1. What is the Lifeline/TAP program?
The federal Lifeline program, established in 1985 by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), assists qualifying low-income consumers to afford telecommunications service, including traditional landline service, wireless/mobile service, and broadband internet access service (internet). The Lifeline program is available to eligible low-income consumers in every U.S. state, territory, commonwealth, and on tribal lands. Qualifying households located on Tribal lands may also receive an additional discount on local telephone activation charges through the FCC’s Link-Up program. The Minnesota Telephone Assistance Plan (TAP) program is a state-funded monthly discount on local telephone service for qualified residents. The TAP program is not available for wireless or internet services.

2. What is the current benefit under the Lifeline/TAP Program?
The Lifeline program benefit is $9.25/month. The TAP benefit is $7.00/month. There is also an enhanced Lifeline discount of $25 available to eligible persons living on Tribal lands or Indian reservations.

3. How can I determine if I am eligible for the Lifeline/TAP discount?
A consumer enrolled in one or more of the following programs, or have an income that is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines may participate in the program:

- Federal Housing Assistance
- Medicaid/Medical Assistance
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/Food Stamps
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Veterans Pension or Survivors Pension Benefit

Additional qualifying programs for persons living on a reservation:
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Food Distribution program on Indian Reservation (FDPIR)
- Tribally administered Head Start (only those meeting its income qualifying standard)
- Tribally administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANF)

(Note that Supplemental Social Security (SSI) is not the same as Social Security. SSI is a Federal income supplement program funded by general tax revenues (not Social Security taxes). SSI helps aged, blind and disabled people who have little or no income. Also note, Medicare is not a qualifier for the Lifeline program.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>2019 Federal Poverty Guidelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$16,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$22,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$28,796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$34,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For each additional person, add:</td>
<td>$5,967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How do I enroll?
First, telecommunications service providers that participate in the Lifeline and/or TAP programs will be able to provide you with an application. You may also download an application on the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission website. (Check with the company you are applying to that, they will accept this application.) Second, complete and sign the application. Third, attach proof of participation in one of the qualifying programs or proof of income to your application. Fourth, mail the application and required supporting documents to your telecommunications service provider.

5. What documentation do I need to provide at enrollment?
If you qualify by program assistance, please enclose a photocopy of both sides of your benefits card or award letter. If you qualify by income, please enclose photocopies of any of the following qualifying documents; DO NOT send any originals.

If applying by program participation, submit:

- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA) award letter (that includes name of program, date of award, name of beneficiary, and award amount) or lease agreement
- Medicaid card (that includes name of program, name of beneficiary, state of residence, issued or effective date, and name of state agency that issued card)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) award letter or copy of beneficiary card (if that includes beneficiary’s name)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) award letter (that includes name of program, name of beneficiary, address of beneficiary, date of award, and award amount)
- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) letter, pension grant letter, or Survivors Benefit summary letter
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) General Assistance award letter or benefit check stub
- Tribal Head Start enrollment confirmation or letter of participation
- Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) award letters (that include name of program, name of beneficiary, address of beneficiary, and date of award)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) Notice of Action award letter, copy of benefit card, or letter from agency confirming participation

If applying by income, submit:

- Most recent state, federal, or Tribal tax return
- Current income statement from an employer or paycheck stub for most recent 3 months
6. Can I get more than one Lifeline discounted service?
   No. Federal rules prohibit eligible low-income subscribers from receiving more than one Lifeline
discount per household. An eligible subscriber may receive a discount on either a landline, wireless
service (but not more than one), or on broadband or bundled service. If you, or any person in your
household, are currently receiving more than one monthly Lifeline service, you must select one
provider to provide your Lifeline service, and you must contact the other provider to de-enroll from
their program. Eligible households may receive both the Lifeline and TAP credits on the same
service.

7. How do Lifeline/TAP Program define “household”?
   Enrollment is limited to one discount for either a landline or wireless connection, per household. A
household is defined for Lifeline program eligibility as any individual, or group of individuals, who
live together at the same address, that function as a single economic unit (i.e., share income and
household expenses). All adult individuals (e.g., husband, wife, domestic partner, adult child, or
another related or unrelated adult) living at the same address that share expenses (e.g., food, living
expenses) and share income (e.g., salary, public assistance benefits, social security payments) would
be considered part of a single household. If any one of these persons are Lifeline program enrollees,
no other member of that household is eligible.

   However, it is possible that more than one household can reside in a single dwelling, i.e. apartment
buildings, if they are separate economic units. Any violation of the one-per-household rule will
result in de-enrollment from the program and may subject the enrollee to criminal and/or civil
penalties.

