

19.8 TEL-ASSISTANCE

A. Introduction

The Tel-Assistance Program allows reduced rate telephone service to qualified low-income individuals. The monthly cost for Tel-Assistance service is lower than other local telephone services offered. Only one Tel-Assistance service is permitted per household and the household is not allowed to receive services from multiple providers. For example, a household may have Tele-Assistance service on their landline OR their wireless phone, but not both.

The Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) has the following responsibilities for the programs:

- To inform individuals of their eligibility;
- To assist applicants in verifying their eligibility;
- To determine continuing eligibility of individuals; and
- To inform the telephone company of an individual's eligibility.

B. STATE ADMINISTRATION

The Tel-Assistance Program is administered at the State level by the Division of Family Assistance (DFA), Policy Unit. The DFA has the final responsibility of program planning, implementation, operation and management.

C. LOCAL OFFICE RESPONSIBILITY

The local offices are responsible for distributing an Application form, DFA-TA-2, and a Fact Sheet, DFA-TA-3, to any individual who makes a request.

D. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for Tel-Assistance service the individual must be receiving at least one of the following benefits:

- Emergency Assistance (EA)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA) or Section 8

Emergency And Special Assistance Programs

- Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)
- Medicaid
- National School Lunch Program, free program only
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- School Clothing Allowance (SCA)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- WV Children's Health Insurance Program (WV CHIP)
- Any other means-tested state or federal program

NOTE: To qualify for Tel-Assistance service, the telephone bill must be in the name of the individual receiving the service.

NOTE: Any adult member of the AG may apply for Tel-Assistance service.

E. APPLICATION PROCESS

1. eRAPIDS Issued Applications

eRAPIDS includes a notice on each approval letter informing the customer that, if interested in applying for Tel-Assistance, they may obtain an application from their local Department of Health and Human Resources office or by using their My Benefits account at www.wvinroads.org.

2. Walk-In Applications

Local offices are supplied with the DFA-TA-2 and DFA-TA-3 for distribution to any individual who makes a request for a Tel-Assistance application. The following procedure is used when an application is received:

- The DFA-TA-2 and DFA-TA-3 are obtained by the individual from the local office and completed.

Emergency And Special Assistance Programs

- The application is forwarded to the telephone company.
 - The individual is responsible for sending or taking the application to their selected telephone company.
 - The telephone company certifies service.

F. CLOSURE PROCESS

It is the responsibility of the customer to notify the telephone company if he ceases to receive benefits from DHHR or any other means-tested state or federal program that deemed them eligible for Tel-Assistance service or if their annual income exceeds the income guidelines.

G. TELEPHONE COMPANY RESPONSIBILITY**1. Notification Of Eligibility**

Participating telephone companies are responsible for notifying the applicant of eligibility, cost of service, denials, or termination of benefits.

2. Question Of Eligibility

The telephone companies are responsible for answering all questions of eligibility.

3. Hearing Process

Establishing, maintaining, and conducting hearings which may result from the denial of benefits are the responsibility of the participating telephone companies.

H. FORMS

One or more of the following forms may be used to determine eligibility:

- Application, DFA-TA-2
- Fact Sheet , DFA-TA-3

I. PARTICIPATING TELEPHONE COMPANIES

Each participating telephone company may offer its own individual enhanced plan.