

Helping Keep Americans Connected

The USAC Connection High Cost & Low Income monthly newsletter will give you information about upcoming program deadlines, tips to help you ensure timely and proper filings, and other information.

High Cost Program

Online Form 525 Expected to Roll Out in March for CETCs

In anticipation of the March roll-out of the online Form 525 (e525), which will enable online filing of CETC line counts, USAC requests that CETCs confirm that all personnel filing High Cost line count data have access to USAC's [E-File](http://forms.universalservice.org) system (<http://forms.universalservice.org>).

Access to e525 will be managed through the E-File portal, so it is critical that you identify your online users, update their information, and/or confirm their logins and passwords. E-File is the gateway for online Forms 498, 499, and in March the 525. If your company Officer or General Contact as found in Block 14 of Form 498 (*Service Provider Identification Number and Contact Information Form*) needs password assistance, call **(888) 641-8722**.

To gain access to e525, CETC personnel must be the Officer and/or General Contact discussed above **OR** be set up as an "Authorized" user by the Officer or General Contact. Only the Officer and General Contact (they may be the same person) as found in Block 14 of Form 498 have authority to submit the e525 until other "Authorized" users are established. Company Officers and General Contacts may delegate e525 filing authority to "Authorized" users such as company staff, as well as agents.

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Low Income Program

ETCs Must File Form 497 Revisions for 2006 Low Income Support by March 31, 2008

March 31, 2008 is the last day to submit revisions to [Form 497](#) (*Lifeline and Link Up Worksheet*) for 2006. USAC's administrative window for submitting revisions to Form 497 will close March 31, 2008, for all months prior to January 2007. This applies to submission of data on Form 497, including original (first-time) submissions and revisions of previously submitted data. USAC's administrative window for submitting data for the year 2005 is currently closed.

You may submit FCC Form 497 via [email](#) or via fax to 866-873-4665. You may also mail Form 497 to the following address: [USAC Low Income Program, 444 Hoes Lane, Piscataway, NJ 08854](#).

Please contact the Low Income Customer Service Center at 866-873-4727 if you have questions.

2008 Federal Poverty Guidelines Released

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released the 2008 Federal Poverty Guidelines January 23, 2008 in the [Federal Register](#) (73 Fed. Reg. 3971-3972). Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) in federal default states, ETCs with customers residing on federally recognized tribal lands, and

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Low Income Program

ETCs in non-federal default states that use total household income as a criterion for Lifeline and Link Up should update any materials containing the federal poverty guidelines.

USAC has updated all pages on www.lifelinesupport.org to reflect these changes. The chart to the right shows the amounts used in federal default states. USAC also posts the [federal poverty guidelines](#) at 100%, 125%, 150%, and 175% because some states have an income-based eligibility criterion at one of these levels. Please contact USAC's Low Income Team via [e-mail](#) with any questions.

135%			
Persons in Family or Household	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$14,040	\$17,550	\$16,146
2	\$18,900	\$23,625	\$21,735
3	\$23,760	\$29,700	\$27,324
4	\$28,620	\$35,775	\$32,913
5	\$33,480	\$41,850	\$38,502
6	\$38,340	\$47,925	\$44,091
7	\$43,200	\$54,000	\$49,680
8	\$48,060	\$60,075	\$55,269
For Each Additional Person, add	\$4,860	\$6,075	\$5,589

Program Compliance – Whistleblower Hotline

Assuring effective stewardship of the Universal Service Fund (USF) by guarding against misuse or waste of funds is a priority shared by USAC, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Congress, program participants, contributors to the Fund, and the general public. To that end, USAC's Whistleblower Hotlines allow interested parties to alert USAC-anonymously, if desired-to instances where program funds are being misapplied or where program rule violations may exist.

If you are aware of potential waste, fraud, or abuse of USF program funds, USAC encourages you to report it! Because USAC treats each call to the Whistleblower Hotline as a serious and urgent matter requiring immediate attention, we caution you to use the hotline procedure described below ONLY to report potential instances of waste, fraud, or abuse of support program rules.

What kinds of things should you report? Instances of USF support being misapplied, mismanaged, or violations of law, rules, or regulations by support program participants or contributors to the Fund.

Do I have to identify myself? No. You can make an anonymous complaint if you wish.

