# Affordable Connectivity Program: Overview

December 14, 2021

**Universal Service**
Administrative Co.

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# Meet Our Team

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# Agenda

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# Program Overview

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# Overview of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) modifies and extends the existing Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB Program) and will help low-income households pay for broadband service and connected internet devices.

**$14.2B**

in additional funding appropriated by Congress into the Affordable Connectivity Fund

**$30**

per month is the new standard ACP benefit amount for households

**$75**

per month is the enhanced support ACP benefit for households located on Tribal lands

# Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)
## Consumer benefit overview

Eligible subscribers can receive:

### Standard Broadband Services Discount
ACP households can receive up to $30/month discount for broadband services.

### Tribal
ACP households located on Tribal lands can receive up to $75/month discount for broadband service.

### Device Reimbursement

Participating providers may be reimbursed up to $100 for a connected device delivered to the household, provided that the "charge to such eligible household is more than $10 but less than $50 for such connected device" (defined in the statue as a laptop, desktop computer, or a tablet).

# Timeline
## EBB Program to ACP Transition

| Month | Date | Event |
|---|---|---|
| November | November 15 | President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act |
| | November 18 | FCC released a Public Notice, opening the 20-day public comment period on the ACP |
| December | December 14 | USAC hosts ACP Overview training |
| | December 16 | USAC hosts ACP system training/office hours |
| | December 30 at 6pm Eastern | EBB Program enrollments close |
| | December 31 | ACP enrollments begin; start of 60-day transition period for legacy EBB Program households. |
| January | Mid-January | FCC expected to issue rules for ACP |
| March | March 1 | 60-day EBB Program transition ends |

# EBB Program to ACP Transition

- The Infrastructure Act provides for a 60-day transition period for households that qualified for the EBB Program prior to the effective date of ACP:

  - Existing EBB Program subscribers will continue to receive a monthly benefit at the EBB support level through the 60-day window

  - Households enrolled in the EBB Program as of December 31, 2021 based on criteria that still qualify for the ACP will not be required to submit a new application to enroll in ACP

  - Before the end of the 60-day transition period, EBB-enrolled households that qualified for EBB through eligibility criteria that are not applicable to ACP will be required to demonstrate their eligibility to receive an ACP benefit after the transition period ends. This will only impact a small number of EBB consumers who qualified through substantial loss of income or a service provider's approved COVID-19 Program

# EBB Program to ACP Transition

- The FCC is seeking comment on the rules and administration of the ACP. The FCC is expected to release an ACP Report and Order in mid-January 2022 which will provide expanded detail on Program rules

- Legacy EBB Program households enrolled on 12/31 do not need to provide separate consent for the 60-day transition period; further guidance on legacy EBB subscribers will be addressed in the FCC Order

  - Transfers **within** the EBB Program will continue to be allowed during the 60-day transition period

# Consumer Eligibility Criteria

# Eligibility Criteria (1 of 3)

The ACP has different eligibility criteria than the EBB Program. Households can qualify for the ACP by showing that at least one member of their household meets <u>one</u> of the following criteria:

- Participates in the FCC's [Lifeline Program](#)

- Has household income at or below **200%** of federal poverty limit (level adjusted from EBB)

- Participates in a Lifeline-qualifying government program

- Received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year

- Participates in free & reduced-price school lunch program or school breakfast program

- Participates in the Special Supplemental Nutritional Program for Woman, Infants and Children (WIC) – New for ACP

- Qualifies for a participating provider's existing low-income program, subject to FCC approval of that provider's eligibility process

*Before the end of the 60-day transition period, EBB-enrolled households that qualified for the EBB Program through eligibility criteria that are not applicable to the ACP will be required to demonstrate their eligibility to receive an ACP benefit after the transition period ends on March 1, 2022. The FCC expects this requirement will affect only a small number of households currently enrolled in the EBB Program.

