

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Lifeline Awareness Week is September 12th – 18th

During the nationally organized “Lifeline Awareness Week”--September 12-18--the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission (Commission) and the New Hampshire Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA) are promoting the telephone programs, Lifeline and Link-Up Assistance, which offer discounts to low-income residents in order to ensure access to basic local telephone service. This discounted phone service makes it easier for New Hampshire customers to have access to local emergency services and community resources.

Lifeline and Link-Up are two separate programs that can help income qualified customers get new phone service and pay their telephone bills. These are federal programs implemented by local telephone companies that provide discounts to eligible households on installation costs for new phone service, as well as for basic monthly service. The Commission and the OCA want all New Hampshire residents to stay connected, including those who need phone service but can't afford it.

You may be qualified if your household income is no more than 135% of the federal poverty income guideline or if you participate in or qualify for any of the following programs:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Electric Assistance Program (EAP) or Natural Gas Bill Assistance
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)
- Food Stamps
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- National School Lunch Free Lunch Program (NSL)
- Bureau of Indian Affairs Program (Tribal TANF, Head Start Subsidy, NSL)

Lifeline helps qualified customers who already have telephone service save money on their monthly phone bills, while Link-Up helps eligible customers receive a discount on the installation of telephone service in their homes. Some wireless companies participate in these programs, so customers should check with their wireless carriers.

Consumers can also save money by voluntarily foregoing pre-subscribed long distance telephone service by requesting toll-blocking, a service that prevents toll calls from being made

from their phone. Customers using this service can still use pre-paid calling cards or dial-around services to place long-distance calls from their homes.

To apply for either Lifeline or Link-Up, contact your telephone company. More information on the programs is also available on the Commission's website, www.puc.nh.gov.

The Commission is the state agency charged with regulating the rates and services of utilities operating in New Hampshire. To contact the Commission, call 1-800-852-3793 or 1-800-735-2964 (TDD Access-Relay NH), email us at puc@puc.nh.gov, or check our website at www.puc.nh.gov.

The OCA is an independent state agency representing the interests of residential utility ratepayers. To contact the OCA call 603-271-1172, email us oca@oca.nh.gov, or check our website at www.oca.nh.gov.

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