What to expect when you call. If you believe there is a misuse of funds or a violation of rules:

- ◆ Place a call to the hotline number below and tell the operator that you want to report a potential program rule violation.
- ◆ You will be connected to specially trained staff who will ask you a series of questions in order to obtain as much information about the situation as possible, so any investigation can proceed efficiently.
- ◆ If you choose to remain anonymous, you may do so. If you opt to identify yourself so that we can contact you for additional information, we will make every effort to maintain your confidentiality as the investigation proceeds should you request confidentiality.
- ◆ If our investigation determines a program rule violation has occurred, USAC will take immediate corrective steps, including but not limited to, adjusting or rescinding support disbursements and recovering program funds.
- ◆ Depending upon the nature of the rule violation, or whether there is evidence suggesting fraud may have occurred, other steps may be undertaken such as referral of matters to investigatory and enforcement authorities.

LOW INCOME WHISTLEBLOWER HOTLINE (202) 776-0200

High Cost Program

In the case of agent-entered data, as is the case with the paper Form 525, an authorized company representative must make a final certification for the e525. Step-by-step instructions for setting up "Authorized" users can be found in the [E-File User Guide \(https://forms.universalservice.org/form498/visitor/newsp.asp\)](https://forms.universalservice.org/form498/visitor/newsp.asp) on pages 25-37.

Further information on using e525 will be forthcoming via email and on the [High Cost](#) section of USAC's website. If you have questions about the e525, please [e-mail \(hcinfo@usac.org\)](mailto:hcinfo@usac.org) or call (202) 776-0200.

All eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) have ongoing requirements to fulfill, usually on an annual or a quarterly basis. Below are upcoming filings.

Important High Cost Program Filing Deadlines

DATE	TYPE OF CARRIER	COMPONENT	FILING TYPE	FILING DATA DUE
MARCH 30	RURAL & RATE-OF-RETURN	HCL, LSS, ICLS	VOLUNTARY*	QUARTERLY LINE COUNTS AS OF PREVIOUS 9/30
	CETC		MANDATORY	
	NON-RURAL, CETC	HCM	MANDATORY	QUARTERLY LINE COUNTS AS OF PREVIOUS 9/30
MARCH 31	RATE-OF-RETURN	ICLS	MANDATORY	PROJECTIONS (FORM 508) FOR UPCOMING PROGRAM YEAR (JULY-JUNE)
MARCH**	PRICE-CAP, CETC	IAS	MANDATORY	QUARTERLY LINE COUNTS AS OF PREVIOUS 12/31
APRIL 16	PRICE-CAP	IAS	MANDATORY	CMT REVENUE, UNE ZONE RATES, UNE ZONE BOUNDARIES AS OF PREVIOUS 12/31
JUNE 30	RATE-OF-RETURN	ICLS	VOLUNTARY	REVISIONS TO PROJECTIONS FOR CURRENT & UPCOMING PROGRAM YEARS
	RATE-OF-RETURN, CETC	ICLS	MANDATORY	ANNUAL USE CERTIFICATION FOR UPCOMING PROGRAM YEAR (JULY-JUNE)
	PRICE-CAP, CETC	IAS	MANDATORY	ANNUAL USE CERTIFICATION FOR UPCOMING PROGRAM YEAR (JULY-JUNE)
JUNE**	PRICE-CAP, CETC	IAS	MANDATORY	QUARTERLY LINE COUNTS AS OF 3/31
JULY 31	RURAL & NON-RURAL ILECS	HCL	MANDATORY	ANNUAL FILING OF COST, INVESTMENT, EXPENSE (PART 36) DATA FOR PREVIOUS CALENDAR YEAR (FILED WITH NATIONAL EXCHANGE CARRIER ASSOC.)
	NON-RURAL, CETC	HCM	MANDATORY	QUARTERLY LINE COUNTS AS OF PREVIOUS 12/31
	RURAL & RATE-OF-RETURN, CETC	HCL, LSS, ICLS	MANDATORY	QUARTERLY LINE COUNTS AS OF PREVIOUS 12/31

*MANDATORY FOR ILECS IF COMPETITION EXISTS /**DUE ON LAST BUSINESS DAY OF MONTH

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USAC appreciates feedback on this newsletter. For any questions or comments, please contact Ed Rovetto, Program Manager, External Relations, at erovetto@usac.org.

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