

****Recent updates and clarifications have been added****

VPS Consulting Memo

FCC Announces Updated Lifeline Minimum Standards

UPDATE REGARDING TRIBAL LIFELINE

The FCC released a Public Notice on July 30, 2021 announcing the new Lifeline Minimum Standards that will take effective on December 1, 2021.

- Fixed Broadband – 25/3 with 1229 GB of usage per month (speed remained unchanged, usage increased)
 - Exception Reminder - if 25/3 is unavailable at the subscriber's location, the Lifeline benefit can be applied toward the **highest** performing fixed broadband residential offering available but must be at least 4/1
- Mobile Broadband – 18 GB/month with 3G or better mobile technology (technology remained unchanged, data capacity increased)
- Mobile Voice – 1,000 minutes per month (remained unchanged)

If the subscriber is receiving a bundled service, the Lifeline benefit must be applied to one of the services in the bundle and the service it's applied to must meet the minimum standards.

Customers who currently subscribe to Lifeline-supported services that will no longer meet the minimum standards **or the service type (in the case of voice)** on December 1, 2021 must be notified at least one month in advance. The notification should explain that their service will no longer qualify for Lifeline as of December 1, 2021 and they can either switch to a Lifeline-supported plan or de-enroll from the Lifeline program.

Fixed Voice Reminder

In the 2016 Lifeline Reform Order, the FCC began the transition to phase out the Lifeline support for voice-only services in an attempt to shift the focus of Lifeline benefits toward broadband services. The transition for voice-only supported services **for both Tribal and Non-Tribal** are:

- Until December 1, 2019 – \$9.25
- From December 1, 2019 until November 30, 2020 – \$7.25

- From December 1, 2020 until November 30, 2021 – \$5.25
- On December 1, 2021 – standalone voice service, or voice service not bundled with broadband meeting the minimum standards – \$0

The FCC provided an exception for the complete phase out of voice-only support in Census Blocks where there is only one Lifeline provider and directed the Wireline Competition Bureau to identify those Census Blocks by June 1 each year.

On June 1, 2021, the FCC released a [Public Notice](#) which contains a link of the Census Blocks. The identified Census Blocks indicate where ETCs can continue to claim \$5.25 in reimbursement for voice-only Lifeline services offered to eligible subscribers after December 1, 2021 through November 30, 2022.

Tribal Lifeline

As a follow up to the Q3 Tribal webinar, USAC released a memo on September 22, 2021 confirming how Tribal Lifeline will be handled as a result of the voice support phase out. USAC has confirmed that the Enhanced Tribal Benefit of up to \$25.00 will still be available to eligible residents of Tribal lands. To receive the Enhanced Tribal Benefit, subscribers must have the tribal benefit flag applied in NLAD.

As with non-tribal, continued tribal voice support of up to \$5.25 per month (\$5.25 plus up to \$25 for the enhanced Tribal benefit) will also still be available in census blocks where there is only one Lifeline provider.

Benefit Chart Effective December 1, 2021

NLAD Service Type	Service Description	More than one Lifeline Provider in census block		One Lifeline Provider in census block	
		Standard Lifeline	Enhanced Tribal	Standard Lifeline	Enhanced Tribal
Standard Voice Only	Subscriber receives voice only service	\$0.00	\$25.00	\$5.25	\$25.00
Bundled Voice	Subscriber receives voice service and non-qualifying broadband service				
Broadband	Subscriber receives qualifying broadband service	\$9.25	\$25.00	\$9.25	\$25.00
Bundled Broadband	Subscriber receives qualifying broadband service and voice service				

Additional Information

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