

WHEREFORE, Staff prays that the Commission will accept its *Notice*; adopt its proposed form for Lifeline voice-only services; and grant such other and further relief as the Commission considers just in the circumstances.

/s/ Whitney Payne

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the foregoing was served by electronic mail, or First Class United States Postal Mail, postage prepaid, on this 14th day of October, 2021, to all counsel of record.

/s/ Whitney Payne

MEMORANDUM

To: Official Case File
Case No. TO-2019-0346

From: John Van Eschen, Regulatory Compliance Manager
Kari Salsman, Research/Data Analyst
Telecommunications Department

Subject: Follow-Up to Staff's Initial Recommendation

Date: October 14, 2021

On September 2, 2021, the Missouri Commission Staff filed its recommendations regarding the Missouri USF assessment and support. In response to Staff's filing two comments were subsequently filed by interested stakeholders to the docket. The comments filed by a group of 35 incumbent local telephone companies express support for all of Staff's proposals, while comments filed by the Missouri Cable Telecommunications Association (MCTA)¹ voice opposition to increasing Missouri USF support but are in favor of extending the suspension of the Missouri USF assessment. Staff maintains the recommendations contained in Staff's recent filing but makes some additional recommendations. These additional recommendations attempt to address Universal Service Administrative Company's (USAC's) plan to discontinue certain administrative services associated with Lifeline voice-only service. This discussion might be helped by first elaborating a point made in MCTA's comments regarding whether federal Lifeline voice-only support may be maintained in certain areas.

MCTA is correct in pointing out federal Lifeline voice-only support will be eliminated in most areas but can continue in designated areas served by only one Lifeline provider.² The designated areas where the \$5.25 in federal Lifeline support for voice-only service will be maintained were announced earlier this year.³ Missouri's designated areas are limited to certain census blocks in five ZIP codes.⁴ The FCC and USAC have stated that they intend to annually review the identified areas where \$5.25 in federal Lifeline support will be maintained. Federal Lifeline voice-only support will be eliminated in a given area on December 1st of the year in which a census block begins to be served by more

¹ MCTA's website indicates its membership includes eight members. Absent obscure affiliations, five of the eight members are registered IVoIP providers. No members have ever received federal or state Lifeline funding.

² Third Report and Order, Further Report and Order, and Order on Reconsideration; In the Matter of Lifeline and Link-Up Reform and Modernization; WC Docket No. 11-42, et al; FCC 16-38; released April 27, 2016; ¶52.

³ Public Notice; Wireline Competition Bureau Announces Census Blocks in Which Eligible Lifeline Consumers can Continue to Receive Discounted Voice-Only Lifeline Services; WC Docket Nos. 11-42, 09-197 and 10-90; DA 21-640; released June 1, 2021.

⁴ Out of Missouri's 1,154 ZIP codes the five ZIP codes (associated communities) are: 63881 (Wolf Island, MO in Mississippi County), 63442 (Granger, MO), 64162 (Northeast of Kansas City, MO in Clay County), 64781 (Roscoe, MO), and 65532 (Lake Spring, MO).

than one Lifeline provider. According to FCC documentation, for the relevant Missouri areas, the sole Lifeline provider in these five ZIP codes is a wireless provider, which means Missouri USF Lifeline support is currently not provided to any subscribers in these identified areas.⁵

MCTA recommends the Missouri Commission "...should clarify that under no circumstance should any increase in the Missouri TAP discount be used to offset the loss of the \$5.25 federal Lifeline discount for voice-only service beyond the federal discount, where the latter discount remains available...." In Staff's opinion, such clarification is unnecessary. Existing Missouri Commission rules prohibit total monthly support from exceeding total monthly charges.⁶ In addition, Staff recommends that the Commission consider how crafting such a clarification could further complicate program administration given the anticipated changes after December 1, 2021. Staff discusses these changes in the remainder of this memo.

USAC administers the federal USF and performs various administrative functions for the Lifeline program but these functions will be limited to the isolated areas where \$5.25 in federal Lifeline support will be maintained.⁷ On a practical basis this change means USAC will no longer receive enrollment application forms and verify eligibility, including conducting the annual verification of continued eligibility, for most Lifeline voice-only applicants and subscribers. USAC officials have informed Staff that Lifeline providers will also be instructed to remove their Lifeline voice-only subscribers from the National Lifeline Accountability Database.

These anticipated changes will require the Missouri USF Board to authorize an enrollment process and an annual recertification process for Lifeline voice-only service. Staff recommends Lifeline voice-only service enrollment simply revert back to the way Lifeline enrollment was conducted prior to March 5, 2019, before USAC began operations in Missouri as the National Verifier. Companies should use the generic form provided in Attachment A and have a company representative sign the form attesting to having seen an applicant's proof of eligibility. Missouri Commission rules require the form to comply with federal requirements. If the form is approved by the Missouri Board, it is posted on the respective websites of the Missouri Commission and Missouri USF.⁸

As previously mentioned, the annual verification of continued eligibility will change for Lifeline voice-only subscribers due to USAC no longer performing this function. USAC verifies eligibility primarily by electronic access to certain data bases.⁹ Subscriber eligibility for other programs or by income, is verified by USAC when a

⁵ The Missouri USF only supports landline service and not wireless service. According to FCC records the wireless provider is Easy Wireless.

