

## **An Overview of the Affordable Connectivity Program – Transcript of audio**

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:everyone, welcome to the Academy, I'm with my colleague Ashley Don who is my tech support. Today's event is entitled An Overview of the Affordable Connectivity Program. Our presenter today is Kailer Hernandez. In this capacity should provide strategic leadership in regards to planning, development and managing. She assists with outreach effort. For March 2015 to June 2016 to January 2018, she was acting deputy chief managing several positions. Recently she served as the associate administrative cheap. She was responsible for getting information, policy, productivity and developing and implementing consumer outreach education priorities targeted to consumers at the federal and state levels. I will let Kayla take it away.

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Hello, can you hear me now?

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Yes, you're good.

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Thank you [ Laughter ] Thank you. I am from the Federal Communications Commission I'm going to talk with you about the affordable connectivity program, who is eligible and how accessible and how you can apply. We will again a quick agenda here, something I didn't mention before we are going to mention consumer protections within the program, how to be a local outreach partner and then we will end with a list of contacts and references. So, for those of you who are not familiar with the affordable connectivity program it is a program that provides a discount on monthly broadband that is for qualifying households so they can receive up to \$30 per month discount for broadband service associated equipment rental income for households on tribal lands, that goes up to \$75 per month. And, though not all service providers are participating in this program there are some that are participating in the program and are offering a one time discount of up to \$100 off of laptops, laptop computers or tablets that is purchased through the dissipating provider as long as the consumer pays at least \$10 but no more than \$50 toward the purchase price of the device. You're going to hear me mention household a lot during this presentation so what is household? For the purposes of this program, household is a group of people who live together and share money and expenses and they don't necessarily need to be related. So, if you live with someone you share money you are what household, even if everyone in the household qualifies for this benefit. I will talk a little bit more about that in a minute. A household can also qualify if perhaps the head of household was not filling out the application, but there is someone in household who needs the eligibility criteria, this is called an eligible dependent. And in some houses may have to answer additional questions about the household to determine how they can apply for the affordable connectivity program. An example of household could be for example, a married couple that lived together, even if both qualify and must share one benefit, it could've lied to a parent, or a parent or guardian who lives with a child. Even if a qualified they both share the bits in multiple house could be or roommates who live together but don't share money, they are considered four separate households and also can receive the in a fit as long as each person is eligible and for example, seniors who live in assisted living who do not share money are all considered separate households again. All can receive the benefit as long as each qualifies for it. So, there are many ways a household can be eligible, most household qualify because their income is at or below 200% of the federal property guideline. And I'll talk a little bit more about where you can find that information. But, if the household decided to not to apply using income or they are not eligible based on income, then the member of the household can think about what are the ways they can qualify and here is the list of things I will mention a few. If

