a Head Start (income-qualifying standard) subsidy, or participate in the National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program.

Anyone who would like to take advantage of the Link-Up and Lifeline programs or anyone who would like to help someone else establish "lifeline" telephone service, should contact his or her local telephone company or state regulatory agency for information. The telephone number for a state regulatory agency can be found on the Web site of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners at www.naruc.org, or in the blue "government" pages of the telephone directory.

In addition, you can contact the FCC's Consumer Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322), voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322), TTY, write the FCC at 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20554, or check our Web site, www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected, for more information. You can also subscribe to the FCC's electronic information service to receive updates on this and other FCC activities. To sign up, click on www.fcc.gov/cgb/emailservice.html.

(This article is an unofficial announcement. Only release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. For information, consult the FCC Web site, www.fcc.gov, or call 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322), voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322), TTY.)

Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone

**A Link-Up America and Lifeline Assistance Program
Outreach Campaign**

**Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554**

Sample Public Service Announcement Scripts

0:15 41 Words

GET CONNECTED WITH "AFFORD-A-PHONE" FROM THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION. IF YOU RECEIVE FOOD STAMPS OR SIMILAR BENEFITS YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR DISCOUNTED TELEPHONE SERVICE. CONTACT YOUR LOCAL PHONE COMPANY OR WRITE GET CONNECTED: AFFORD-A-PHONE, FCC, WASHINGTON, DC 20554, OR CALL 1-888-CALL-FCC.

0:20 48 Words

GET CONNECTED WITH "AFFORD-A-PHONE" FROM THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION. IF YOU RECEIVE FOOD STAMPS, MEDICAID, FEDERAL HOUSING, ENERGY, OR SIMILAR BENEFITS, YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR DISCOUNTED "LIFELINE AND LINK-UP" PHONE SERVICE. CONTACT YOUR LOCAL PHONE COMPANY OR WRITE GET CONNECTED: AFFORD-A-PHONE, FCC, WASHINGTON, DC 20554, OR CALL 1-888-CALL-FCC.

0:30 64 Words

GET CONNECTED WITH "AFFORD-A-PHONE" FROM THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION. IF YOU RECEIVE FOOD STAMPS, MEDICAID, SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI), FEDERAL HOUSING, ENERGY, OR SIMILAR BENEFITS, YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR DISCOUNTED "LIFELINE AND LINK-UP" TELEPHONE SERVICE. IF YOU THINK YOU QUALIFY OR KNOW SOMEONE WHO MIGHT, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL PHONE COMPANY OR WRITE GET CONNECTED: AFFORD-A-PHONE, FCC, WASHINGTON, DC 20554, OR CALL 1-888-CALL-FCC; THAT'S 1-888-CALL-FCC.

THE FCC'S UNIVERSAL SERVICE SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Background – The Universal Service Programs

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Congress recognize that telephone service provides a vital link to emergency services, government services, and surrounding communities. To help promote telecommunications service nationwide, the FCC, as directed by Congress, developed the Federal Universal Service Fund. There are four components to the Federal Universal Service Fund. They are:

- **Low-Income.** This program provides telephone service discounts to consumers with qualifying low-incomes.
- **High-Cost.** This program provides financial support to companies that provide telecommunications services in areas of America where the cost of providing service is high.
- **Schools and Libraries.** This program helps to ensure that the nation's classrooms and libraries receive access to the vast array of educational resources that are accessible through the telecommunications network.
- **Rural Health Care.** This program helps to link health care providers located in rural areas to urban medical centers so that patients living in rural America will have access to the same advanced diagnostic and other medical services that are enjoyed in urban communities.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT UNIVERSAL SERVICE

Who Pays for Universal Service?

- Currently, Universal Service is supported by all telecommunications carriers that provide service between states and internationally. This includes long distance companies, local telephone companies, wireless telephone companies, paging companies, and payphone providers.
- Carriers pay contributions into one central fund. The FCC makes payments from this central fund to support the four Universal Service programs.

How Much do Companies Contribute for Universal Service?

- Companies contribute a certain percentage of the amount billed to their residential and business customers for interstate telecommunications services. The exact percentage that companies contribute is adjusted every quarter based on projected Universal Service demands.



