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areas included in the definition of “reservation” and “near reservation,” as defined in § 54.400(e), must ensure that its qualification criteria are reasonably designed to apply to low-income individuals living in such areas.

(b) To qualify to receive Lifeline service in a state that does not mandate state Lifeline support, a consumer’s income, as defined in § 54.400(f), must be at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or a consumer must participate in one of the following federal assistance programs: Medicaid; Food Stamps; Supplemental Security Income; Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8); Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program; National School Lunch Program’s free lunch program; or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

(c) A consumer that lives on a reservation or near a reservation, but does not meet the qualifications for Lifeline specified in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, nonetheless shall be a “qualifying low-income consumer” as defined in § 54.400(a) and thus an “eligible resident of Tribal lands” as defined in § 54.400(e) and shall qualify to receive Tiers One, Two, and Four Lifeline service if the individual participates in one of the following federal assistance programs: Bureau of Indian Affairs general assistance; Tribally administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Head Start (only those meeting its income qualifying standard); or National School Lunch Program’s free lunch program. Such qualifying low-income consumer shall also qualify for Tier-Three Lifeline support, if the carrier offering the Lifeline service is not subject to the regulation of the state and provides carrier-matching funds, as described in § 54.403(a)(3). To receive Lifeline support under this paragraph for the eligible resident of Tribal lands, the eligible telecommunications carrier offering the Lifeline service to such consumer must obtain the consumer’s signature on a document certifying under penalty of perjury that the consumer receives benefits from at least one of the programs mentioned in this paragraph or paragraph (b) of this section, and lives on or near a reservation, as defined in § 54.400(e). In addition to identifying in that document

the program or programs from which that consumer receives benefits, an eligible resident of Tribal lands also must agree to notify the carrier if that consumer ceases to participate in the program or programs. Such qualifying low-income consumer shall also qualify for Tier-Three Lifeline support, if the carrier offering the Lifeline service is not subject to the regulation of the state and provides carrier-matching funds, as described in § 54.403(a)(3).

(d) In a state that does not mandate state Lifeline support, each eligible telecommunications carrier providing Lifeline service to a qualifying low-income consumer pursuant to paragraphs (b) or (c) of this section must obtain that consumer’s signature on a document certifying under penalty of perjury that:

(1) The consumer receives benefits from one of the programs listed in paragraphs (b) or (c) of this section, and identifying the program or programs from which that consumer receives benefits, or

(2) The consumer’s household meets the income requirement of paragraph (b) of this section, and that the presented documentation of income, as described in §§ 54.400(f), 54.410(a)(ii), accurately represents the consumer’s household income; and

(3) The consumer will notify the carrier if that consumer ceases to participate in the program or programs or if the consumer’s income exceeds 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

[65 FR 47905, Aug. 4, 2000, as amended at 68 FR 41942, July 16, 2003; 69 FR 34600, June 22, 2004]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 69 FR 34600, June 22, 2004, § 54.409 paragraph (d) was added. This paragraph contains information collection and recordkeeping requirements and will not become effective until approval has been given by the Office of Management and Budget.

§ 54.410 Certification and Verification of Consumer Qualification for Lifeline.

(a) *Certification of income.* Consumers qualifying under an income-based criterion must present documentation of their household income prior to enrollment in Lifeline.

(1) By one year from the effective date of these rules, eligible telecommunications carriers in states that mandate state Lifeline support must comply with state certification procedures to document consumer income-based eligibility for Lifeline prior to that consumer's enrollment if the consumer is qualifying under an income-based criterion.

(2) By one year from the effective date of these rules, eligible telecommunications carriers in states that do not mandate state Lifeline support must implement certification procedures to document consumer-income-based eligibility for Lifeline prior to that consumer's enrollment if the consumer is qualifying under the income-based criterion specified in §54.409(b). Acceptable documentation of income eligibility includes the prior year's state, federal, or tribal tax return, current income statement from an employer or paycheck stub, a Social Security statement of benefits, a Veterans Administration statement of benefits, a retirement/pension statement of benefits, an Unemployment/Workmen's Compensation statement of benefits, federal or tribal notice letter of participation in General Assistance, a divorce decree, child support, or other official document. If the consumer presents documentation of income that does not cover a full year, such as current pay stubs, the consumer must present three consecutive months worth of the same types of document within that calendar year.

(b) Self-certifications. After income certification procedures are implemented, eligible telecommunications carriers and consumers are required to make certain self-certifications, under penalty of perjury, relating to the Lifeline program. Eligible telecommunications carriers must retain records of their self-certifications and those made by consumers.

(1) An officer of the eligible telecommunications carrier in a state that mandates state Lifeline support must certify that the eligible telecommunications carrier is in compliance with state Lifeline income certification procedures and that, to the best of his/her knowledge, documentation of income was presented.

