



**For Immediate Release**



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### **Stay Connected with Lifeline Telephone Assistance**

**Columbia, S.C.** – Staying connected to local resources and emergency services can improve quality of life and possibly save lives. Access to local emergency services and community resources is vital to our residents. The Office of Regulatory Staff and the Public Service Commission of South Carolina want residents to *stay connected* and are reaching out to those who need telephone service but cannot afford it.

Governor Nikki Haley has proclaimed September 10-16, 2012, to be Telephone Discount Lifeline Awareness Week in South Carolina. The Lifeline assistance program offers discounts to help residents have access to telephone service.

More than 200,000 households in South Carolina participate in the Lifeline telephone program, and recent reforms could make the program more accessible than ever.

As of June 1, 2012, any household with a member on Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, Section 8, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), school free lunch, or the Low Income Heating Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can qualify for assistance. In addition, if the household income falls below 135% of the Federal Poverty Level, then a telephone customer may qualify for Lifeline benefits, even if he or she does not participate in any of these assistance programs.

One significant change to Lifeline in recent months has been the addition of wireless phones to the program. Now a South Carolina consumer can choose to have the

discount applied as a credit to a landline phone or can choose to receive \$12.75 worth of free minutes applied to a Lifeline cell phone (about 250 minutes). The cell phone plans have no up-front costs or contracts and are an alternative for customers who need the mobility of wireless service but cannot afford a hefty wireless plan.

Consumers who are interested in the Lifeline discount should contact their local telephone provider or the Office of Regulatory Staff by phone (1-866-788-6565) or on the web ([www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov](http://www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov)) for more information.

*The Public Service Commission serves the public by providing fair, open, and effective regulation of the state's public utilities, through the faithful administration of the law and the regulatory process. For more information, please visit the PSC web site at <http://www.psc.sc.gov>.*

*The Office of Regulatory Staff is an agency of the State of South Carolina. Its mission is to represent the public interest in utility regulation by balancing the concerns of the using and consuming public, the financial integrity of public utilities, and the economic development of South Carolina. For more information, please visit the ORS web site at <http://www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov>.*

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