



# NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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## FCC KICKS OFF CAMPAIGN TO EDUCATE CONSUMERS ABOUT PHONE SERVICE PROGRAMS FOR LOW-INCOME CONSUMERS

### *Lifeline and Link-Up Programs Provide Discounted Phone Service to Eligible Consumers*

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced the kickoff of **“Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone,”** a national public education campaign to educate consumers about the Lifeline Assistance (Lifeline) and Link-Up America (Link-Up) programs. The announcement was made by the Chief of the FCC’s Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, K. Dane Snowden, at a ceremony in Washington, DC, sponsored by the D.C. Public Service Commission, on Friday, July 19, and during a joint radio appearance on July 20 with District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams.

The Lifeline and Link-Up programs provide discounts on initial telephone installation and basic monthly telephone service to qualifying low-income consumers.

The FCC’s **“Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone”** campaign is providing information to potential Lifeline and Link-Up subscribers through federal, state, tribal and local governments, and social service, community, and faith-based organizations. Low-income consumers are encouraged to contact their local phone companies to see if they are eligible to receive Lifeline and Link-Up discounts. Consumer questions can be directed to the FCC by writing Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone, FCC, Washington, DC 20554, calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322)-voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322)-TTY, or visiting the Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone Web site at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected).

These programs are components of the Universal Service Fund.

Snowden said, "Lifeline and Link-Up are designed to ensure that everyone in this country has access to basic telephone service. Phone service is not only a convenience, but a necessity. It is our link to emergency services, the way we look for jobs and the way we stay in touch with our families. By launching the **‘Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone’** campaign, the FCC is committed to making sure eligible families are aware of the Lifeline and Link-Up programs."

It has been our nation’s policy to promote telephone service to all households since this service began in the 1930s. Since 1984, Lifeline has promoted universal service by providing low-income individuals with monthly discounts on the cost of receiving telephone service. The Commission established Link-Up to help low-income individuals pay the initial costs of getting

telephone service. In June 2000, the FCC expanded the Lifeline and Link-Up programs to provide additional discounts to qualifying individuals living on tribal lands.

Lifeline and Link-Up are available to qualifying consumers in every U. S. state, territory and commonwealth. Qualifications for participation vary by state. States with their own programs have their own criteria. In states that rely solely on the federal program, the subscriber must participate in one of the following programs: Medicaid, food stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance, or the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

The Lifeline program provides certain discounts on monthly service for qualified telephone subscribers. These amounts vary, depending on the state. Link-Up helps qualified low-income consumers to connect, or hook up, to the telephone network. This federal program offsets one-half of the initial hook-up fee, up to \$30.00, for qualified households. The program also includes a plan to encourage local telephone companies to offer low-income telephone subscribers a deferred payment schedule for these charges.

Residents of American Indian and Alaskan Native tribal lands may qualify for an additional \$25 of enhanced Lifeline support monthly and up to \$70 of expanded Link-Up support beyond current levels. An individual living on tribal lands may also qualify for Lifeline and Link-Up discounts if he or she participates in one of the following federal programs: Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Head Start (income qualifying standard), or the National School Lunch Program's Free Lunch Program.

Phone companies support Lifeline, Link-Up and other Universal Service programs through contributions paid into the Universal Service Fund. The contribution is based on a percentage of their interstate and international revenues. Companies often recover their contributions to the fund by adding a line item on their phone bills called "Universal Service."

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**Note to Editors:** Materials for the "Get Connected: Afford-A-Phone" campaign can be found at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/getconnected).

For electronic updates on this and other FCC consumer topics, click on [www.fcc.gov/cgb/emailservice.html](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/emailservice.html).

News about the Federal Communications Commission can also be found on the Commission's Web site, [www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov).