

## **History of the Lifeline Program**

**1934-** The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is created by the Federal Communications Act of 1934. The goal of the FCC is to regulate interstate communication and to make a nationwide communication and radio system available to all Americans

**1985-** The Lifeline Assistance Program is established to help provide low-income families with affordable, basic, landline telephone options.

**1996-** The Telecommunications Act of 1996 creates the Universal Service Fund (USF). The Act states that all telecommunications carriers must contribute to the USF, which is used to provide low-income families with Lifeline Assistance.

**1997-** The Universal Service Administration Company (USAC) is created to manage the four branches of the USF (High Cost Program, Low Income Lifeline Program, Schools and Libraries Program, and Rural Healthcare Program) and to collect contributions from telecommunications carriers for the USF. The USAC is an independent, non-profit company that is regulated by the FCC.

**2005-** Wireless telephone service (cellphones) is included into the Lifeline Assistance Program.

**2012-** The FCC adopts a reform which eliminated waste, abuse, and fraud, saving over two billion dollars during the first three years it was in effect.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How is Lifeline funded by the Federal Universal Service Fund?**

Lifeline is funded by the Federal Universal Service Fund, which is comprised of contributions from telecommunications carriers. Customers' telephone bill payments are assessed by the company to contribute to the USF.

### **Only one Lifeline service is available per household. What should I do if I know someone who has two Lifeline phones?**

The FCC's Enforcement Bureau maintains a **dedicated Lifeline Fraud Tip Line – 1-855-4LL-TIPS (or 1-855-455-8477)**, and an email address, [Lifelinetips@fcc.gov](mailto:Lifelinetips@fcc.gov) – to facilitate reporting of possible fraud in the program. Callers are encouraged to provide as much detail as possible, including the name and contact information of the individuals involved and the companies they are using to receive Lifeline-supported phone service. While callers may remain anonymous, the Bureau urges callers to provide a contact phone number in case additional information is needed.

### **Who qualifies for Lifeline?**

Lifeline is available to any eligible consumer. Consumers must either have an income at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or participate in one of the following assistance programs:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps or SNAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)

- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- National School Free Lunch Program

**Additional Resources:**

[Federal Communications Commission \(FCC\) Lifeline Information](#)

[National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners](#)

[Universal Service Administrative Company](#)