

19.8 TEL-ASSISTANCE/LIFELINE AND LINK UP

I. Introduction

The Tel-Assistance/**Lifeline** Program allows reduced rate telephone service to qualified low-income **individuals**. The monthly cost for Tel-Assistance/**Lifeline** is lower than other local telephone services offered. **Link Up reduces the cost of initiating new telephone service. Eligible consumers may receive a discount off the one-time costs associated with initiating telephone service and may also qualify for a deferred payment schedule for other costs.**

The Department of Health and Human Resources (**DHHR**) **has the following responsibilities for the programs:**

- To inform **individuals** of their eligibility;
- To assist applicants in verifying their eligibility;
- To determine continuing eligibility of **individuals**; and
- To inform the telephone company of **an individual's eligibility**.

A. STATE ADMINISTRATION

The **Tel-Assistance/Lifeline and Link Up Programs** are administered at the State level by the **Division of Family Assistance (DFA)**, Policy Unit. The **DFA** has the final responsibility of program planning, implementation, operation and management.

B. LOCAL OFFICE RESPONSIBILITY

The local offices are responsible for distributing an Application form, DFA-TA-2, and a Fact Sheet, DFA-TA-3, to any individual who makes a request.

C. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for Tel-Assistance/Lifeline and Link Up services the individual must be receiving at least 1 of the following benefits:

- **Emergency Assistance (EA)**
- **Federal Public Housing Assistance** or Section 8

- **Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)**
- **Medicaid**
- **National School Lunch Program, free program only**
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**
- **School Clothing Allowance (SCA)**
- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**
- **WV Children's Health Insurance Program (WV CHIP)**
- **Any other means-tested state or federal program**

NOTE: To qualify for Tel-Assistance/Lifeline and Link Up services, the telephone bill must be in the name of the individual receiving the benefit.

NOTE: Any adult member of the AG may apply for Tel-Assistance/Lifeline and Link Up services.

D. APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Mail-Out Application Kits

RAPIDS issues the **Tel-Assistance/Lifeline and Link Up** Application form, **DFA-TA-2**, and a **Fact Sheet, DFA-TA-3**, to all new approvals. The **DFA-TA-2** is mailed directly to the **individual** who must complete it and return it to his **selected** telephone company. After certification of service, the telephone company forwards the approved application to the **Tel-Assistance/Lifeline and Link Up Coordinator**.

2. Walk-In Applications

Local offices are supplied with the **DFA-TA-2** and **DFA-TA-3** for distribution to any individual who makes a request for a Tel-Assistance/**Lifeline and Link Up** application. The following procedure is used when an application is received:

- **The DFA-TA-2 and DFA-TA-3 are obtained by the individual** from the local office and completed.

Emergency And Special Assistance Programs

- The application is **forwarded** to the telephone company.
 - The **individual** is responsible for sending or taking the application to their selected telephone company.
 - The telephone company certifies service and forwards the application to the **Tel-Assistance/Lifeline and Link Up Coordinator**.

E. CLOSURE PROCESS

It is the responsibility of the customer to notify the telephone company if he ceases to receive benefits from DHHR or any other means-tested state or federal program that deemed them eligible for Tel-Assistance/Lifeline and Link Up services.

F. TELEPHONE COMPANY RESPONSIBILITY

1. Notification Eligibility

Participating telephone companies are responsible for notifying the applicant of eligibility, **cost of service**, denials, or termination of benefits.

2. Question Of Eligibility

The telephone companies are responsible for answering all questions of eligibility.

3. Hearing Process

Establishing, maintaining, and conducting hearings which may result from the denial of benefits are the responsibility of the participating telephone companies.

G. FORMS

One or more of the following forms may be used to determine eligibility:

- Application, **DFA-TA-2**
- **Fact Sheet , DFA-TA-3**

H. PARTICIPATING TELEPHONE COMPANIES

Each participating telephone company may offer its own individual enhanced plan. See Appendix E for a list of participating Telephone Companies. A list of participating telephone companies is also located on the DFA Intranet site.