

## LIFELINE ASSISTANCE

### What Is Lifeline Assistance?

- Lifeline Assistance is a government assistance program that provides a monthly credit to the local telephone service bill of residential customers. Lifeline Assistance is designed to make basic home telephone service even more affordable for qualified customers.
- If you qualify for Lifeline Assistance, Ragland Telephone Company will discount your local telephone charge by \$12.75 each month.

### What Restrictions Apply to the Lifeline Program?

- Lifeline customers may subscribe to any local telephone service plans offered by Ragland Telephone Company, but the discount may only be applied to local telephone charges.
- **Lifeline Assistance is a federal benefit – willfully making false statements in order to receive government assistance 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 telephone or wireless (cellular) line per household, which is used as the primary residential line.
- 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 and possible prosecution by the United States Government.
- 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.

### How Do I Qualify for Lifeline Assistance?

Lifeline Assistance is available to residential telephone 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 or Food Stamps)
- ❖ Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- ❖ Section 8 Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- ❖ Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- ❖ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- ❖ National School Lunch Program’s Free Lunch Program (NSLP)

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, and for whom you are financially responsible, 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.

Annual Income 135% Thresholds Based on Household Size								
1 person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5 people	6 people	7 people	8 people	For each additional person
\$15,080	\$20,426	\$25,727	\$31,118	\$36,464	\$41,810	\$47,156	\$52,502	+ \$5,346 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:

- Most recent state or federal tax return
- Retirement/pension statement of benefits
- Current income statement from an employer
- Unemployment/Workmen's Compensation Statement of Benefits
- Paycheck stubs for most recent 3 months
- 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 for at least 3 months time

**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 program
- A notice letter of participation in a qualifying state or federal 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

Ragland Telephone Company will NOT keep a copy of any of the supporting documentation you provide.

**Frequently Asked Lifeline Questions**

**Q. Can Ragland 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 3 consecutive 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 most recent 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. Ragland Telephone Company is required to verify your temporary address every 90 days, until you obtain a permanent address. If you do not respond to Ragland’s address verification attempts within 30 days, you may be de-enrolled from Lifeline service.

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

A. Ragland 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 Ragland Telephone Company 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 Ragland Telephone Company 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; 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 Assistance may be required to provide a service deposit, consistent with the terms of Ragland Telephone Company's General Subscriber Services Tariff. Ragland offers free Toll Limitation Service to Lifeline customers for any local 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 Ragland Telephone Company 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 Ragland within 30 days, as required, your Lifeline Assistance was terminated. 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 Ragland's customer service representatives at 205-472-2141 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).

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

- You may apply in person for Lifeline Assistance at Ragland Telephone Company's business office, located at 630 Main Street in Ragland, Alabama, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- You must complete the Lifeline application form and bring proof of your eligibility for Lifeline Assistance based on either your household income or participation in one of the qualifying low-income assistance programs.
- If you have questions about Lifeline Assistance, you may call Ragland's customer service representatives at 205-472-2141 during normal business hours.