My Telephone Bill Lists Universal Service Charges. Does the FCC Require Telephone Companies to Pass on Their Contributions to the Universal Service Fund to Their Customers?

- The FCC does not require companies to recover their contributions directly from their customers. Each company makes a business decision about whether and how to assess customers to recover Universal Service costs. Some companies do not impose specific Universal Service charges on customer bills.

Does the FCC's Schools and Libraries Support Mechanism Duplicate State and Local Efforts?

- No. The FCC's plan complements the efforts of states and localities to link the nation's classrooms and libraries to the information superhighway. Universal Service support provides discounts only for telecommunications services, Internet access, and internal connections. The discounts range from 20 to 90 percent, depending on the income level and whether the school or library is located in a rural area.

I Can't Afford to Pay Full Price for Telephone Service. What Federal Programs Provide Financial Assistance?

- **LinkUp America** helps qualified low-income consumers to connect, or hook up, to the telephone network. This federal program offsets one-half of the initial hook-up fee, up to \$30.00, for qualified households. The program also includes a plan to encourage local telephone companies to offer low-income telephone subscribers a deferred payment schedule for these charges.
- **The Lifeline Assistance Program** provides certain discounts on monthly service for qualified telephone subscribers. These amounts range from \$5.25 to \$7.85 per month, depending on the actions of authorities in your state.
- Residents of Native American Indian and Alaska Native tribal communities may qualify for enhanced Lifeline support (up to an additional \$25.00 in support beyond current levels) and expanded LinkUp support (up to \$70.00 in additional support beyond current levels).
- The Lifeline and LinkUp programs are available to qualifying consumers in every state, territory, and commonwealth. You should contact your local telephone company or your state regulatory agency for information about these programs and to determine whether or not you qualify for financial assistance under these programs. The telephone number for your state regulatory agency can be found on the Web site of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners: www.naruc.org.



TIPS FOR CONSUMERS

- **Remember** - The FCC does not require your phone company to place Universal Service charges on your bill. Telephone companies are taking very different approaches to whether and how they recover Universal Service costs from their customers.
- Let your company know if you believe these charges are inappropriate or are too high. It's in the company's best interest to meet the needs of its customers.
- Companies compete for your telephone business, so shop around. Call other companies and ask if they add these types of charges to their customers' bills. Ask companies to explain how these charges are calculated and exactly what amount would appear on your bill.
- If you have a contract with your telephone company, carefully read the contract to see if the company is allowed to add new charges or surcharges to your bill.

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010524



Telephone Discount Programs...Get Connected!

Can't afford telephone service? A discount on your phone bill may help! There are programs that offer savings on telephone bills and hook up charges in all U.S. states and territories, if you qualify. Click on the Federal Communications Commission's Web site, www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected, to learn more!

Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone

A Link-Up America and Lifeline Assistance Program Outreach Campaign

Backgrounder

The Universal Service Fund

Universal service has been a goal of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), state utility regulators, and industry for decades. The Communications Act of 1934 first codified the goal as: "To make available, so far as possible, to all the people of the United States a rapid, efficient Nation-wide, and world-wide wire and radio communication service with adequate facilities at reasonable charges." The Telecommunications Act of 1996 reaffirmed this goal by establishing policies for the "preservation and advancement of Universal Service."

Until 1996, the Universal Service Fund compensated telecommunications companies that provided service to both low-income communities as well as rural areas where the cost of providing service was high. In the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Congress expanded the reach of the Universal Service Fund. The Universal Service Fund now encompasses four programs that support telecommunications services nationwide. These include: Low-Income, High-Cost, Schools and Libraries, and Rural Health Care. Link-Up America (Link-Up) and the Lifeline Assistance Program (Lifeline) are part of the Fund's Low-Income Program and are described in detail below.

The Universal Service Fund is generated through contributions from telecommunications providers in the United States, including local and long distance phone companies, wireless and paging companies and payphone providers. Contributions are based on a percentage of these providers' interstate and international end-user telecommunications revenues. These providers, in turn, typically recover the cost of contributions from their customers, often through a line item on customer bills.

