

Lifeline to Affordable Phone Service



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Providing Legal Support to the
Aging Advocacy Network

- <http://www.nlrc.aoa.gov/>
- Collaboration developed by the Administration for Community Living/ Administration on Aging between the National Consumer Law Center, National Senior Citizens Law Center, American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging, Center for Elder Rights Advocacy, and the Center for Social Gerontology
- See upcoming trainings, conferences, and webinars
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- Request consulting
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- Access articles and resources



Presenter – Olivia Wein



- Is an attorney at the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) focusing on low income consumer access to affordable and reliable telecommunications, energy and utility services.
- She is co-author of the fifth edition of NCLC's manual *Access to Utility Service* and co-author of *The Rights of Utility Consumers*.
- In addition to her recent appointment to the Universal Service Administrative Company Board of Directors, Ms. Wein serves on the Federal Communication Commission's Consumer Advisory Committee and was active in the recent reform of the federal Lifeline program. She co-chairs the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Coalition.





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Quick Poll

Who is familiar with the federal telephone Lifeline program?

- A working knowledge of the program
- Heard about this program and want to learn more
- Taking a chance and learning something new



Quick Facts About Lifeline

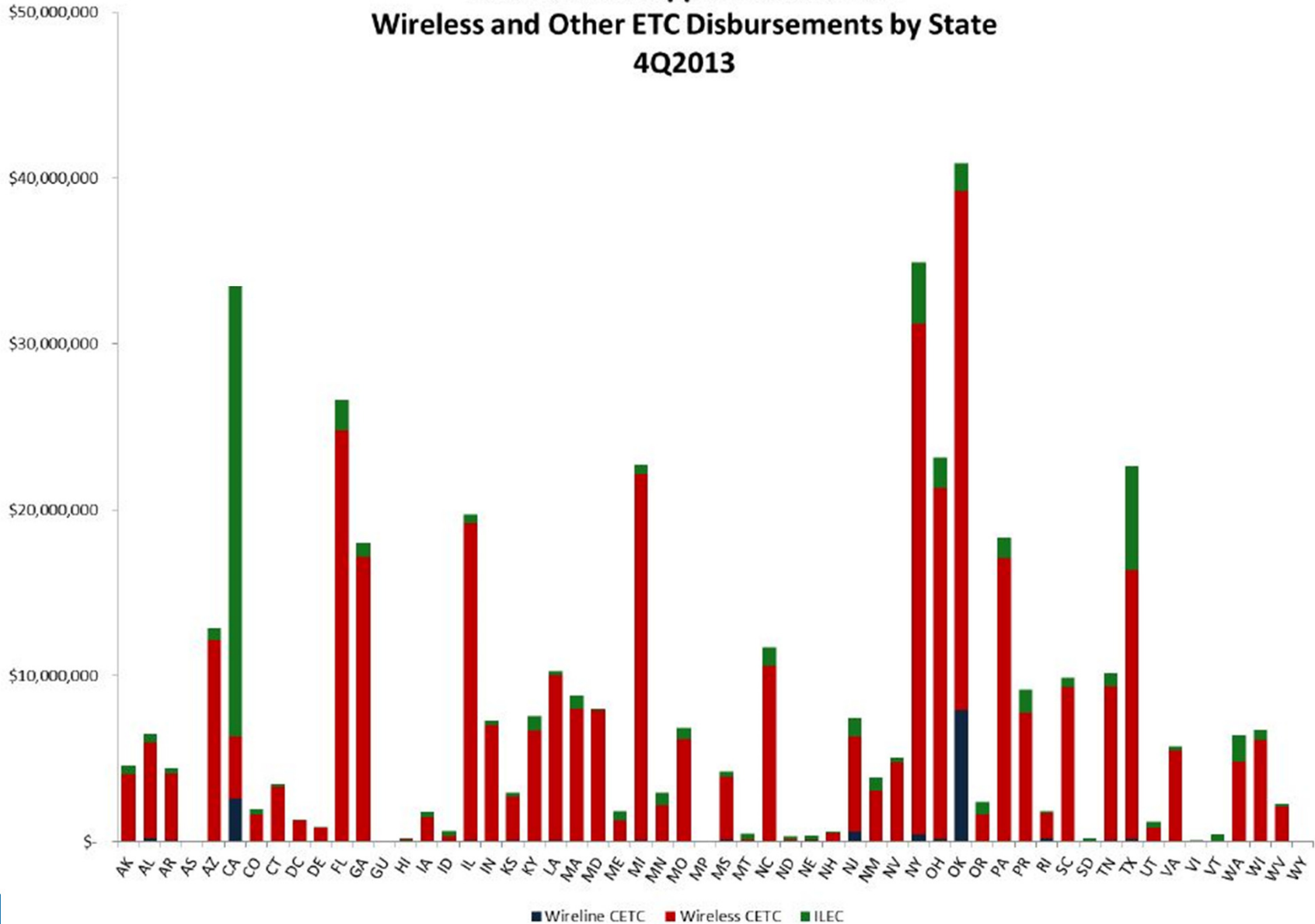
- The federal Lifeline program provides low-cost/no-cost phone service for eligible low-income households.
- The program provides about \$1.8 billion in support and has helped around 14.3 million households in 2013.
- Participating carriers can apply the Lifeline benefit on all residential service packages that include voice, including bundles and family shared calling plans. Carriers decide which service packages qualify for Lifeline support.
- Most consumers can choose between wireline or wireless Lifeline service.
- Lifeline support does not pay for the handset/cellphone, just the service.
- There is only one Lifeline benefit allowed per household.
- The Lifeline benefit is available to eligible low-income consumers in every state, territory and there is an enhanced Lifeline for consumers living on tribal lands.
- Some states have a complementary phone assistance program.
- It is possible that this program will transition into a federal low-income broadband assistance program someday and there is a Lifeline broadband pilot underway right now.



