

Federal Communications Commission

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subpart, has obtained valid certification and re-certification forms for each of the subscribers for whom it is seeking reimbursement.

(e) In order to receive universal service support reimbursement, an eligible telecommunications carrier must keep accurate records of the revenues it forgoes in providing Lifeline services. Such records shall be kept in the form directed by the Administrator and provided to the Administrator at intervals as directed by the Administrator or as provided in this subpart.

[77 FR 12970, Mar. 2, 2012, as amended at 77 FR 38534, June 28, 2012; 80 FR 35577, June 22, 2015; 80 FR 40935, July 14, 2015]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 80 FR 40935, July 14, 2015, § 54.407 was amended by revising paragraphs (a) and (b). These paragraphs contain information collection and record-keeping requirements and will not become effective until approval has been given by the Office of Management and Budget.

§ 54.409 Consumer qualification for Lifeline.

(a) To constitute a qualifying low-income consumer:

(1) A consumer's household income as defined in § 54.400(f) must be at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a household of that size; or

(2) The consumer, one or more of the consumer's dependents, or the consumer's household must receive benefits from one of the following federal assistance programs: Medicaid; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Supplemental Security Income; Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8); Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program; National School Lunch Program's free lunch program; or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; or

(3) The consumer meets additional eligibility criteria established by a state for its residents, provided that such-state specific criteria are based solely on income or other factors directly related to income.

(b) A consumer who lives on Tribal lands is eligible for Lifeline service as a "qualifying low-income consumer" as defined by § 54.400(a) and as an "eligible resident of Tribal lands" as defined by § 54.400(e) if that consumer meets the qualifications for Lifeline specified in

paragraph (a) of this section or if the consumer, one or more of the consumer's dependents, or the consumer's household participates in one of the following Tribal-specific federal assistance programs: Bureau of Indian Affairs general assistance; Tribally administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Head Start (only those households meeting its income qualifying standard); or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

(c) In addition to meeting the qualifications provided in paragraph (a) or (b) of this section, in order to constitute a qualifying low-income consumer, a consumer must not already be receiving a Lifeline service, and there must not be anyone else in the subscriber's household subscribed to a Lifeline service.

[77 FR 12970, Mar. 2, 2012, as amended at 77 FR 38534, June 28, 2012]

§ 54.410 Subscriber eligibility determination and certification.

(a) All eligible telecommunications carriers must implement policies and procedures for ensuring that their Lifeline subscribers are eligible to receive Lifeline services. An eligible telecommunications carrier may not provide a consumer with an activated device that it represents enables use of Lifeline-supported service, nor may it activate service that it represents to be Lifeline service, unless and until it has:

(1) Confirmed that the consumer is a qualifying low-income consumer pursuant to § 54.409, and;

(2) Completed the eligibility determination and certification required by this section and §§ 54.404 through 54.405, and completed any other necessary enrollment steps.

(b) *Initial income-based eligibility determination.* (1) Except where a state Lifeline administrator or other state agency is responsible for the initial determination of a subscriber's eligibility, when a prospective subscriber seeks to qualify for Lifeline or using the income-based eligibility criteria provided for in § 54.409(a)(1) or (a)(3) an eligible telecommunications carrier:

(i) Must not seek reimbursement for providing Lifeline to a subscriber, unless the carrier has received a certification of eligibility from the prospective subscriber that complies with the requirements set forth in paragraph (d) of this section and has confirmed the subscriber's income-based eligibility using the following procedures:

(A) If an eligible telecommunications carrier can determine a prospective subscriber's income-based eligibility by accessing one or more databases containing information regarding the subscriber's income ("income databases"), the eligible telecommunications carrier must access such income databases and determine whether the prospective subscriber qualifies for Lifeline.