8. What do I do if I am currently receiving more than one Lifeline/TAP service?
   Households with duplicate Lifeline services must select a single provider and de-enroll from other
Lifeline programs. Subscribers violating the one per household rule may be subject to criminal
and/or civil penalties.

9. How often do I need to verify my eligibility?
   Once enrolled, participants must recertify annually to confirm eligibility. The provider can recertify
customers by themselves or by the Universal Services Administrative Company, which administers
the Lifeline program. You may receive a letter or form that requires you to certify continued
eligibility to receive the discount, and that no other household member is receiving a Lifeline
discount. If no longer eligible, participants must de-enroll or risk removal from the program. Lifeline
benefits are not transferable, even to other qualifying subscribers. If an enrollee is still eligible but
does not meet the deadline stated in the letter, the discount will be lost and the participant must re-
enroll to regain the discount.

   Those enrolled under a pre-paid wireless option where there is no charge risk de-enrollment for
non-usage. If the participant does not initiate or use the service for 30 consecutive days, the
provider is required to automatically de-enroll the participant 15 days from notification. This gives the participant a total of 45 days in which to demonstrate usage.

10. Can Lifeline recipients change their service provider?
Yes. A Lifeline customer of voice service must stay with the same provider for 60 days, but can obtain the discount from another provider after the 60 day “freeze” period expires. A customer that receives Lifeline for internet service, or as part of a bundle that includes internet, may not obtain the discount from another provider for 12 months.

11. What happens if the broadband internet services, that meet the minimum standards for eligibility, are not available where I live?
Where available internet service options do not meet the FCC’s minimum standards, the FCC will allow the $9.25/month discount to apply to a 4 Mbps download/1 Mbps upload speeds for fixed broadband service offerings. For mobile broadband services, in areas without 3G or 4G coverage, the Lifeline discount will only be available for voice service.

12. My current landline or wireless carrier said it does not offer Lifeline or TAP. What should I do?
Not all landline and wireless carriers are required to provide Lifeline and TAP discounts. Your telecommunications provider is responsible for knowing whether they are under any requirement to provide Lifeline/TAP. If you are concerned whether your company is providing accurate information, please contact the Minnesota Department of Commerce (at 651-539-1876 or telecom.commerce@state.mn.us).

13. Are any service providers required to participate in the Lifeline and TAP programs?
All Minnesota telephone and telecommunications carriers, regulated by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission are required to offer the TAP program to customers. All incumbent local exchange carriers, and those wireless carriers authorized to receive universal service funds from the FCC, are required to offer the Lifeline program.

14. What should I do if my Lifeline or TAP credits suddenly disappear from my monthly bill? Why would this happen?
The FCC requires landline and wireless carriers to verify customer eligibility for Lifeline every year. If you do not complete and return the Lifeline Rate Assistance Verification form that your provider sent to you each year, your provider will terminate your Lifeline and TAP Assistance. If your Lifeline and TAP provider terminates your credits, you must re-apply in order to receive the discount.

15. Am I eligible for the Lifeline and TAP discount even if my household already subscribes to the eligible services?
Yes, you may apply for the Lifeline and TAP discount as long as no one else in the household is already receiving the Lifeline and TAP discount.

16. Whom do I contact with questions about the Lifeline and TAP programs?
If you have questions or complaints about these discount programs or the application process, contact your local telephone company or the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission at 651-296-0406, toll free at 1-800-657-3782, or by email at consumer.puc@state.mn.us.

17. Why did my provider deny my application or renewal?
If you received a letter denying your participation in Lifeline or TAP, there are many possible reasons for your disqualification. The most common reason is an applicant did not complete and sign the
form, verify documentation, or submit the recertification form by the due date. If your company does not explain the reason for the denial and you need assistance, please contact the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission as shown in the previous question.

18. How do I get a Hearing Aid Compatible (HAC) cell phone from my wireless Lifeline provider?

If you need a hearing aid compatible (HAC) cell phone, it is best to contact the customer service department of the Lifeline provider you are considering to ask if they have HAC phones available. If your hearing aid has a telecoil, you will need a phone with a HAC rating of T3 or T4. If your hearing aid uses a microphone for audio input, instead of a telecoil, you will need a phone with a HAC rating of M3 or M4.

If the provider has a HAC cell phone available that will meet your needs, ask how to request the device when you apply for Lifeline. In addition, ask customer service what the provider’s policy is for returning or exchanging the device if it does not meet your needs. If the provider does not have a HAC cell phone available that will meet your needs, contact another Lifeline provider in your area.

Sources for questions and answers:

   https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44487.pdf
   feline
3. http://www.psc.state.md.us/telecommunications/lifeline-availability-maryland/
5. https://mn.gov/puc/telecommunications/telephone-discounts/
     aqs.pdf
     telephones