



PUBLIC NOTICE

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WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU ANNOUNCES CENSUS BLOCKS IN WHICH ELIGIBLE LIFELINE CONSUMERS CAN CONTINUE TO RECEIVE DISCOUNTED VOICE-ONLY LIFELINE SERVICES

WC Docket No. 11-42, 09-197, 10-90

Today, the Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) announces those Census blocks where Lifeline support for voice-only service will continue at \$5.25 per month from December 1, 2021 through November 30, 2022. These Census blocks can be found on the Universal Service Administrative Company's (USAC) website here: https://www.usac.org/wp-content/uploads/lifeline/documents/Data/voice_CB_blocks.zip.

In the *2016 Lifeline Order*, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC or Commission) outlined a shift in the Lifeline program towards a greater focus on supporting broadband services for Lifeline eligible consumers.¹ As part of that effort, the Commission adopted a transition period to phase down support for voice-only Lifeline services before reimbursement for such services would decrease to \$0 on December 1, 2021.² The Commission also adopted an exception to this complete phase-down in voice-only support and continued Lifeline support, in the amount of \$5.25 per subscriber per month, for qualifying voice-only services provided to Lifeline eligible subscribers in Census blocks where there is only one Lifeline provider.³ The Commission directed the Bureau to identify Census blocks where there is only one Lifeline provider and to announce those Census blocks by June 1 of each year.⁴

The Bureau's action today is intended to comply with the requirements of the *2016 Lifeline Order*.⁵ This Public Notice is not intended to prejudice the pending Petition for Reconsideration from the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA), which requested that the Commission reconsider the phase down in Lifeline support for voice-only services,⁶ nor to impact the

¹ See *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization et al.*, WC Docket No. 11-42, Third Report and Order, Further Report and Order, and Order on Reconsideration, 31 FCC Rcd 3962, 3972-75, paras. 30-37 (2016) (*2016 Lifeline Order*).

² See *2016 Lifeline Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 4003-05, paras. 117-122; 47 CFR § 54.403(a)(2). For these purposes, "voice-only" Lifeline services include voice-broadband bundled services in which only the voice component meets the Lifeline minimum service standards. See 47 CFR § 54.408 (establishing minimum service standards for mobile voice, mobile broadband, and fixed broadband Lifeline support).

³ See *2016 Lifeline Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 4004, para. 120; 47 CFR § 54.403(a)(2)(v).

⁴ See *2016 Lifeline Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 4004-05, para. 122.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Petition of NASUCA for Reconsideration, WC Docket No. 11-42, at 3-4 (filed June 23, 2016), https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/1062324901351/WC%2011_42_NASUCA_Pet_for_Recon_Final.pdf.

Bureau's work towards the completion of the State of the Lifeline Marketplace Report, which the Commission directed the Bureau to release by June 30, 2021.⁷

The Census blocks listed in today's announcement were identified by the Lifeline administrator, USAC, working at the direction of the Bureau. To identify Census blocks with only one eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) providing service, USAC: first, created a list of all study area codes (SACs) and ZIP codes with at least one qualifying Lifeline subscriber; second, used data from USAC's "Companies Near Me" tool⁸ to supplement its original list with ZIP codes where an ETC had notified USAC that it is providing service in a particular ZIP code; third, used this consolidated list to determine which SACs and ZIP codes were served by only one ETC; fourth, compared this list with the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD)⁹ list of all ZIP codes in the United States to determine whether any ZIP codes were not served by ETCs; and finally, overlaid the identified ZIP codes that are only served by a single or no ETC with Census blocks to determine a list of impacted Census blocks.

The identified Census blocks where ETCs can continue to claim \$5.25 in reimbursement for voice-only Lifeline services offered to eligible subscribers after December 1, 2021 can be found here: https://www.usac.org/wp-content/uploads/lifeline/documents/Data/voice_CB_blocks.zip. The Bureau and USAC will provide an annual update to this list of impacted Census blocks, and any obligation to offer service discounted by passing through the Lifeline support amount shall end in a Census block as of December 1 of the year that the Bureau identifies the Census block as being served by more than one Lifeline provider.¹⁰

For additional information on this proceeding, please contact Nick Page (nicholas.page@fcc.gov) of the Wireline Competition Bureau, Telecommunications Access Policy Division.

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⁷ See *2016 Lifeline Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 3987, para. 66.

⁸ USAC, *Companies Near Me*, <https://data.usac.org/publicreports/CompaniesNearMe/Download/Report> (last visited May 6, 2021).

⁹ HUD, *HUD USPS Zip Code Crosswalk Files*, https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/usps_crosswalk.html (last visited May 6, 2021).

¹⁰ See *2016 Lifeline Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 4004-05, para. 122.