The Universal Service Administrative Company administers the Universal Service Fund under the direction of the FCC. Although consumers benefit from the Universal Service Fund, only companies that provide telecommunications service may draw money directly out of the Universal Service Fund, which defrays the cost of delivering discounted service to consumers.

In order for a telecommunications carrier to receive Universal Service high cost and low-income funding, the carrier must be designated an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC). To obtain ETC certification, a local telephone company must demonstrate it offers the services supported by Federal universal service support mechanisms. ETCs are also required to publicize the availability of Link-Up and Lifeline support in a manner designed to reach those consumers who would likely qualify for the discounts.

States have primary responsibility for making ETC designations. The FCC has jurisdiction to designate ETCs if a carrier is not subject to state jurisdiction, such as certain carriers on tribal lands. As a practical matter, most local exchange carriers, and certain wireless carriers, are ETCs.

Link-Up America

Consumers qualifying for Link-Up America support are eligible to save up to 50% on initial installation fees, not to exceed \$30 per household. In other words, up to \$30 of the first \$60 of their initial hook-up bill. Participants may also work with their telephone company to establish a deferred payment schedule for remaining costs of up to \$200. Consumers living on American Indian or Alaskan Native tribal lands may also qualify for an additional \$70 to defray initial connection charges.

Lifeline Assistance Program

The Lifeline Assistance Program enables eligible low-income consumers to save from at least \$6.75 to \$8.50 on their basic monthly telephone service fee depending on the state where the consumer lives. Residents of tribal lands may be eligible for an additional \$25 in savings on their basic monthly phone bill.

Eligibility for Link-Up and Lifeline Programs

Consumer qualifications for participation in these Low-Income Programs vary by state. Individuals whose states have their own state telephone assistance programs must meet criteria established by their state commission. In states that do not provide state support, consumers may be eligible if they currently participate in one or more of the following federal programs:

- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), or any official Home Energy Assistance Program
- Federal Public Housing Assistance, or Section 8
- Medicaid
- Food Stamps
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Beginning in October 2000, the Low-Income Program was expanded to provide additional support to low-income consumers living on tribal lands. Broader consumer qualification criteria for Link-Up and Lifeline were also established to include means-tested or income-based programs in which low-income consumers living on tribal lands are more likely to participate. Consumers living on tribal lands may rely on participation in any of the following programs to establish eligibility:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANF)
- Head Start (those meeting its income qualifying standard)
- National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program

Important Notes on Link-Up and Lifeline for Eligible Consumers Nationwide

- Link-Up and Lifeline are available for both wireline and wireless telephone services.
- If the consumer moves, and still qualifies, Link-Up assistance may also be available to help reduce telephone service connection charges at a new home. Consumers may receive the Link-Up reduction more than once only if they change residences.
- If a qualifying consumer voluntarily elects toll blocking, where available, their carrier is not permitted to charge a service deposit to initiate Lifeline service. Where toll blocking is not available, the carrier is permitted to charge a service deposit.
- Link-Up does not reduce or eliminate any permissible security deposits. Link-Up customers are still responsible for security deposits.
- The named subscriber to the local telecommunications service (rather than a member of the household) must qualify for participation.

Important Notes for Eligible Consumers Living on Tribal Lands

- The additional \$70 Link-Up support covers 100% of the charges between \$60 and \$130 for commencing service at the subscriber's place of residence.
- The additional \$25 in Lifeline assistance does not override the requirement that a subscriber pay at least \$1 for basic monthly telephone service.
- Supported Link-Up connection charges include any charges the carrier customarily assesses to connect subscribers to the telephone network, including facilities-based charges associated with line extensions or the construction of facilities needed to initiate service.
- The Link-Up discount does not apply to charges for facilities or equipment that fall on the customer's side of the demarcation point (for example, inside wiring).

Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone

**A Link-Up America and Lifeline Assistance Program
Outreach Campaign**

**Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554**

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Note: Please send all Order Forms to the FCC, c/o Janice Wise, at the above address. These materials can also be downloaded from our Web site, www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected, and are available in alternate formats (Braille, large font, other).