participating in assistance programs such as snap, which is a sub supplemental assistance program, it could be someone a house where someone receives Medicaid, federal housing assistance, for this program, most qualify because they are recipients of the housing choice voucher. And that is to many consumers is known as section 8 vouchers. But they are other supplemental income recipients and qualify for SSI and some households participate in a program, W.I.C. for short but it's a special supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children. Lifeline which is another one and I will talk a little bit more about that in a moment. There could be a veteran in the household, there could be someone who is already participating in a providing assistance program. These are programs where the benefit for Internet is currently being charged at \$9.95 to about \$14.95 per month. Of course, there could be a lesser charge or greater charge, but more or less that is the range receiving a Pell Grant, or participating in the school lunch or school records program all qualify as household. And on tribal land use even areas here I will mention the tribal temporary assistance for needy families, qualifies a lot of the household on tribal land. So I mentioned lifeline which another federal program that lowers the cost of monthly phone and Internet and you can also get up to \$25 and on tribal land it's \$35 off their monthly bill. Many households do also qualify for lifeline. There is a great difference between ACP and lifeline and that is the federal poverty guidelines but I mentioned before that for ACP, it's the household being at or below 200% of the federal property guideline. For lifeline, this is 100 35%. So, most consumers don't know, including me, off the type of my head would not know those numbers, but the good thing is that the application for both programs do have a section that details what the federal poverty guidelines are. The current applications for both programs include the guidelines for 2023 and as you can see here, there's another list of programs that do qualify a household for Lifeline, there is a difference also with ACP versus Lifeline, there are some programs that you do not see here. For example you do not see W.I.C. as a way to qualify for Lifeline, nor do you see the free or reduced school lunch school best program as examples. This is a shorter list of qualifiers for this program, to qualify for Lifeline they need to also consider applying for ACP. There's two steps to enroll for the affordable connectivity program. As of last week, the website where the applications are located have changed and now you have to go to [getinternet.gov](https://getinternet.gov) you can apply online. And you can also fill out an application and if you can remember [affordableconnectivity.gov](https://affordableconnectivity.gov). And so now it will be live and we will redirect you to [getinternet.gov](https://getinternet.gov) to fill out the application. Once you fill out the application, you wait for the Universal service administrative company to send you a confirmation that you are now eligible for the benefit. This is really important, because a letter or email, depending on what you signed up for will have a confirmation number that you can then provide to the provider of your choice if you currently have a provider you can also ask the provider if they participate in ACP and they can then give you the instructions on how to enroll in the program. I will stop here and say about providers that some of them are also certified by the federal communications commission to enroll someone online without having to fill out the application because they have been certified to also fill out the application for consumer, so while you're waiting to get that later letter from the provider you can find out what programs they can offer to see if they participate in the program and other related questions. I mentioned before the introduction that the ACP does have consumer protections that are in place FCC is a regulatory agency but we always look for consumer protections you see them all here. I will say, that the most important one would be in my mind providing a dedicated FCC process or ACC complaint. At the FCC we have [consumercomplaints.fcc.gov](https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov) as the hub for all consumer complaints and you could go to that website and kind of look for information before you consider what type of complaint you want to file. But the great thing about our website is that at the very top and does say need help with in ACP complaint, if you click on that it will give you more information on how to file a complaint. So what may be the reason to file a complaint under ACP? It could be, for example that a provider is offering to either upgrade or downgrade your current plan, because you now are a recipient of the benefit. It could be that they are not offering you all the plans to consider. In this case, every single plan that they offer to someone who

is not receiving the and if it should also be offered to someone who is receiving the benefits and that is just a few of the ways that we protect consumers and all of this is to make sure that consumers get the best plans that meets their needs. So, now we up to the point of becoming an outreach partner, this is my call to action for everyone listening today the FCC always a tree sheets having people in the community share information about this program, because we want to reach as many eligible consumers as possible. I know we can't do it alone, I can tell if you're just stepping out of FCC myself, I have a very small team and a very dedicated team, but we are only about a team of about 10 people so we appreciate anyone sharing information about this program. One way that a lot of people have done this is by requesting a speaker at [ACPspeakers@fcc.gov](mailto:ACPspeakers@fcc.gov) , or if you want to become a partner in terms of where to find information and share what your community, please send an email to [outreach@fcc.gov](mailto:outreach@fcc.gov). Our ACP outreach toolkit you can learn more about becoming a partner you can see all of these materials on your screen I will mention a few. For social media, we have for example, logos, images that you can put on your websites, we have a newsletter insert, we have principles of back sheet that has all of the general information consumers would need to apply to the program. Nine by five information cards, we have video and information in American sign language. And for those consumers that needed we also have audio PSAs for the now we have to the resources. I own a lot of information at you, but please note that you can always find information on our hub, [fcc.gov/ACP](http://fcc.gov/ACP). You need information there's a toll-free number you can call 877-384-2575 or you can email support, and we have claims and trackers of port if you want to find out how much money has been drawn down from this program which Congress gave us \$14.2 billion for this program, you can see how many people are enrolled per state and much more. You can subscribe to notifications for email by going to the website are toolkit as I mentioned before I have on the screen every long URL, but if you want to remember where to find you can always go to [fcc.gov/ACP](http://fcc.gov/ACP). We have information for people who need things in accessible formats, and again I mentioned that now the new address to apply is to get [Internet.gov](http://Internet.gov) and finally if you need any information on the FCC you can always send an email. So that kind of concludes everything I am open to any questions and I'm going to ask Donald if there are any questions that people have put in the chat.

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Yes we do have one question I want to encourage anyone in the audience to these put your questions in the chat. The first question we have is you have to be a partner to access the toolkit?

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No, you do not toward if you go to [FCC.gov/ACP](http://FCC.gov/ACP) come you find a link which shows outreach toolkit, click on that and these materials are free and anyone can download them. Anyone you would like us to send hard copies we do have limited print runs, you can always email us for your request.

