



## Leader Voice Mail – Frequently Asked Questions for Participating Agencies

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) has joined Leader Technologies Inc. and the Ohio Benefit Bank to bring a critically-needed free voice mail service to individuals in 24 counties in northwest Ohio. \* In order to assist participating agencies as they help their clients sign up and use Leader Voice Mail, listed below are answers to frequently asked questions, which illustrate how this service may best suit their agency and their client's needs.

**Q. What is Leader Voice Mail?**

A. Leader Voice Mail is a free service for individuals who are in transition and have no access to traditional land line telephone service. It provides them with a way to be reached by potential employers, landlords or to maintain contact with social service agencies, family members and loved ones. Voice mail messages can be left by calling the individual's personal telephone number and messages can be retrieved by using any touch-tone phone or most computers with access to the Internet.

**Q. What does it mean to be a participating agency?**

A. Being a participating agency means that the agency has decided to participate in signing up its clients for free Leader Voice Mail service. Participating agencies must obtain an authorization code from OCC in order to sign up clients. Agencies can contact OCC for training on how to sign up their clients for Leader Voice Mail. A participating agency will be able to sign up clients it determines are in need of Leader Voice Mail

**Q. Is there any cost associated with being a participating agency?**

A. No. The service is offered completely free of charge to both the participating agency and their clients through the cooperative efforts of Leader Technologies, the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel, and the Ohio Benefit Bank.

**Q. What type of agencies are participating agencies?**

A. Any agency that serves clients in need of voice mail service can be a participating agency, such as local community action agencies, social service agencies, homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters.

**Q. How does our agency determine which of its clients may be in need of voice mail service?**

A. Eligibility should be determined on a case-by-case basis by each participating agency based on the client's need for the service. Individuals without telecommunications service and who are in crisis or in transition (i.e. homeless, unemployed, domestic abuse survivors) as well as low-income households will be the primary target audience for the service.

**Q. How long does it take to sign up?**

A. The sign-up process is very simple and should take only a few minutes.

**Q. How does a participating agency sign up clients for the service?**

A. Agencies can sign up clients by going to the Leader Voice Mail Web site at [www.leadervm.com/pickocc](http://www.leadervm.com/pickocc) and entering the "Signup" section and following the prompts. A computer with an accessible printer will be necessary. Training will be provided by the OCC on the sign-up process and use of Leader Voice Mail for each participating agency.

**Q. How long will clients be able to use the voice mail service?**

A. The voice mail box is available as long as the client needs it. However, if the service remains inactive for 90 days, it will automatically be deactivated. If a client whose voice mail box has been de-activated then decides that he/she



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needs the service again, the client will need to go back to the participating agency to sign up again.

***Q. What should a client do if the voice mail service is no longer needed?***

A. If a client no longer needs the service, he/she should contact the agency where the client initially signed up, so that the voice mail phone number can be reassigned to a new user. The agency should then send an e-mail to [vm@leader.com](mailto:vm@leader.com) to alert Leader Technologies that the phone number can be reassigned. Agencies will need to identify the phone number in the email.

***Q. Will clients get their own personal phone number when signing up for Leader Voice Mail?***

A. Yes, clients will receive a phone number in the 419 area code as their personal phone number. This is the number they can give to others so that they can receive messages.

***Q. How do clients retrieve messages?***

A. Messages can be retrieved from any touch-tone phone by calling a toll-free number or through the Internet. Clients can use a public pay phone, request to use the phone at a shelter or social service agency, or request to use a friend/family member's home phone or cell phone. When checking messages through the Internet the computer has to have sound activated. Most public libraries offer computers for public use. Clients may also wish to check with local community or senior citizen centers as well. However, if using an unfamiliar computer to check messages, clients should verify that there is sound capability to hear messages. A printout of instructions for retrieving messages will be provided to each client during the sign-up process. Agencies should also keep a copy of this printout for each client they sign up for the purpose of keeping track of phone numbers for various clients.

***Q. Will clients be able to record a personal greeting?***

A. Yes, if they choose. Clients can record a personal greeting at any time by following a simple set of prompts. Greetings can be changed at any time. Participating agencies can offer to assist in setting up personal greetings for the client.

***Q. Will messages left in each voice mail box be secure?***

A. Yes. An access code is required to retrieve messages by telephone and/or by using the Internet. A four digit access code is chosen by each client during the sign-up process. It is suggested that this be a number that would be difficult for others to guess. Clients who log into their voice mail account using the Internet can change their access code if they choose to do so. Clients should be directed not to give this access code to others.

***Q. What type of computer software is necessary to check messages online?***

A. To retrieve messages the computer will need to have at least one of the following: Windows Sound Recorder, Windows Media Play, or Apple Quicktime. Windows Sound Recorder and Windows Media Player are standard with the Windows operating system.

***Q. Do clients need to have a library card to use the computers there?***

A. Check with the local library regarding its policies on computer use.

***Q. Will clients need headphones to listen to messages if using a computer at a library to access their voice mail messages?***

A. Check with the local library regarding its policies on headphone use.

***Q. What do clients do if they forget their access code?***

A. If they are trying to access their voice mail box from a telephone, there will be a prompt on the message with Leader's telephone number in case this happens. If they are trying to access their voice mail box with a computer, the login page will give instructions for forgotten access codes. This method of retrieving forgotten access codes will require the client to have their own e-mail address.

***Q. Do clients have to have an e-mail address to use the voice mail service?***

A. An e-mail address is not required to use the service. However, free e-mail accounts are available through Web sites such as [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com), [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) or [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).

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**Q. Can clients still sign up even if they don't have a permanent address?**

A. Yes. The sign-up screen will ask for an address, but this is not a required field.

**Q. When clients are ready to obtain their own telephone service, is there assistance available?**

A. Yes. The Lifeline program offers financial assistance for home telephone (land line) service for income eligible individuals. For more information on Lifeline, contact the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel toll-free.

**Q. Is it a good idea for clients to use their voice mail phone number as an emergency contact?**

A. No. The number is an excellent way for others to contact the user of the voice mail box by leaving messages, but in emergency situations this number may not be the right number for clients to give out. Clients would have to check in constantly for that purpose and it may not be the best way to utilize this service.

**Q. Will each participating agency have a certain number of voice mail numbers to assign to clients?**

A. No. To make the program work more effectively, numbers are not assigned to agencies.

**Q. Who do agencies contact if they or their clients encounter technical problems with using Leader Voice Mail?**

A. Agencies can let Leader Technologies know of any difficulties or problems by emailing Leader at [vm@leader.com](mailto:vm@leader.com).

**Q. Where can agencies get more information or become a participating agency?**

A. Contact the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622) toll free in Ohio or visit the OCC Web site at [www.pickocc.org](http://www.pickocc.org).

**Q. Are there similar voice mail programs elsewhere in Ohio?**

A. The concept of voice mail for people in need is part of a nationwide effort initially made available in 2000 to Ohioans in Cuyahoga and Lorain counties through Community Voice Mail, a national nonprofit organization. Recently, Community Voice Mail expanded its Ohio efforts to include Summit County.

\* - *Counties offering Leader Voice Mail Service are: Allen, Ashland, Auglaize, Crawford, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Mercer, Morrow, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Richland, Sandusky, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wood, Wyandot*

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

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