

§ 54.401

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someone who provides financial support to him/her, both people shall be considered part of the same household. Children under the age of eighteen living with their parents or guardians are considered to be part of the same household as their parents or guardians.

(i) *National Lifeline Accountability Database or Database.* The “National Lifeline Accountability Database” or “Database” is an electronic system, with associated functions, processes, policies and procedures, to facilitate the detection and elimination of duplicative support, as directed by the Commission.

(j) *Qualifying assistance program.* A “qualifying assistance program” means any of the federal or Tribal assistance programs the participation in which, pursuant to § 54.409(a) or (b), qualifies a consumer for Lifeline service, including Medicaid; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Supplemental Security Income; Federal Public Housing Assistance; Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit; Bureau of Indian Affairs general assistance; Tribally administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Tribal TANF); Head Start (only those households meeting its income qualifying standard); or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).

(k) *Direct service.* As used in this subpart, direct service means the provision of service directly to the qualifying low-income consumer.

(l) *Broadband Internet access service.* “Broadband Internet access service” is defined as a mass-market retail service by wire or radio that provides the capability to transmit data to and receive data from all or substantially all Internet endpoints, including any capabilities that are incidental to and enable the operation of the communications service, but excluding dial-up service.

(m) *Voice telephony service.* “Voice telephony service” is defined as voice grade access to the public switched network or its functional equivalent; minutes of use for local service provided at no additional charge to end users; access to the emergency services provided by local government or other public safety organizations, such as 911 and enhanced 911, to the extent the

local government in an eligible carrier’s service area has implemented 911 or enhanced 911 systems; and toll limitation services to qualifying low-income consumers as provided in subpart E of this part.

(n) *Supported services.* Voice Telephony services and broadband Internet access services are supported services for the Lifeline program.

(o) *National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier.* The “National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier” or “National Verifier” is an electronic and manual system with associated functions, processes, policies and procedures, to facilitate the determination of consumer eligibility for the Lifeline program, as directed by the Commission.

(p) *Enrollment representatives.* An employee, agent, contractor, or subcontractor, acting on behalf of an eligible telecommunications carrier or third-party entity, who directly or indirectly provides information to the Universal Service Administrative Company or a state entity administering the Lifeline Program for the purpose of eligibility verification, enrollment, recertification, subscriber personal information updates, benefit transfers, or de-enrollment.

[77 FR 12966, Mar. 2, 2012, as amended at 80 FR 40935, July 14, 2015; 81 FR 33089, May 24, 2016; 84 FR 71327, Dec. 27, 2019]

§ 54.401 Lifeline defined.

(a) As used in this subpart, Lifeline means a non-transferable retail service offering provided directly to qualifying low-income consumers:

(1) For which qualifying low-income consumers pay reduced charges as a result of application of the Lifeline support amount described in § 54.403; and

(2) That provides qualifying low-income consumers with voice telephony service or broadband Internet access service as defined in § 54.400. Toll limitation service does not need to be offered for any Lifeline service that does not distinguish between toll and non-toll calls in the pricing of the service. If an eligible telecommunications carrier charges Lifeline subscribers a fee for toll calls that is in addition to the per month or per billing cycle price of the subscribers’ Lifeline service, the

carrier must offer toll limitation service at no charge to its subscribers as part of its Lifeline service offering.

(b) Eligible telecommunications carriers may allow qualifying low-income consumers to apply Lifeline discounts to any residential service plan with the minimum service levels set forth in § 54.408 that includes fixed or mobile voice telephony service, broadband Internet access service, or a bundle of broadband Internet access service and fixed or mobile voice telephony service; and plans that include optional calling features such as, but not limited to, caller identification, call waiting, voicemail, and three-way calling.

(1) Eligible telecommunications carriers may permit qualifying low-income consumers to apply their Lifeline discount to family shared data plans.

(2) Eligible telecommunications carriers may allow qualifying low-income consumers to apply Lifeline discounts to any residential service plan that includes voice telephony service without qualifying broadband Internet access service prior to December 1, 2021.

(3) Beginning December 1, 2016, eligible telecommunications carriers must provide the minimum service levels for each offering of mobile voice service as defined in § 54.408.

(4) Beginning December 1, 2021, eligible telecommunications carriers must provide the minimum service levels for broadband Internet access service in every Lifeline offering.

(c) Eligible telecommunications carriers may not collect a service deposit in order to initiate Lifeline for voice-only service plans that:

(1) Do not charge subscribers additional fees for toll calls; or

(2) That charge additional fees for toll calls, but the subscriber voluntarily elects toll limitation service.

(d) When an eligible telecommunications carrier is designated by a state commission, the state commission shall file or require the eligible telecommunications carrier to file information with the Administrator demonstrating that the carrier's Lifeline plan meets the criteria set forth in this subpart and describing the terms and conditions of any voice telephony service plans offered to Lifeline subscribers, including details on the num-

ber of minutes provided as part of the plan, additional charges, if any, for toll calls, and rates for each such plan. To the extent the eligible telecommunications carrier offers plans to Lifeline subscribers that are generally available to the public, it may provide summary information regarding such plans, such as a link to a public Web site outlining the terms and conditions of such plans. Lifeline assistance shall be made available to qualifying low-income consumers as soon as the Administrator certifies that the carrier's Lifeline plan satisfies the criteria set out in this subpart.

(e) Consistent with § 52.33(a)(1)(i)(C) of this chapter, eligible telecommunications carriers may not charge Lifeline customers a monthly number-ported-ability charge.

(f) Eligible telecommunications carriers may aggregate eligible subscribers' benefits to provide a collective service to a group of subscribers, provided that each qualifying low-income consumer subscribed to the collective service receives residential service that meets the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section and § 54.408.

[77 FR 12967, Mar. 2, 2012, as amended at 80 FR 40935, July 14, 2015; 81 FR 33090, May 24, 2016]

§ 54.403 Lifeline support amount.

(a) The federal Lifeline support amount for all eligible telecommunications carriers shall equal:

(1) *Basic support amount.* Federal Lifeline support in the amount of \$9.25 per month will be made available to an eligible telecommunications carrier providing Lifeline service to a qualifying low-income consumer, except as provided in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, if that carrier certifies to the Administrator that it will pass through the full amount of support to the qualifying low-income consumer and that it has received any non-federal regulatory approvals necessary to implement the rate reduction.

(2) For a Lifeline provider offering either standalone voice service, subject to the minimum service standards set forth in § 54.408, or voice service with