# Eligibility Criteria: Lifeline-Qualifying Government Programs (2 of 3)

Households can qualify for the ACP by showing that at least one member of their household participates in one of the following programs:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit
- Tribal Programs for Residents for Qualifying Tribal Lands
  - Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
  - Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
  - Tribal Head Start (only those households meeting its income qualifying standard)
  - Food Distribution Program on Tribal Reservations

# Eligibility Criteria (3 of 3)

Households **cannot** use the below criteria to qualify for ACP as they did for the EBB Program:

x   A substantial loss of income (SLI) since February 29, 2020

x   Participation in a provider's COVID-19 program

# ACP Household Eligibility

The FCC is seeking comment on the one-per household limitation for the ACP. The EBB Program one-per household rules apply to ACP enrollees until the FCC issues new rules or guidance

- "Household" is defined as a group of people who live together and share income or expenses, whether related or not

- If more than one household receiving an ACP benefit resides at an address, consumers must complete an Independent Economic Household worksheet or service provider equivalent process to show eligibility for the ACP

Households that are eligible for ACP and Lifeline may apply for and receive both benefits on the same or separate service

# Benefit Qualifying Person (BQP)

- Households can qualify for the ACP through an eligible child or dependent (Benefit Qualifying Person or BQP)
  - For example, a household member with a child or dependent who is approved for the free and reduced-price school lunch program or school breakfast program or who attends a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school is eligible for ACP
  - Documentation of enrollment in a CEP School or in a free & reduced-price school lunch or breakfast program will be required to demonstrate eligibility. For example, households could provide a report card or a letter from the school to demonstrate that the student is enrolled in a CEP school

- The application should be completed by an adult member of the household, identifying the child or dependent as the BQP

# Systems Overview

# USAC ACP Systems

- The **Lifeline National Eligibility Verifier (NV)** is a centralized system that determines whether consumers are eligible for the ACP

- The **National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD)** allows service providers to enroll qualified ACP consumers in the program and transfer consumers (with the consumer's consent) to their company

- The **Claims System** is the online filing system within NLAD that service providers use to submit claims for reimbursement for offering ACP-supported services to ACP subscribers

- The **Representative Accountability Database (RAD)** is a registration system that validates the identities of service provider representatives performing transactions in the NV and NLAD

# National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier (National Verifier)

- The National Verifier checks consumer eligibility to participate in the ACP and accepts documentation to help consumers address eligibility errors

- Service providers will also be able to use the National Verifier to check the status of a consumer's eligibility application (with the consumer's permission)

- Consumers will be able to apply for the ACP directly through the National Verifier or with the help of a service provider

  - The application will be updated with the ACP eligibility items on December 31

- Service provider representatives need credentials to use the National Verifier service provider portal

# National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD)

- NLAD is available through USAC's one portal system, which is a single portal dashboard that allows users to access all of their Universal Service Fund and ACP systems through the same portal

- NLAD will allow service providers to manage their ACP subscribers, including enrolling consumers in the program and transferring subscribers

- All account types for NLAD and the NV are created in NLAD

- For more information about NLAD, visit the NLAD section of USAC's website

# ACP Claims System

- The FCC is seeking comment on the ACP claims process. The current claims process will remain in place until the FCC issues new rules or guidance

- Current claims process:

  - Service Providers will use the Claims System to claim ACP subscribers for reimbursement and to certify reimbursement claims

  - USAC will provide a "snapshot" of each providers' eligible subscribers on the first of each month as in the EBB Program, unless otherwise directed by the FCC

  - Service providers will claim the monthly service reimbursement amount for each eligible subscriber, as well as any device benefit reimbursement

  - Service providers must certify the claim by the 15th of the month for reimbursement

USAC will send a bulletin to providers alerting them of guidance issued by the FCC; providers can also monitor the docket

# Representative Accountability Database (RAD)

- ACP service provider enrollment representatives must register for a Representative ID through RAD