⁶ Missouri Commission rule 20 CSR 4240-31.014(7).

⁷ Staff communication with Tiffany Johnson, USAC Manager of Communications for the Lifeline Program.

⁸ The referenced rule is Missouri Commission rule 20 CSR 4240-31.014(5). The referenced websites containing this form will be https://psc.mo.gov/Telecommunications/ETC_Information under "Enrollment Forms for Lifeline and Disabled Program" and www.missouriusf.com under "Printable Forms".

⁹ USAC has electronic access to Missouri's Social Service's databases for food stamps and MoHealthNet as well as to the federal database for Federal Public Housing Assistance.

Lifeline subscriber completing FCC Form 5630 and mailing the form to USAC. USAC intends to only continue to perform recertification if the subscriber continues to receive federal Lifeline support. Consequently, the Missouri USF Board will ultimately need to approve a process for recertification; however, such a decision can wait because all recertification is currently suspended.¹⁰ In the meantime Staff proposes that it should meet with Lifeline providers eligible for Missouri USF support at which time the parties can exchange ideas about how recertification might be easily accomplished and then later present its findings to the Board for approval.

In summary, Staff maintains the recommendations identified in its September 2, 2021 filing. In addition, Staff recommends the Missouri USF Board approve the enrollment form for Lifeline voice-only service contained here in Attachment A.

¹⁰ USAC conducted recertification based on the anniversary date of when a subscriber enrolled in the Lifeline program; however, recertification efforts have been on hold for subscribers with anniversary dates from April 14, 2020 to December 29, 2021.

[Insert Missouri-designated ETC name and/or logo]

Voice-Only Lifeline Program Enrollment Form

To enroll into the Lifeline program for **voice-only** service complete and submit this form along with proof of eligibility to a participating landline Lifeline provider.¹ Enrollment enables qualifying consumers to receive a \$24.00 monthly discount for residential voice telephony service.

Lifeline program eligibility criteria (Check all programs that you or someone in your household currently participates in):

Eligibility Criteria (check all that apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> MO HealthNet (f/k/a Medicaid)
<input type="checkbox"/> Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (Food Stamps)
<input type="checkbox"/> Supplemental Security Income
<input type="checkbox"/> Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
<input type="checkbox"/> 135% of the Federal Poverty Level <i>(income threshold requirements below)</i>

Annual Income Thresholds for Meeting 135% of Federal Poverty Level (Based on Household Size)								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Each add'l person
\$17,388	\$23,517	\$29,646	\$35,775	\$41,904	\$48,033	\$54,162	\$60,291	+ \$6,129/person

Acceptable documentation for meeting the criteria of 135% of the federal poverty level includes: a copy of prior year's state or federal tax return; paycheck stub (three consecutive months); a statement of benefits for Social Security, Veterans Administration, retirement/pension or Unemployment/Workmen's Compensation; or other legal documents showing current income (e.g. divorce decree, child support award). Any documentation must cover a full year or three consecutive months within the previous twelve months.

Applicant's Full Name: _____ Birth Date: _____

Last 4 Digits of Social Security #: _____ Customer Contact Telephone #: _____

Name on Voice Service Account (if different from Applicant): _____

Customer's Address (no P.O. boxes): Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

Is this address also the mailing address? Yes No

If No, please provide mailing address: _____

¹ This form should not be used to enroll into the Lifeline program for a qualifying broadband service. Use form and follow procedures at www.lifelinesupport.org if Lifeline program enrollment is for broadband service or for a bundled voice/broadband service.

I understand the following obligations and provisions about the Lifeline program:

- The Lifeline program is a government benefit program and willfully making false statements to obtain the benefit can result in fines, imprisonment, de-enrollment or being barred from the program.
- A household may receive only one Lifeline benefit. A Lifeline benefit cannot be combined with a benefit from the Disabled program.
- A household is defined as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses.
- Violation of the one-per-household limitation constitutes a violation of rules and will result in the subscriber's de-enrollment from the program.
- The Lifeline program is a non-transferable benefit and the subscriber may not transfer his or her benefit to any other person.

I hereby certify under penalty of perjury that (please initial next to each statement):

___ I meet the eligibility criteria for the Lifeline program.

___ I will provide notification to my voice service provider within 30 days if for any reason I no longer satisfy the criteria for receiving Lifeline benefits including if I or any member of my household receives a benefit from the Lifeline or Disabled programs.

___ My household will receive only one benefit from the Disabled or Lifeline programs.

___ I acknowledge I may be asked to verify my continued eligibility for Lifeline benefits and failure to verify my continued eligibility will result in de-enrollment and the termination of benefits.

___ I consent to sharing my account information with the Missouri Public Service Commission who oversees and administers the Lifeline program.

The information supplied on this form is true and correct. I acknowledge providing false or fraudulent information to receive Lifeline benefits is punishable by law.

Signature of Customer

Date

Submit a completed signed form and proof of eligibility.

Company Use Only:

I hereby attest the applicant presented acceptable proof of eligibility:

Print name of company official

Signature

Date

[If desired, insert Missouri-designated ETC name, logo, or contact information.]