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The nest questions are what other requirements for partner agencies that want a partner?

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We are really flexible. If you send us an email, like let's say you just want us Beaker, you can send in email to [ACPspeakers@fcc.gov](mailto:ACPspeakers@fcc.gov) . But what we do is, we have a short meeting with anyone who wants to share information. We talk about the ways in which information can be provided, whether it's a presentation we do train the trainers and we walked them through the application process so that they can help others in their communities and we also asked if they would like to share sums secrets, I like to call them feel good stories, but they are positive stories about helping others enroll in the community. And it's not a one-time relationships. It is six months from now if you want to come back to us because you want to refresh of refresher training for you want more information we are always happy to share that with you.

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All right, so next question is going to be, is this a funded program that will sunset or is it permanent?

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This one is under the infrastructure act, and so Congress gave the FCC \$14.2 billion and so as of this conversation, this program is going to go until the funds are drawn down, or Congress will let us know what the next steps are. So there's really no right now, we don't have any dates of when this is going to end. If, though, for example something comes down from Congress, then the FCC doesn't just tell people well, tomorrow the program is going to be cut off. There are certain steps we have to follow, including issuing a public notice, having the universal service administrative company send out information to consumers. The providers will also be aware and send out information to consumers. And then, it's a long process to close down should that happen. That is a hypothetical right now of the things that would be put into place. But, as I said before, right now we don't have a deadline and Congress is encouraging us, the FCC, to provide information to as many consumers as possible so that they can enroll for this benefit.

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All right, our next question is going to be, how did this program work if you already have Internet and the equipment?

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That is a very good question. A lot of consumers think this is only for people that have no axis currently. If you already have Internet service, but you qualify for the program and have not a light Ford, the same steps that I mentioned before apply. It would look to see how you qualify and then for the purposes of this answer I will just say, let the you are a Medicaid recipient. You fill out the information, you go to the whole process again, and once you get confirms a confirmation letter or an email from the universal service administrative company, you go to your current provider and say, I'm a recipient of the affordable connectivity program benefit, I would like to discuss how can be applied to my current plan. Or you can decide if your current plan doesn't work for your family or your household, then you can definitely disc and desk -- talk with the provider about your needs. Now as long as your consumer, you can decide to upgrade or downgrade your major plan. But as I mentioned before, but the provider cannot do is say, well, I am going to downgrade you meaning a reduction in cost, or upgrade you, meaning you are increased in cost or an increase of the services. It is really up to you, the consumer, to decide what you want. And as I said before, does cover associated equipment rentals from your provider. So, whatever it is, if you currently have something for you to receive service, then that is something to consider. That's part of the process will be conducted in your monthly bills.

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Our next question is, can a person living alone be a household?

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Definitely, yes. So, if you are household of one, you can definitely apply for the program as long as you qualify, whether you if your qualifying to your income that I mentioned before, at at or below the poverty guidelines or any of the programs, Medicaid, veterans pension, those are just a few.

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I don't see any more questions in the chat right now I'm going to come I think Ashley's going to put our webinar survey in the chat if you would all like to fill it out, that would be great. Actually, I think I do see another question someone is asking, which is, a clarification. If you share living space with someone not eligible? There is a question mark.

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Okay [ Laughter ], Let's say, someone is not eligible. As long as one person, if you live with someone and you share expenses and money, then you are considered a household. But if one of you, let's say my sister and I, are living together where sharing expenses, we are sharing an apartment. And I qualify because I'm a veteran who is receiving a pension, and she doesn't qualify for anything. As a household, yes, the household is eligible, because I am the veteran with the pension, even though the both of us

live together, it is just one benefit per household. And any household can apply as long as one person in the household is eligible for the benefit.

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Our next question is going to be, does APP guarantee that you can get services if you have minimum Internet speed?