- RAD registration is a two-step process:

  - Representatives **self-register** for a Representative ID, which is needed to perform transactions in NLAD and the NV

  - Representatives provide their Representative ID number to each service provider for which they work

    - Service providers use the Representative ID to link the number to the representative's NLAD and/or NV account credentials; providers can find detailed instructions on how to link Representative IDs in the "How to Link a Rep ID" and "Data Input Templates" section of the RAD Resources page

- Representatives can begin registering with RAD now before their service provider has been granted NLAD access

- For more information about RAD, visit the RAD section of USAC's website

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# Verify & Enroll Eligible Consumers

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# Application Process – National Verifier (1 of 2)

**Option 1:**
Apply with a Service Provider

- The consumer visits a service provider
- The service provider will get the consumer's consent to enter the consumer's information into the National Verifier service provider portal
- This is an in-person interaction, where the service provider asks the consumer questions in an interview style approach

- The consumer must sign and certify the application

**Option 2:**
Apply Online

- The consumer visits the National Verifier website from any computer or mobile device to complete the electronic application and upload any required documentation
- If approved, the consumer contacts a participating service provider to enroll in ACP

**Option 3:**
Apply by Mail

- The consumer fills out and signs the National Verifier ACP Application Form
- The consumer mails the application and supporting documentation to the Support Center
- Service providers may assist consumers with the paper application and mail it on the consumer's behalf

# Application Process – National Verifier (2 of 2)

- The National Verifier will use the consumer's information to perform the following automated checks:
    - Eligibility check
    - Identity check
    - Address check
    - Duplicate subscriber check
    - Duplicate address check
    - Tribal eligibility check
    - Deceased subscriber check
- If any of these checks return errors, the consumer will be directed to either resolve the error in the portal or to provide additional documentation

# Enroll Consumers in NLAD – National Verifier (1 of 2)

- After a consumer is found eligible for the ACP using the National Verifier, the consumers must be enrolled using the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD)

- Service providers enroll consumers by using the APP ID feature or entering:
  - First and last name
  - Date of Birth
  - Last 4 digits of Social Security Number (if entered on the application)
  - Address
  - Email address or phone number
  - Service type
  - Intent to provide a device (if applicable)
  - Device type, make and model (if applicable)

  - Expected service rate and device rate (if applicable)
  - Benefit Qualifying Person's information (if applicable)
  - School Name (If qualifying through a free and reduced price lunch or breakfast program, or CEP School)

# Enroll Consumers in NLAD – National Verifier

- The National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD) will use the consumer information to check for a qualified application in the National Verifier
  - If found, the provider can complete the enrollment in NLAD
  - If not found, the consumer must return to the National Verifier to complete an application
- Service providers must receive affirmative consent from all existing consumers to enroll them in the ACP
  - For existing subscribers, service providers need to collect documentation demonstrating that the consumer received disclosures about the ACP and that the consumer provided affirmative consent to apply their ACP Benefit to the service received from the service provider
- Service providers in all states, including the Lifeline opt-out states California, Oregon, and Texas, must use NLAD for ACP enrollments

# Application Process – Approved Alternative Verification Process (AVP)

- For FCC-approved alternative verification processes (AVPs), including for existing low-income programs, service providers must also maintain documents used to verify eligibility

- If a provider is interested in becoming an AVP provider, visit the FCC website for more information

# Enroll Consumers in NLAD – Alternative Verification Process (AVP)

- Service providers using AVPs must enroll consumers in NLAD using the bulk upload process or an Application Programming Interface (API)

- Service providers enroll consumers in NLAD by entering:

  - First and last name

  - Date of Birth

  - Last 4 digits of Social Security Number (if entered on the application)

  - Address

  - Email address or phone number

  - Service type

  - Intent to provide a device (if applicable)

  - Device type, make and model (if applicable)

  - Expected service rate and device rate (if applicable)

