



Universal Service in Ohio

Updated October 2007

This publication is updated quarterly.

What is Universal Service?

For many years, federal universal support mechanisms have helped make telephone service affordable for low-income consumers and consumers who live in rural areas where the cost of providing service is high. Congress mandated in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that universal service mechanisms also should include support for schools, libraries and rural health care providers.

Who pays for Universal Service?

In the past, only long-distance companies paid fees to support universal service. The 1996 Telecommunications Act expanded the number of companies contributing to universal service. Now all telecommunications carriers that provide service between states — including long distance, local telephone, cellular, paging and payphone companies — support low income and high cost universal service.

How much do these companies contribute?

The percentage that companies contribute is adjusted by the Federal Communications Commission every quarter based on projected universal service demands. These contributions fund all federal universal service programs.

How will this affect my bill?

Some companies have added to their residential customers' bills separate charges and fees — such as a "universal service fee" or "national access fee" — to recover their

contributions. Some companies have chosen not to add a separate charge for their contributions.

Financial assistance for low income consumers

Federal and state universal service programs provide financial assistance to low-income residential telephone subscribers and ensure that low-income customers can afford basic, local telephone service.

Those programs in Ohio include:

- AT&T Ohio Lifeline
- CenturyTel Lifeline
- Champaign Telephone Lifeline
- Chillicothe Telephone Lifeline
- Cincinnati Bell Telephone Lifeline
- Embarq Lifeline
- Telephone Service Company Lifeline
- Verizon Lifeline
- windstream Ohio/windstream Western Reserve Lifeline
- Lifeline Assistance Program
- Link-Up
- Service Connection Assistance (SCA)

The OCC offers a separate fact sheet that details eligibility requirements, features and the application process for each program.

There are different eligibility requirements between several of the programs and in some cases, consumers may participate in more than one program. Several programs have restrictions on services like Caller ID and Call Waiting.

For more information or to find out whether you are eligible for any of these programs, contact your local telephone company.



The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.

For additional information from the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel:

Call: 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622) toll free or 614-466-8574

Write: 10 West Broad Street, 18th Floor, Columbus, Ohio 43215-3485

E-mail: occ@occ.state.oh.us • Internet Address: <http://www.pickocc.org>