



# PUBLIC NOTICE

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## WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU ANNOUNCES THE NEXT NATIONAL LIFELINE ELIGIBILITY VERIFIER LAUNCH IN FIVE STATES

### WC Docket No. 11-42

By this Public Notice, the Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) announces that the National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier (National Verifier) will soft launch on December 16, 2019 in Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.<sup>1</sup>

The soft launch period will allow eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) to become familiar with the National Verifier and adjust and test their systems and business processes before use of the National Verifier becomes mandatory. During the soft launch, only ETCs will have access to the National Verifier. ETCs will also have access to a pre-production test environment in the National Verifier to improve their ability to conduct sample transactions and train their employees for readiness.<sup>2</sup> If an ETC uses existing eligibility processes to enroll subscribers during the soft launch period, the ETC must comply with the Commission's existing rules for eligibility determinations.<sup>3</sup>

ETCs in Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin should not begin any recertifications for Lifeline subscribers as of December 16, 2019 and should finish any currently open recertifications for Lifeline subscribers in these states no later than February 21, 2020. In addition, USAC will begin reverification of existing Lifeline subscribers in these five states during the soft launch period. Specifically, USAC will begin using the National Verifier to re-verify the eligibility of consumers that already participate in the Lifeline program.<sup>4</sup> The reverification process will continue after the full launch date to verify that subscribers in the National Verifier for these five states are eligible to receive Lifeline service and any consumer whose eligibility cannot be verified in this process will be de-enrolled from the program.

USAC will be conducting ongoing outreach and training for ETCs in the relevant states during the soft launch, and ETCs can also access the pre-production test environment. To ensure that ETCs continue to be supported during the transition to the National Verifier, USAC will also be contacting

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<sup>1</sup> See *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization et al.*, Third Report and Order, Further Report and Order, and Order on Reconsideration, 31 FCC Rcd 3962, 4021, para. 165 (2016) (*2016 Lifeline Order*) (directing the Bureau to "issue a notification to all interested participants providing information about effective dates and any other relevant obligations" as USAC deploys the National Verifier in each state).

<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the service provider portal available during the soft launch, to which ETCs should only submit true data for consumers seeking to apply in the Lifeline program, the pre-production environment allows ETCs to use test data that does not reflect actual Lifeline applicants.

<sup>3</sup> See 47 CFR §§ 54.410(a), 54.410(b)(1), 54.410(c)(1), 54.410(d), 54.410(g).

<sup>4</sup> See USAC, Lifeline National Verifier Plan, WC Docket Nos. 11-42, 17-287, 09-197, and 10-90 (Jan. 31, 2019).

ETCs in the relevant states to provide details regarding additional training opportunities. Informational resource materials regarding the National Verifier are also available on USAC's website.<sup>5</sup>

We emphasize that, even where the National Verifier is launched, ETCs remain responsible for any fraud that forms the basis of their claims for Lifeline reimbursement, and the National Verifier does not provide a "safe harbor" for ETCs that improperly claim or obtain reimbursement.<sup>6</sup>

For further information, please contact Allison Jones of the Wireline Competition Bureau's Telecommunications Access Policy Division at (202) 418-1571.

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<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.usac.org/lifeline/eligibility/national-verifier/how-to-use-it/>.

<sup>6</sup> See *Lifeline Providers Remain Liable for Ensuring the Eligibility of Their Subscribers to Receive Lifeline Service*, Public Notice, FCC Enforcement Advisory, EA No. 2019-07, DA 19-1211 (EB 2019); *Wireline Competition Bureau Reminds Eligible Telecommunications Carriers of Their Ongoing Responsibility to Claim Lifeline Support Only for Eligible Low-Income Consumers*, Public Notice, 32 FCC Rcd 5129 (WCB 2017).