  - Benefit Qualifying Person's information (if applicable)

  - School Name (If qualifying through the free and reduced price lunch or breakfast)

  - A confirmation flag indicating that the service provider is using an AVP for enrollment

# Enroll Consumers in NLAD – Alternative Verification Process (AVP)

- NLAD will run several checks (i.e., address, Tribal, duplicate subscriber, duplicate address, deceased subscriber)

- Errors can be resolved in NLAD

- Service provider using an AVP must certify that they confirmed eligibility of the consumers they enroll and retain documentation

- Upon completion, the provider can compete the enrollment in NLAD

# Transition from EBB Program to ACP

- Any consumers who are enrolled in the EBB Program by 5:59 PM ET on December 30, 2021 will continue to receive their monthly benefit at EBB support levels during the 60-day transition period

- USAC will remove the "Apply Now" button and paper application from GetEmergencyBroadband.org at 6 p.m. ET on December 30, 2021
  - Subscribers will not have to restart any open application as this application can be used for ACP
  - **It is encouraged that service providers shorten the amount of time between when a consumer picks them and when they enroll them into NLAD leading up to the December 30 change**

- All open EBB Program applications, except those that qualify through an EBB-only eligibility program (i.e. substantial loss of income), will roll over into ACP to be used for ACP enrollment.

- Consumers enrolled on and after December 31, 2021 will receive the ACP benefit

# Transition from EBB Program to ACP

- Reverification is required for consumers who qualified for the EBB Program using substantial loss of income or participation in an provider's approved COVID-19 program

- USAC will conduct reverification for consumers qualified through the National Verifier and where a provider with an AVP does not intend to rely on that process for determining eligibility in the ACP

- USAC will send providers a list of customers that are being contacted for reverification and notify providers which subscribers will be de-enrolled

- Consumers who do not demonstrate eligibility through an ACP qualifying program/criteria will be de-enrolled when the transition period ends on March 1, 2022

- A one week notice will be provided to service providers in advance of conducting any subscriber de-enrollments for consumers who fail to complete an ACP application in the required time

# Guidance on Provider Communication to Consumers

Providers should include the below information in notifications to consumers:

- The change in program name from EBB Program to ACP;

- The December 31, 2021 launch date for ACP;

- The continued discount during the 60-day transition period;

- The beginning and end dates of the transition period;

- The discount amount available under ACP after the transition period;

- Subscribers' option to switch service offerings at any time; and

- That subscribers will receive additional information if they need to take steps to retain their benefit after the transition period

# System Changes Preview

- USAC is hosting **System Changes Office Hours on December 16** that will review some of the key changes between the EBB and ACP systems

- There will be a flag in the system for EBB subscribers; providers  will be required to update this flag to ACP for all subscribers after March 1 snapshot and before the April snapshot or they will not be reimbursed in April for subscribers left with an EBB flag

- If providers prematurely update this flag to ACP prior to March 1 then they will not receive the up to $50 benefit for that legacy EBB customer

**Questions?**

# **Upcoming Service Provider Trainings**

Affordable Connectivity Program System Changes Office Hours:
Thursday, December 16, 2021 @ 2 p.m. ET: <u>Register</u>

Affordable Connectivity Program System Changes Office Hours:
Tuesday, December 21, 2021 @ 2:30 p.m. ET: <u>Register</u>

Recordings of ACP webinars can be found on the <u>ACP Learn page</u>

# Service Providers: Stay Informed About ACP

- Visit USAC.org to follow ACP updates

- Sign up for ACP updates and select the information you'd like to receive

- Visit the FCC website for additional program information and to submit comments on the ACP

- Give the new ACP provider help desk email address

- FCC guidance orders:
  - 11/26: https://www.fcc.gov/document/wcb-issues-guidance-transition-affordable-connectivity-program
  - 12/8: https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-issues-further-guidance-affordable-connectivity-program