(B) If an eligible telecommunications carrier cannot determine a prospective subscriber's income-based eligibility by accessing income databases, the eligible telecommunications carrier must review documentation that establishes that the prospective subscriber meets the income-eligibility criteria set forth in § 54.409(a)(1) or (a)(3). Acceptable documentation of income eligibility includes the prior year's state, federal, or Tribal tax return; current income statement from an employer or paycheck stub; a Social Security statement of benefits; a Veterans Administration statement of benefits; a retirement/pension statement of benefits; an Unemployment/Workers' Compensation statement of benefit; federal or Tribal notice letter of participation in General Assistance; or a divorce decree, child support award, or other official document containing income information. If the prospective subscriber presents documentation of income that does not cover a full year, such as current pay stubs, the prospective subscriber must present the same type of documentation covering three consecutive months within the previous twelve months.

(ii) Must securely retain copies of documentation demonstrating a prospective subscriber's income-based eligibility for Lifeline consistent with § 54.417.

(2) Where a state Lifeline administrator or other state agency is responsible for the initial determination of a subscriber's eligibility, an eligible tele-

communications carrier must not seek reimbursement for providing Lifeline service to a subscriber, based on that subscriber's income eligibility, unless the carrier has received from the state Lifeline administrator or other state agency:

(i) Notice that the prospective subscriber meets the income-eligibility criteria set forth in § 54.409(a)(1) or (a)(3); and

(ii) A copy of the subscriber's certification that complies with the requirements set forth in paragraph (d) of this section.

(iii) An eligible telecommunications carrier must securely retain all information and documentation provided by the state Lifeline administrator or other state agency consistent with § 54.417.

(c) *Initial program-based eligibility determination.* (1) Except in states where a state Lifeline administrator or other state agency is responsible for the initial determination of a subscriber's program-based eligibility, when a prospective subscriber seeks to qualify for Lifeline service using the program-based criteria set forth in § 54.409(a)(2), (a)(3) or (b), an eligible telecommunications carrier:

(i) Must not seek reimbursement for providing Lifeline to a subscriber unless the carrier has received a certification of eligibility from the subscriber that complies with the requirements set forth in paragraph (d) of this section and has confirmed the subscriber's program-based eligibility using the following procedures:

(A) If the eligible telecommunications carrier can determine a prospective subscriber's program-based eligibility for Lifeline by accessing one or more databases containing information regarding enrollment in qualifying assistance programs ("eligibility databases"), the eligible telecommunications carrier must access such eligibility databases to determine whether the prospective subscriber qualifies for Lifeline based on participation in a qualifying assistance program; or

(B) If an eligible telecommunications carrier cannot determine a prospective subscriber's program-based eligibility for Lifeline by accessing eligibility

databases, the eligible telecommunications carrier must review documentation demonstrating that a prospective subscriber qualifies for Lifeline under the program-based eligibility requirements. Acceptable documentation of program eligibility includes the current or prior year's statement of benefits from a qualifying assistance program, a notice or letter of participation in a qualifying assistance program, program participation documents, or another official document demonstrating that the prospective subscriber, one or more of the prospective subscriber's dependents or the prospective subscriber's household receives benefits from a qualifying assistance program.

(ii) Must securely retain copies of the documentation demonstrating a subscriber's program-based eligibility for Lifeline services, consistent with § 54.417.

(2) Where a state Lifeline administrator or other state agency is responsible for the initial determination of a subscriber's eligibility, when a prospective subscriber seeks to qualify for Lifeline service using the program-based eligibility criteria provided in § 54.409, an eligible telecommunications carrier must not seek reimbursement for providing Lifeline to a subscriber unless the carrier has received from the state Lifeline administrator or other state agency:

(i) Notice that the subscriber meets the program-based eligibility criteria set forth in §§ 54.409(a)(2), (a)(3) or (b); and

(ii) a copy of the subscriber's certification that complies with the requirements set forth in paragraph (d) of this section.

(iii) An eligible telecommunications carrier must securely retain all information and documentation provided by the state Lifeline administrator or other state agency consistent with § 54.417.