(2) An officer of the eligible telecommunications carrier in a state that does not mandate state Lifeline support must certify that the eligible telecommunications carrier has procedures in place to review income documentation and that, to the best of his/her knowledge, the carrier was presented with documentation of the consumer's household income.

(3) Consumers qualifying for Lifeline under an income-based criterion must certify the number of individuals in their households on the document required in §54.409(d).

(c) Verification of Continued Eligibility. Consumers qualifying for Lifeline may be required to verify continued eligibility on an annual basis.

(1) By one year from the effective date of these rules, eligible telecommunications carriers in states that mandate state Lifeline support must comply with state verification procedures to validate consumers' continued eligibility for Lifeline. The eligible telecommunications carrier must be able to document that it is complying with state regulations and verification requirements.

(2) By one year from the effective date of these rules, eligible telecommunications carriers in states that do not mandate state Lifeline support must implement procedures to verify annually the continued eligibility of a statistically valid random sample of their Lifeline subscribers. Eligible telecommunications carriers may verify directly with a state that particular subscribers continue to be eligible by virtue of participation in a qualifying program or income level. To the extent eligible telecommunications carriers cannot obtain the necessary information from the state, they may survey subscribers directly and provide the results of the sample to the Administrator. Subscribers who are subject to this verification and qualify under program-based eligibility criteria must prove their continued eligibility by presenting in person or sending a copy of their Lifeline-qualifying public assistance card and self-certifying, under penalty of perjury, that they continue to participate in the Lifeline-qualifying public assistance program. Subscribers who are subject to this

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verification and qualify under the income-based eligibility criteria must prove their continued eligibility by presenting current income documentation consistent with the income-certification process in § 54.410(a)(2). These subscribers must also self-certify, under penalty of perjury, the number of individuals in their household and that the documentation presented accurately represents their annual household income. An officer of the eligible telecommunications carrier must certify, under penalty of perjury, that the company has income verification procedures in place and that, to the best of his or her knowledge, the company was presented with corroborating documentation. The eligible telecommunications carrier must retain records of these certifications.

[69 FR 34600, June 22, 2004, as amended at 73 FR 42274, July 21, 2008]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 69 FR 34600, June 22, 2004, § 54.410 was added. This section contains information collection and record-keeping requirements and will not become effective until approval has been given by the Office of Management and Budget.

§ 54.411 Link Up program defined.

(a) For purposes of this subpart, the term “Link Up” shall describe the following assistance program for qualifying low-income consumers, which an eligible telecommunications carrier shall offer as part of its obligation set forth in §§ 54.101(a)(9) and 54.101(b):

(1) A reduction in the carrier’s customary charge for commencing telecommunications service for a single telecommunications connection at a consumer’s principal place of residence. The reduction shall be half of the customary charge or \$30.00, whichever is less; and

(2) A deferred schedule for payment of the charges assessed for commencing service, for which the consumer does not pay interest. The interest charges not assessed to the consumer shall be for connection charges of up to \$200.00 that are deferred for a period not to exceed one year. Charges assessed for commencing service include any charges that the carrier customarily assesses to connect subscribers to the network. These charges do not include

any permissible security deposit requirements.

(3) For an eligible resident of Tribal lands, a reduction of up to \$70, in addition to the reduction in paragraph (a)(1) of this section, to cover 100 percent of the charges between \$60 and \$130 assessed for commencing telecommunications service at the principal place of residence of the eligible resident of Tribal lands. For purposes of this paragraph, charges assessed for commencing telecommunications services shall include any charges that the carrier customarily assesses to connect subscribers to the network, including facilities-based charges associated with the extension of lines or construction of facilities needed to initiate service. The reduction shall not apply to charges assessed for facilities or equipment that fall on the customer side of demarcation point, as defined in § 68.3 of this chapter.

(b) A qualifying low-income consumer may choose one or both of the programs set forth in paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(2) of this section. An eligible resident of Tribal lands may participate in paragraphs (a)(1), (a)(2), and (a)(3) of this section.

(c) A carrier’s Link Up program shall allow a consumer to receive the benefit of the Link Up program for a second or subsequent time only for a principal place of residence with an address different from the residence address at which the Link Up assistance was provided previously.

(d) An eligible telecommunications carrier shall publicize the availability of Link Up support in a manner reasonably designed to reach those likely to qualify for the support.

[62 FR 32948, June 17, 1997, as amended at 65 FR 47906, Aug. 4, 2000]

§ 54.413 Reimbursement for revenue forgone in offering a Link Up program.

(a) Eligible telecommunications carriers may receive universal service support reimbursement for the revenue they forgo in reducing their customary charge for commencing telecommunications service and for providing a deferred schedule for payment of the charges assessed for commencing service for which the consumer does not