Telephone Lifeline Program

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Telephone Lifeline Program Basics

- Offers discount on telephone bill
- New York’s program in effect since 1985
- Offered by incumbent local landline telecommunications companies, some competitive landline telecommunications companies, and wireless companies
Telephone Lifeline Program Basics

- Funding for the Lifeline discount comes from a combination of support from both the Federal Government and New York State and is given directly to the company providing the Lifeline service.

- Wireless Companies do not receive the New York State portion of the funding.
Lifeline Program Elements

- Offers reduced basic service rate – Amount dependent upon customer’s designated local telecommunications company
- Waiver of the Federal subscriber line charge
- Various affordable wireless Lifeline packages
- 42 companies currently serve approximately 100,000 wireline lifeline customers Statewide – 2 years ago, there were 150,000!
Lifeline Eligibility Criteria

Customers are eligible if enrolled in these programs:

- Family Assistance
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly Food Stamps
- HEAP
- Medicaid
- Safety Net Assistance
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Veteran’s Disability & Surviving Spouse Pension
- National School Lunch Program
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
Income Eligibility

- Can qualify to receive Lifeline based on annual gross income.
- Income must be at or below 135% of Federal Poverty Guidelines
- Customer needs to provide documentation of income eligibility
- Documentation includes state or federal tax returns, social security statement of benefits, unemployment statements, child support awards, among others.
FCC Order 12-11 Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization (2/6/12)

- Lifeline limited to a single discount per household.
- All Lifeline customers need to be recertified annually.
- Lifeline customers required to provide last 4 digits of social security number and birthdate.
- Companies conduct a database match to help eliminate duplication.
Lifeline Customer Certifications

☐ Whether address is temporary or permanent.
☐ Only one Lifeline discount per household.
☐ Agree not to transfer Lifeline benefit to another person.
☐ Agree to notify phone company if moving to another address.
☐ Agree to notify phone company if no longer receiving federal or state benefits.
Lifeline Customer Certifications

- Agree to participate in annual certification of eligibility.
- Acknowledge that providing false or fraudulent information is punishable by law.
What’s New???

□ On March 31, 2016, FCC approved changes to Lifeline program to support stand-alone broadband service as well as bundled voice and data service packages.

□ Phases in Federal broadband support as Federal support for stand-alone voice service is phased out by December 1, 2021. (Except in areas where there is only one Lifeline provider)
What’s New???

- Provides for a National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier and Database

- No decision yet on how New York Public Service Commission will react to this new plan