(d) *Eligibility certifications.* Eligible telecommunications carriers and state Lifeline administrators or other state agencies that are responsible for the initial determination of a subscriber's eligibility for Lifeline must provide prospective subscribers Lifeline certifi-

cation forms that in clear, easily understood language:

(1) Provide the following information:

(i) Lifeline is a federal benefit and that willfully making false statements to obtain the benefit can result in fines, imprisonment, de-enrollment or being barred from the program;

(ii) Only one Lifeline service is available per household;

(iii) A household is defined, for purposes of the Lifeline program, as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses;

(iv) A household is not permitted to receive Lifeline benefits from multiple providers;

(v) Violation of the one-per-household limitation constitutes a violation of the Commission's rules and will result in the subscriber's de-enrollment from the program; and

(vi) Lifeline is a non-transferable benefit and the subscriber may not transfer his or her benefit to any other person.

(2) Require each prospective subscriber to provide the following information:

(i) The subscriber's full name;

(ii) The subscriber's full residential address;

(iii) Whether the subscriber's residential address is permanent or temporary;

(iv) The subscriber's billing address, if different from the subscriber's residential address;

(v) The subscriber's date of birth;

(vi) The last four digits of the subscriber's social security number, or the subscriber's Tribal identification number, if the subscriber is a member of a Tribal nation and does not have a social security number;

(vii) If the subscriber is seeking to qualify for Lifeline under the program-based criteria, as set forth in § 54.409, the name of the qualifying assistance program from which the subscriber, his or her dependents, or his or her household receives benefits; and

(viii) If the subscriber is seeking to qualify for Lifeline under the income-based criterion, as set forth in § 54.409, the number of individuals in his or her household.

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(3) Require each prospective subscriber to certify, under penalty of perjury, that:

(i) The subscriber meets the income-based or program-based eligibility criteria for receiving Lifeline, provided in § 54.409;

(ii) The subscriber will notify the carrier within 30 days if for any reason he or she no longer satisfies the criteria for receiving Lifeline including, as relevant, if the subscriber no longer meets the income-based or program-based criteria for receiving Lifeline support, the subscriber is receiving more than one Lifeline benefit, or another member of the subscriber's household is receiving a Lifeline benefit.

(iii) If the subscriber is seeking to qualify for Lifeline as an eligible resident of Tribal lands, he or she lives on Tribal lands, as defined in 54.400(e);

(iv) If the subscriber moves to a new address, he or she will provide that new address to the eligible telecommunications carrier within 30 days;

(v) If the subscriber provided a temporary residential address to the eligible telecommunications carrier, he or she will be required to verify his or her temporary residential address every 90 days;

(vi) The subscriber's household will receive only one Lifeline service and, to the best of his or her knowledge, the subscriber's household is not already receiving a Lifeline service;

(vii) The information contained in the subscriber's certification form is true and correct to the best of his or her knowledge,

(viii) The subscriber acknowledges that providing false or fraudulent information to receive Lifeline benefits is punishable by law; and

(ix) The subscriber acknowledges that the subscriber may be required to re-certify his or her continued eligibility for Lifeline at any time, and the subscriber's failure to re-certify as to his or her continued eligibility will result in de-enrollment and the termination of the subscriber's Lifeline benefits pursuant to § 54.405(e)(4).

(e) State Lifeline administrators or other state agencies that are responsible for the initial determination of a subscriber's eligibility for Lifeline

must provide each eligible telecommunications carrier with a copy of each of the certification forms collected by the state Lifeline administrator or other state agency from that carrier's subscribers.

(f) *Annual eligibility re-certification process.* (1) All eligible telecommunications carriers must annually re-certify all subscribers except for subscribers in states where a state Lifeline administrator or other state agency is responsible for re-certification of subscribers' Lifeline eligibility.

(2) In order to re-certify a subscriber's eligibility, an eligible telecommunications carrier must confirm a subscriber's current eligibility to receive Lifeline by:

(i) Querying the appropriate eligibility databases, confirming that the subscriber still meets the program-based eligibility requirements for Lifeline, and documenting the results of that review; or

(ii) Querying the appropriate income databases, confirming that the subscriber continues to meet the income-based eligibility requirements for Lifeline, and documenting the results of that review; or

(iii) Obtaining a signed certification from the subscriber that meets the certification requirements in paragraph (d) of this section.

