Procedure Section: P2110, General Application Procedures

Subsection: P2110F, Lifeline/Link Up Vermont

Procedure:	**P2110F**	**Effective Date:**	**5/1/96**
Bulletin:	**96-16**	**Supersedes:**	**N/A**

Included Programs

All programs

A. Lifeline Eligibility

In the 1985 legislative session, the Vermont legislature voted to participate in a nationwide program designed to help low-income households maintain telephone service. A credit is deducted from the phone bills of eligible households. This credit is computed as half of the company's lowest basic service charge or $5.50, whichever is greater, plus up to $3.50 in matching federal funds.

> For example, NYNEX's lowest basic service rate is $13.68. Half of this is $6.84. The Lifeline benefit for a NYNEX customer is $10.34 ($6.84 in state funds plus $3.50 in federal funds).
>
> A customer of one of the small phone companies, such as Shoreham Telephone Company, will receive a Lifeline credit based on that company's lowest basic service charge.

Two groups of people are eligible for Lifeline:

- Recipients of ANFC, food stamps, Medicaid (excluding those households in which the only recipients of DSW assistance are children who are coded eligible for Medicaid as Dr. Dynasaur), Essential Person, and fuel assistance.
- Low-income elderly (65 or older) who are not recipients of welfare. Application is made by June 15 through the Vermont Tax Department, which sends the applications in batches to Operations for entry into ACCESS as soon as

administratively possible. Applications do not have to be filed with the tax return. For instance, if an elderly food stamp client files her tax return on February 10th and loses her FS eligibility on April 30th, she can still file a Lifeline application with the Vermont Tax Department by June 15th.

On the seventh of the month, ACCESS closes Lifeline for anyone whose DSW program benefits closed effective prior to that date.

Once a non-recipient of DSW benefits qualifies for Lifeline through the Vermont Tax Department application process, eligibility continues at least until the following June 30th. In July, ACCESS will close Lifeline for an elderly person who did not reapply with the current year's tax forms. (Example: A person applies with tax forms filed in March 1995. He/she will receive the Lifeline credit through June 1996. To receive the Lifeline credit after June, he/she would have to file a new application through the tax department by June 15, 1996.)

To be eligible for Lifeline, the person must have a phone installed in his/her residence:

- The phone does not necessarily need to be in the person's name, but the person must pay for it in full or in part.
- Lifeline is not available for business accounts, even if it is the only phone that a person has in his home.
- Only one credit can be applied to any one telephone number.

B. Application for Lifeline

A person applies for Lifeline on the DSW 201.

Determine, for NYNEX customers, the three-digit customer code that follows the telephone number on every page of the phone bill. (See sample below.) The applicant has the option of providing the code or sending you a page from the phone bill.

If the phone is not in the Lifeline applicant's name, get a verbal statement from him or her confirming that he or she pays part or all of the telephone bill.

For ACCESS instructions, see the APPL/ADDR section of the ACCESS manual.

If, due to oversight, a Lifeline request is not entered on ACCESS, or is not entered timely, and the applicant requests a retroactive credit, contact Family Services Division to ask that a letter be sent to the phone company.

Lifeline requests made via the hotline will be entered at state office, with documentation of new requests appearing on the case action log (CATN).

C. Lifeline Interface with Telephone Companies

On the seventh of the month, ACCESS generates the following information for the telephone companies:

- all recipients who have requested Lifeline since the last report;
- changes of phone numbers, codes and names since the last report;
- cases about which the phone company previously notified us of an error, whether you've had time to correct the error or not; and
- Lifeline recipients whose eligibility for DSW assistance ended effective prior to the seventh of that month.

The Lifeline credit will be deducted from the client's phone bill beginning with the first bill after the phone company has received and processed the information from DSW. If the telephone company does not list Lifeline as a deduction, customers must compare the phone bill charges or call the phone company to assure the deduction was made. NYNEX bills display the dollar amount of the Lifeline credit quarterly. The estimated amount of time from the client's application to a reduction in the phone bill is 90 days.

Every three months we send the phone companies a reconciliation list of every Lifeline recipient.

D. Lifeline Phone Number Error List

Each month the phone companies report back to state office:

- cases in which the phone number or customer code did not match the number in their files,
- business accounts,
- disconnects, and
- duplicate phone numbers.

State office staff enter discrepancy data on ACCESS, which generates an error message to you. To correct the error:

- Determine which number, the phone number or customer code, is in error.
- Check to see if there was a data entry error.
- Contact the client to request the code or a current copy of the phone bill if there was no data entry error.

E. Lifeline Changes

Each time a client moves and the telephone number changes, the telephone number and three-digit customer code (NYNEX) must be reverified. If the telephone number is not in the client's name, then a verbal statement from the client is needed to confirm that he/she pays for the telephone in part or in whole.

F. Link-Up Vermont

Anyone who has received ANFC, food stamps, Medicaid (excluding those households in which the only recipients of DSW assistance are children coded eligible for Medicaid as Dr. Dynasaur), or fuel assistance in the last 12 months is eligible for Link Up, a program to cut the cost of telephone installation for households without phone services.

Your responsibilities are to be aware of the program, tell clients who do not have a phone or who are moving about Link Up, provide an application if appropriate, and make a copy of the required verification form if necessary.

A supply of application forms is available on request from the Department of Public Service in Montpelier. The client completes the form and returns it to the phone company.

Verification of DSW assistance is any one of the following:

- any notice showing receipt of benefits in ANFC, food stamps, fuel assistance or Medicaid for the adult household members within the last 12 months.
- validation on the Link Up application by a DSW employee.

Revision History for P2110F

5/1/96

Content unavailable