



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

[FR ID: 174730]

Privacy Act of 1974; Matching Program.

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission.

ACTION: Notice of a new matching program.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (“Privacy Act”), this document announces a new computer matching program the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC” or “Commission” or “Agency”) and the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) will conduct with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The purpose of this matching program is to verify the eligibility of applicants to and subscribers of Lifeline, and the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), both of which are administered by USAC under the direction of the FCC. More information about these programs is provided in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section below.

DATES: Written comments are due on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. This computer matching program will commence on [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER], and will conclude 18 months after the effective date.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to Elliot S. Tarloff, FCC, 45 L Street NE, Washington, DC 20554, or to Privacy@fcc.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Elliot S. Tarloff at 202-418-0886 or Privacy@fcc.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Lifeline program provides support for discounted broadband and voice services to low-income consumers. Lifeline is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under FCC direction. Consumers qualify for Lifeline through proof of income or participation in a qualifying program, such as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), Federal Public Housing Assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit, or various Tribal-specific federal assistance programs.

In the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-260, 134 Stat. 1182, 2129-36 (2020), Congress created the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, and directed use of the National Verifier to determine eligibility based on various criteria, including the qualifications for Lifeline (Medicaid, SNAP, etc.). EBBP provided \$3.2 billion in monthly consumer discounts for broadband service and one-time provider reimbursement for a connected device (laptop, desktop computer or tablet). In the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. No. 117-58, 135 Stat. 429, 1238-44 (2021) (codified at 47 U.S.C. 1751-52), Congress modified and extended EBBP, provided an additional \$14.2 billion, and renamed it the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). A household may qualify for the ACP benefit under various criteria, including an individual qualifying for the FCC's Lifeline program.

In a Report and Order adopted on March 31, 2016, (81 FR 33026, May 24, 2016) (*2016 Lifeline Modernization Order*), the Commission ordered USAC to create a National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier ("National Verifier"), including the National Lifeline Eligibility Database (LED), that would match data about Lifeline applicants and subscribers with other data sources to verify the eligibility of an applicant or subscriber. The Commission found that the National Verifier would reduce compliance costs for Lifeline service providers, improve service for Lifeline subscribers, and reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in the program.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 directs the FCC to leverage the National Verifier to verify applicants' eligibility for ACP. The purpose of this matching program is to verify the eligibility of Lifeline and ACP applicants and subscribers by determining whether they receive Federal Public Housing Assistance benefits administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; Federal Communications Commission

AUTHORITY FOR CONDUCTING THE MATCHING PROGRAM:

The authority to conduct the matching program for the FCC's ACP is 47 U.S.C. 1752(a)-(b).

The authority to conduct the matching program for the FCC's Lifeline program is 47 U.S.C. 254(a)-(c), (j).

PURPOSE(S):

The purpose of this new matching agreement is to verify the eligibility of applicants and subscribers to Lifeline, as well as to ACP and other Federal programs that use qualification for Lifeline as an eligibility criterion. This new agreement will permit eligibility verification for the Lifeline program and ACP by checking an applicant's/subscriber's participation in Federal Public Housing Assistance. Under FCC rules, consumers receiving these benefits qualify for Lifeline discounts and also for ACP benefits.

CATEGORIES OF INDIVIDUALS:

The categories of individuals whose information is involved in the matching program include, but are not limited to, those individuals who have applied for Lifeline and/or ACP benefits; are currently receiving Lifeline and/or ACP benefits; are individuals who enable another individual in their household to qualify for Lifeline and/or ACP benefits; are minors whose status qualifies a parent or guardian for Lifeline and/or ACP benefits; or are individuals who have received Lifeline and/or ACP benefits.

CATEGORIES OF RECORDS:

The categories of records involved in the matching program include, but are not limited to, the last four digits of the applicant's Social Security Number, date of birth, state of residence, and first and last name.

The National Verifier will transfer these data elements to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which will respond either "yes" or "no" that the individual is enrolled in a qualifying assistance program: Federal Public Housing Assistance administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

SYSTEM(S) OF RECORDS:

The HUD records shared as part of this CMA reside within the following:

(1) HUD's Tenant Rental Assistance Certification System (TRACS) system of records that HUD has designated as HUD/HOU-11, published in the Federal Register on July 14, 2023 (88 FR 45234). Routine Use No. 8 supports HUD's disclosure under this Agreement.

(2) HUD's Inventory Management System/Public Housing Information Center (IMS/PIC) system of records that HUD has designated as HUD/PIH.01, published in the Federal Register on March 21, 2023 (88 FR 17005) and modifying the notice published on March 25, 2019 (84 FR 11117). Routine Use No. 14 supports HUD's disclosures under this Agreement.

The FCC SORNs that support this matching program are: (1) “FCC/WCB-1,” Lifeline, which was published in the Federal Register at 86 FR 11526 (Feb. 25, 2021); and (2) “FCC/WCB-3,” Affordable Connectivity Program, which was published in the Federal Register at 86 FR 71494 (Dec. 16, 2021).

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION.

Marlene Dortch,
Secretary.

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