(3) Where a state Lifeline administrator or other state agency is responsible for re-certification of a subscriber's Lifeline eligibility, the state Lifeline administrator or other state agency must confirm a subscriber's current eligibility to receive a Lifeline service by:

(i) Querying the appropriate eligibility databases, confirming that the subscriber still meets the program-based eligibility requirements for Lifeline, and documenting the results of that review; or

(ii) Querying the appropriate income databases, confirming that the subscriber continues to meet the income-based eligibility requirements for Lifeline, and documenting the results of that review; or

(iii) Obtaining a signed certification from the subscriber that meets the certification requirements in paragraph (d) of this section.

(4) Where a state Lifeline administrator or other state agency is responsible for re-certification of subscribers' Lifeline eligibility, the state Lifeline administrator or other state agency must provide to each eligible telecommunications carrier the results of its annual re-certification efforts with respect to that eligible telecommunications carrier's subscribers.

(5) If an eligible telecommunications carrier is unable to re-certify a subscriber or has been notified of a state Lifeline administrator's or other state agency's inability to re-certify a subscriber, the eligible telecommunications carrier must comply with the de-enrollment requirements provided for in § 54.405(e)(4).

(g) *Re-certification of temporary address.* An eligible telecommunications carrier must re-certify, every 90 days, the residential address of each of its subscribers who have provided a temporary address as part of the subscriber's initial certification or re-certification of eligibility, pursuant to paragraphs (d), (e), or (f) of this section.

[77 FR 12970, Mar. 2, 2012, as amended at 77 FR 38534, June 28, 2012; 78 FR 40970, July 9, 2013; 80 FR 40935, July 14, 2015]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 80 FR 40935, § 54.410 was amended by revising paragraphs (b)(1)(ii), removing (b)(1)(iii), by adding (b)(2)(iii), by revising paragraph (c)(1)(ii), by removing paragraph (c)(1)(iii), and adding paragraph (c)(2)(iii). These paragraphs contain information collection and record-keeping requirements and will not become effective until approval has been given by the Office of Management and Budget.

§ 54.412 Off reservation Tribal lands designation process.

(a) The Commission's Wireline Competition Bureau and the Office of Native Affairs and Policy may, upon receipt of a request made in accordance with the requirements of this section, designate as Tribal lands, for the purposes of the Lifeline and Tribal Link Up program, areas or communities that fall outside the boundaries of existing Tribal lands but which maintain the same characteristics as lands identified as Tribal lands defined as in § 54.400(e).

(b) A request for designation must be made to the Commission by a duly authorized official of a federally recog-

nized American Indian Tribe or Alaska Native Village.

(c) A request for designation must clearly describe a defined geographical area for which the requesting party seeks designation as Tribal lands.

(d) A request for designation must demonstrate the Tribal character of the area or community.

(e) A request for designation must provide sufficient evidence of a nexus between the area or community and the Tribe, and describe in detail how program support to the area or community would aid the Tribe in serving the needs and interests of its citizens and further the Commission's goal of increasing telecommunications access on Tribal lands.

(f) Upon designation by the Wireline Competition Bureau and the Office of Native Affairs and Policy, the area or community described in the designation shall be considered Tribal lands for the purposes of this subpart.

[77 FR 12972, Mar. 2, 2012, as amended at 77 FR 38534, June 28, 2012]

§ 54.413 Link Up for Tribal lands.

(a) *Definition.* For purposes of this subpart, the term "Tribal Link Up" means an assistance program for eligible residents of Tribal lands seeking telecommunications service from a telecommunications carrier that is receiving high-cost support on Tribal lands, pursuant to subpart D of this part, that provides:

(1) A 100 percent reduction, up to \$100, of the customary charge for commencing telecommunications service for a single telecommunications connection at a subscriber's principal place of residence imposed by an eligible telecommunications carrier that is also receiving high-cost support on Tribal lands, pursuant to subpart D of this part. For purposes of this subpart, a "customary charge for commencing telecommunications service" is the ordinary charge an eligible telecommunications carrier imposes and collects from all subscribers to initiate service with that eligible telecommunications carrier. A charge imposed only on qualifying low-income consumers to initiate service is not a customary charge for commencing telecommunications service. Activation charges