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That is a good one. For speed, the best, the best way to find out about speed is to ask your provider. FCC does have information, but for the purposes of this program, if you look at our information we don't mention any specific speed. So that would be the best, you can always, there are always options. If speed is a concern for your household, you can file an FCC complaint using the consumer complaint at [fcc.gov/ACP](https://www.fcc.gov/ACP), it's not necessarily when I ask people to file a complaint it is not necessarily because the providers doing anything wrong. Sometimes, the way that the FCC can look into your issue is if you file a complaint. That is the way our agency works. So, I always encourage consumers to file a complaint, because that is the way that they can look into your specific case and then of course, the way the complaints process works -- I will summarize this very quickly -- make to make your complaint, please keep the confirmation number. It takes about 30 business days to process, maybe less. And once the issue is resolved, both the provider and you as a consumer get an answer to the complaint. And these are called in formal complaints. And so, once you get that information, then it will detail what the results of the complaint are.

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I have a question about anticipating providers. I was wondering if, based on locality or if there is a set list of people who participate in the program?

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Very good question. Which providers, there are over, probably close to 1100, but I will say there's over 1000 providers across the United States and the territories. And you have a great tool and affordable connectivity.gov when you get to that page it's companies near me tool. So, how do you provide providers in your area? You go to companies near me, you put down that and then it will ask you, it ask which ones do I pick? When you get to that page it will ask you, if you're looking for Lifeline provider or an ACP provider. And when you click ACP, depending on what browser you are using, usually when you click on that, another box will appear asking you to look for providers in your area. You can use one of you can do one of two things, you can use your 522 ZIP Code or you can use your city and state, don't put in both, because it will come back with their no providers in your area and we know that's not the case. So let's say you use your ZIP Code it will be a list of all the providers in your area that are offering the ACP benefits. And under that, you also find other things that I always like to let consumers know, it'll talk about fixed or mobile broadband. Fixed broadband is broadband to the home, let's say you have a desktop and you are taking it anywhere. Mobile, you can use with any type of mobile device. It is up to you, the consumer to decide what works better for my household. With mobile, you can have it on, let's say a tablet, a laptop, a phone, it is exactly how it is named, mobile broadband. Also tells you what providers in your area or offering broadband at zero cost and it will save you dollars. That came because last year, the White House, I believe President Biden and Vice President Harris both had this really great event and there were providers that said they would offer that. Because I'm with the FCC I can't really name the providers but when you look in search in the area, you see those that say zero cost, that is because they were part of the agreement. And then, course it also will tell you who is offering the device that I mentioned earlier, or who isn't. If you see someone that says, such and such a provider and it says laptop, that is the type of device they are offering. And these are called connected devices. And those are some really good things all under the companies near me tool that, I recommend consumers look at to choose a provider in your area that will meet your needs.

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Our next question is, what if there's already a local program in place, for example, can you still qualify for the ACP?

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Yes, you can. Because it is through your household. Now, I will step back as myself and say, it's always a good question, if it is a neighborhood provided broadband, talk to the provider, just to make sure that they are participating in the program. Like, the national named providers that serve all across the United States, most of them are involved in it. The more local providers may, or may not. So it is good to either call them directly, or use the companies near me tool that I mentioned before, just to make sure they are on the list. And if they are not, then that is something, me stepping out of my role as FCC, that is something you would need to consider, because you could be in the scenario where, do I apply for the benefit, but my provider doesn't take it? Or, do I apply for the benefit and move from that provider to some other provider that is offering? So consumers have to sit down and really ink about what steps they want to take.

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All right, I don't see any more questions in the chat I'm going to go ahead, and give people the opportunity to ask for I want to take the opportunity to thank Keyla Hernandez-Ulloa for participating and also Ashley -- Ashley Dahlen. We have seminars coming up that answering is answering questions in Medicaid. We have an introduction to the USGS publication scheduled for Thursday. Also please fill out our webinar separate very if you have an in the chat. And actually someone is asking in the chat if the session wasn't recorded and in fact it was you will see receive this tomorrow or the day after. And actually you can go on our training repository.

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I think we have another question for Marlene.

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Sarr, Arlene said can we if we want our providers to participate where can we send them?

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Yes, let's say there's a provider in your area that is not participating, they can go to SEC.gov, it's a very, and that contains all of the information for providers who are not participating in the program, but who are interested. And it has a list of all the things they need to do to become a provider, an ACP provider.

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A few seconds in case anyone has any last minute questions. But we are near the end of this webinar.

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While we wait for questions I just want to remind everyone to not hesitate to contact [fcc.gov/ACP](https://www.fcc.gov/ACP).

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Thank you, Ashley, thank you all for participating.

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Thank you.

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