

## **LIFELINE ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY FARMERS TELECOMMUNICATIONS COOPERATIVE**

### **What Is Lifeline Assistance?**

- Lifeline Assistance is a government assistance program that provides a monthly credit for telephone service and/or broadband internet access service of residential customers. Lifeline Assistance is designed to make basic home telephone service and broadband Internet access service (minimum of 20 Mbps downstream/3 Mbps upstream, with monthly usage allowance of 1024 Gigabytes) even more affordable for qualified customers.
- If you qualify for Lifeline Assistance, Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative will discount your charge for local voice only telephone service by \$5.25, stand-alone broadband Internet access service or broadband internet access service as part of a bundled package by \$9.25 each month.

### **What Restrictions Apply to the Lifeline Program?**

- **Lifeline Assistance is a federal benefit – willfully making false statements or providing false or fraudulent documentation in order to obtain the benefit can result in a fine or imprisonment or cause the subscriber to be de-enrolled or barred from the program.**
- Lifeline Assistance is only available for one Lifeline supported service – fixed or mobile (cellular) voice telephone service or broadband Internet access service – per household. The household may not receive Lifeline benefits from more than one company.
- For purposes of the Lifeline program, a “household” is defined as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share in the household’s income and expenses. A household may include related and unrelated persons.
- The household may not receive Lifeline benefits from more than one service provider – that is, if someone in the household receives a Lifeline discount on wireless (cellular) service, the household would not also qualify to receive a discount on home phone service.
- Violation of this “one-per-household” rule is a violation of the rules of the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) and will result in the subscriber’s de-enrollment from the Lifeline Assistance program.
- Lifeline Assistance is also a non-transferable benefit – it is a violation of federal law to rent, sell or give away your Lifeline service to any other individual, including any individual who may be eligible for Lifeline Assistance.

### **How Do I Qualify for Lifeline Assistance?**

Lifeline Assistance is available to customers who have an annual household income at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a household of its size **OR** who participate in any of the following low-income assistance programs:

- ❖ Medicaid
- ❖ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- ❖ Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- ❖ Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- ❖ Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit

You may also be eligible for Lifeline Assistance even if you do not personally participate in one of these programs, as long as an individual who lives in your household participates in at least one of these programs.

## What Proof of Eligibility Do I Need to Provide?

### Qualifying Based on Annual Household Income

If you want to qualify for Lifeline Assistance based on your annual household income, your household income must be at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a household of that size. NOTE: Federal Poverty Guidelines are updated annually; updates not reflected here are available at [www.usac.org](http://www.usac.org) or from Farmers' customer service.

Annual Income 135% Thresholds Based on Household Size (2020)								
1 person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5 people	6 people	7 people	8 people	For each additional person
\$17,388	\$23,517	\$29,646	\$35,775	\$41,904	\$48,033	\$54,162	\$60,291	+ \$6,129 per person

You must provide proof of your household income at the time that you apply for Lifeline Assistance through one or more of the following:

- Prior year's state or federal income tax return
- Retirement/pension statement of benefits
- Current income statement from an employer or paycheck stub
- Unemployment/Workmen's Compensation Statement of Benefits
- Federal notice letter of participation in General Assistance
- Social Security Statement of Benefits
- Veterans Administration Statement of Benefits
- Child Support document
- Divorce decree
- Other official document containing income information

If the documentation does not cover a full year, such as current pay stubs, you must provide the same type of documentation covering 3 consecutive months within the previous 12 months.

NOTE: The FCC's rules require Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative to keep a copy of any of the supporting documentation you provide in support of your eligibility to receive Lifeline benefits.

### Qualifying Based on Participation in Low-Income Assistance Programs

If you want to qualify for Lifeline Assistance based on participation in one of the low-income assistance programs, you must provide proof of participation at the time that you apply for Lifeline Assistance with one or more of the following:

- Current or prior year's statement of benefits from a qualifying state or federal assistance program
- A notice letter of participation in a qualifying state or federal assistance program
- Program participation documents, such as a copy of your SNAP card, Medicaid card, etc.

- Other official document evidencing the qualifying person's participation in one of the listed state or federal low-income assistance programs

NOTE: The FCC's rules require Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative to keep a copy of any of the supporting documentation you provide in support of your eligibility to receive Lifeline benefits.

### **Can I Subscribe to Any Farmers Service Plan?**

- Lifeline customers may subscribe to any residential service plan offered by Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative that includes either landline voice telephone service, broadband Internet access service, or a bundle of broadband Internet access service and landline voice telephone service; and plans that include optional calling features, such as, but not limited to, caller ID, call waiting, voicemail, and three-way calling.
- The Lifeline discount may also be applied to family shared data plans.

