

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES

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Lifeline Support Program

(Food and Nutrition Services, Energy, and Work First)

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Food and Nutrition Services, Energy, and Work First

DATE: November 30, 2016

SUBJECT: Lifeline Support Program Changes

EFFECTIVE: December 1, 2016

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of this letter is to provide information and instructions regarding the changes to the Lifeline Support Program.

Lifeline is the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program that helps make communications services more affordable for low-income consumers. Currently, Lifeline provides subscribers a discount on monthly telephone service purchased from participating providers in the marketplace. On March 31, 2016, the FCC approved rules to modernize Lifeline so that subscribers can also purchase discounted broadband from participating providers. These modernizations will help ensure that low-income consumers can afford 21st-century broadband and the access it provides to jobs, education and opportunities.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

The change allows low income consumers to apply Lifeline's \$9.25 per month discount to stand-alone broadband service as well as bundled voice and data service packages.

The eligibility for Lifeline was updated to allow for more efficient administration that includes federal assistance programs that have a comprehensive eligibility verification system and/or accountability measures to continue to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. As a result the, FCC amended the Lifeline rules to eliminate the following programs as a valid determiner of Lifeline eligibility:

1. National School Lunch Program (NSLP);
2. Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and
3. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF/Work First).

Applicants for and recipients of NSLP, LIHEAP and Work First are no longer automatically eligible for Lifeline program services.

The Lifeline Program will focus on qualifying applicants only through the federal assistance programs that best support the FCC's objectives of electronic validation, accountability and best in identifying people needing support. These programs are:

1. FNS benefits;

2. Medicaid;
3. Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
4. Federal Public Housing Assistance;
5. Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit; and
6. Tribal-specific programs (No changes to the tribal or income eligibility criteria).

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

Apply these new procedures to applications, certifications, reviews, or requests from households on received on or after December 1, 2016. Until program's policy manual are updated, this Administrative Letter serves as policy.

The county DSS is not responsible for providing a form to the client; households interested in this service must contact their provider directly to apply for the Lifeline Program. At this time no new brochures or posters will be made available.

Existing Lifeline subscribers claiming eligibility through NLSP, LIHEAP, or TANF/Work First may not lose their services on or after December 2nd. At the subscriber's recertification or application for NSLP, LIHEAP, or TANF/Work First, they will be asked to prove Lifeline eligibility by providing proof of participation in one of the accepted programs. If the subscriber can provide this information, they will continue to receive Lifeline services, and if they cannot, their Lifeline services will end.

Submit any questions regarding this information to the DHHS Operational Support Team (OST) at ost.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,

David Locklear, Chief
Division of Social Services
Economic and Family Services

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