4th Quarter 2013 Lifeline Funding by State and Type of Carrier

Source: Universal Service Administrative Company

Low Income Support Mechanism Wireless and Other ETC Disbursements by State 4Q2013



Prepaid Wireless Lifeline

- Wireless Lifeline is extremely popular but there have been problems.
- The wireless lifeline products vary, but prepaid is the current form
- Characteristics of common prepaid wireless Lifeline: no deposit, no monthly bill, set number of subsidized minutes reloaded every month, free handsets (not covered by Lifeline)
- LL customer must activate service; 60-day inactivation procedure
- Toll free numbers, checking voicemail, incoming and outgoing calls count against the minutes.



Who is eligible for Lifeline

- All states must use, at a minimum, the federal default eligibility criteria:
- HH income at or below 135% FPG, or
- Participation in Medicaid, SNAP, SSI, Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8); LIHEAP, TANF, NSL Free Lunch Program.
- States may adopt additional program or income criteria.
- Tribal Lifeline is not covered here.



One Benefit Per Household

- The new Lifeline rules accommodate the housing realities often faced by struggling low-income households: Doubling up/group housing/SROs
- The rules define a household as an economic unit, similar to the LIHEAP definition of household: All adults who live together and contribute to and share in the income and expenses of a household.
- If more than one Lifeline household resides at the same address, the households must fill out a worksheet showing they are separate economic units.



How to Apply for Lifeline

- In most states, consumers will apply for Lifeline through the carrier.
- There are numerous Lifeline carriers in all the states, so consumers should shop around for the best Lifeline product that meets the household's needs.
- You can change Lifeline providers if you are not happy with your service.



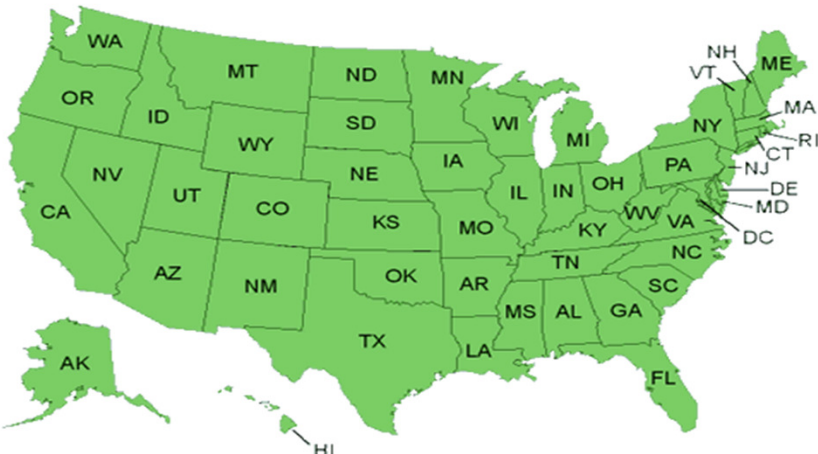
Finding Lifeline Providers

- The Universal Service Administrative Company runs the Lifeline program and has helpful information.
- USAC has a map that provides Lifeline providers in each state at: <http://www.lifelinesupport.org/ls/companies/companies.aspx>

COMPANIES IN MY STATE

Use the [Lifeline Program Pre-Screening tool](#) or read the [eligibility requirements](#) to learn whether you qualify for discounted service.

If you have already determined that you are eligible, use the map below to locate a Lifeline Program provider in your state.



Or select a state or territory from the list:



Duplicates Database

- When a household applies for Lifeline, the carrier will check a database to make sure the household does not already receive a Lifeline benefit.
- The database is brand new. It is called the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD).
- The carrier will be running an identity authentication check at the same time as the NLAD duplicates check. This is an automated process.
- Puerto Rico, Texas, Oregon, California and Vermont have opted out of NLAD. They have a statewide system that is comparable to check for duplicates.



More on the Duplicates/Id check

- Required information: Lifeline applicant/recipient: name, address, phone #, date of birth, last 4 of SSN, means of qualifying, start date and termination date for LL
- NLAD can handle changing Lifeline providers (transfers)
- NLAD can handle more than one Lifeline household at the same address (group home, doubling up)



54.410(d)(3) Certifications For New Applicants

- Applicant meets eligibility criteria
- Duty to notify ETC if no longer eligible
- If applying for Tribal LL, lives on tribal land
- Duty to notify ETC if moves to new address
- If provided a temp address, duty to recertify every 90 days
- Household only receives one LL benefit
- Information is true and correct
- Consequences of providing false info



Annual Re-certification/Verification

- All Lifeline recipients must re-certify annually that they continue to be eligible for the benefit.
- The Universal Service Administrative Company handles re-certification for some companies, but Lifeline participants may not realize this.



54.405(e) 4 De-Enrollment Situations

- General situation: deference to state dispute resolution procedures
- Duplicates: ETCs must de-enroll if USAC flags a duplicate account (but need to ensure USAC has a good dispute resolution procedures: correctable denial and uncorrectable denials; concern re changing carriers)
- 60-day non-usage of prepaid wireless Lifeline: note the reporting requirement of number de-enrolled for this reason
- Failure to recertify (annual verification & 1-per-HH re-cert)



*Thank you for your interest in the
Lifeline program.*

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