### **Frequently Asked Lifeline Questions**

#### **Q. Can Farmers accept a copy of my paycheck as proof of my income eligibility for Lifeline Assistance?**

A. The FCC rules require copies of your paycheck stubs for at least 3 consecutive months within the previous 12 months as proof of your income-based eligibility for Lifeline Assistance. A copy of your paycheck is not acceptable.

#### **Q. If I babysit or am self-employed, what is acceptable proof of my income?**

A. You may provide a copy of your prior year's state or federal income tax return as proof of your income.

#### **Q. How can I get a copy of my Social Security Statement of Benefits, as acceptable proof of my income?**

A. The Social Security Statement of Benefits is mailed to all recipients annually. You may obtain another copy from your local Social Security office. You should be aware that Supplemental Social Security ("SSI") is not the same as Social Security – SSI is a federal income supplement program for blind and disabled people with little or no income and is not funded by Social Security taxes.

#### **Q. Can I qualify for Lifeline Assistance based on my age?**

A. Lifeline Assistance is not awarded based on age. To qualify, you must meet the income guidelines or participate in one of the qualifying low-income assistance programs.

#### **Q. Do I qualify for Lifeline Assistance if I receive Medicare?**

A. No. Medicare is not one of the qualifying programs for Lifeline Assistance.

#### **Q. I have recently moved to the area and need telephone service, but I only have a temporary address. Can I apply for Lifeline Assistance?**

A. You must provide a permanent residential address and a billing address, if different from the residential address, before you can receive Lifeline Assistance. If you do not have a permanent address (e.g., an address not recognized by the Post Office or a temporary living situation), you must provide a temporary residential service address or other address identifying information.

**Q. Can I use a Post Office Box for my address?**

A. Farmers can accept a P.O. Box or General Delivery address as your billing address, but not as a residential address.

**Q. What must I do if my address changes?**

A. If you move to a new address, you must provide your new address to Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative within 30 days after relocating.

**Q. Am I required to notify you of any changes in my income or participation in one of the low-income assistance programs?**

A. You must notify Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative within 30 days if you or the qualifying person in your household no longer participates in the government assistance program(s) that qualify you for Lifeline Assistance; if your qualifying annual household income exceeds 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines; if you are receiving more than one Lifeline benefit or another member of your household is receiving a Lifeline benefit; or if you no longer qualify to receive Lifeline Assistance for any other reason. You will then stop receiving Lifeline benefits.

**Q. Do I need to provide a deposit when I apply for Lifeline Assistance?**

A. Customers who do not subscribe to Toll Limitation Service at the time of signing up for Lifeline voice telephone service may be required to provide a service deposit, consistent with the terms of Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative's General Subscriber Services Tariff. Farmers offers free Toll Limitation Service to Lifeline customers for any local voice telephone service plan that charges a fee for toll calls that is in addition to the monthly price of your Lifeline service.

**Q. When will the Lifeline discount be included on my telephone bill?**

A. The discount will be applied to your account within two billing cycles and will be retroactive back to your approval date.

**Q. Why isn't the Lifeline discount still appearing on my bill?**

A. The FCC now requires Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative to verify its Lifeline customers' continuing eligibility for Lifeline Assistance every year. If you did not complete and return the Lifeline Rate Assistance Verification form sent to you by Farmers within 60 days, as required, your Lifeline Assistance was terminated.<sup>1</sup> You must re-apply for Lifeline Assistance in order to receive the discount.

**Q. Who can I call if I have questions about Lifeline Assistance?**

A. You may call Farmers' customer service representatives at 256-638-2144, or toll-free at 1-866-638-2144, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. You may also contact the Alabama Public Service Commission at 1-800-882-3919 or visit the following websites: [www.psc.state.al.us](http://www.psc.state.al.us) or [www.usac.org](http://www.usac.org).

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the FCC rules in effect before December 2, 2016, subscribers were required to return Verification forms issued prior to that date to the Company within thirty (30) days. Effective December 2, 2016, the allowable time for a subscriber to respond to the Company's verification request was extended from thirty (30) days to sixty (60) days. Therefore, subscribers who received Verification forms before December 2, 2016, and failed to return them within thirty (30) days, as required, were terminated from the program under the FCC's rules then in effect.

**Q. Are there any additional requirements for receiving Lifeline Assistance?**

A. All of the terms and conditions for receiving service from Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative, as set forth in Farmers' General Subscriber Services Tariff and/or Price List, are applicable to services received under Lifeline Assistance. You may view Farmers' Tariff and Price List on this website at [farmerstel.com/legal](http://farmerstel.com/legal).

**How Do I Apply for Lifeline Assistance?**

Please visit [www.lifelinesupport.org/national-verifier](http://www.lifelinesupport.org/national-verifier).