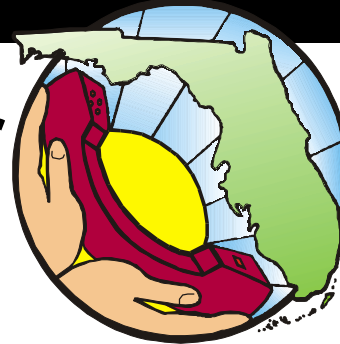




# Consumer Bulletin

Lila A. Jaber, Chairman



## Lifeline Assistance & Link-Up Florida

No one considers telephone service a luxury. In our world today, everyone needs a phone. A telephone is not only a lifeline to emergency help, but also provides a vital link to family and friends. I'd like to tell you about two programs that can help you save money on your local phone service or help you or someone you know obtain phone service.

The Lifeline Assistance Program provides up to a \$12.00 credit on qualified residential customers' local monthly telephone bills, including a federal credit of \$8.50, and a matching credit from their telephone company of \$3.50.

Link-Up Florida provides up to a 50% reduction in the telephone service hook-up charge, to a maximum of \$30.

In 1995, the Florida legislature joined in a federal effort to provide low-income people with a monthly discount from their phone bill and because of the strong leadership provided by the Legislature, the Lifeline and Link-Up programs are helping to make telephone service affordable to low-income consumers in our state.

Recent PSC reports show that it is estimated that over 850,000 people in Florida are eligible to receive Lifeline and Link-Up, yet only about 144,610 or 17% of them are taking advantage of the programs. Due to the low participation rate in this program, the PSC is committed to increasing public and consumer awareness of both Lifeline and Link-Up to facilitate greater participation in the programs. The PSC is also committed to making sure that eligible residents receive these discounts. We have and will continue to work collaboratively with state and local agencies, such as the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Elder Affairs, AARP, the Florida League of Cities, and the Florida Association of Counties for direct mail opportunities and to ensure that information about these programs reaches the people that need it most.

The PSC is asking you to help us spread the word about Lifeline and Link-Up. Without a telephone, a good amount of the information that low-income and fixed-income households receive is through word of mouth or by some other form of communication. To get as many qualified individuals as possible signed up for Lifeline and Link-Up, I hope you will join us in our outreach efforts. We should work together to make sure that all those that are eligible enroll in Lifeline and Link-Up.

### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Q: Who is eligible for Lifeline and Link-Up?**

A: You are eligible for Lifeline and Link-Up if you are receiving benefits under one of these programs:

- ◆ Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- ◆ Food Stamps
- ◆ Medicaid
- ◆ Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- ◆ Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- ◆ Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)

**Q: How can a person sign up for the programs?**

A: Contact your local phone company to sign up for Lifeline and/or Link-Up. Check the front pages of your area's local telephone directory and call the number for establishing or changing telephone service.

**Q: Can a person participate in both programs?**

A: Yes.

**Q: What if a person does not have service at this time because of a previous bill that has not been paid? Can this person still receive Lifeline?**

A: Yes. The telephone company can require the person to make payment arrangements over a period of four months for the outstanding local portion of the bill. If the person has outstanding long distance charges, they may be required by the phone company to participate in toll blocking (blocking a person's access to dial long distance from their phone), but the company cannot deny Lifeline service to qualified customers because of unpaid long distance bills.

**Q: How can a person find out more about Lifeline and Link-Up?**

A: If you or someone you know may be eligible for Lifeline and Link-Up, or if you would like to know if you are eligible to participate in the programs, please call your **local phone company**. If, after speaking with your phone company, you have further questions, please call the PSC at **1-800-342-3552** for answers and request a copy of our free brochure, **Lifeline Assistance and Link-Up Florida**. You may also e-mail us at [contact@psc.state.fl.us](mailto:contact@psc.state.fl.us), or visit our Internet home page at [www.floridapsc.com](http://www.floridapsc.com) for more information.

*Lila A. Jaber is the Chairman of the Florida Public Service Commission. The PSC sets the rates utility companies charge for natural gas, electric and telephone service within the state. In 35 counties, it sets the price you pay for the water you drink, if your water company is privately owned. Chairman Jaber is also a member of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service and the state chair of the Federal-State Joint Conference on Advanced Telecommunications Services.*