



California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

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Media Contact: Terrie Prosper, 415.703.1366, news@cpuc.ca.gov

PRESS RELEASE

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CPUC Expands Access to Communications for California Foster Youth

New Modifications to the LifeLine Foster Youth Program Remove Barriers and Extend Support

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 13, 2025 – The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has made major enhancements to the [California LifeLine Foster Youth Program](#), significantly expanding access to communications services for current and former foster youth across the state.

The changes approved at the CPUC's October 9th Voting Meeting reflect the continued focus on digital inclusion and the objective that every young person in foster care deserves reliable, affordable access to phone service to stay connected, pursue education and employment, and build independent lives.

Key Program Modifications

- **Expanded Eligibility:** The program now includes all current and former foster youth ages 13 through 20 who were in foster care at any point on or after their 13th birthday.
- **Simplified Documentation:** New flexibility in verification allows youth to use alternative documents or statements from the California Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson Office, reducing delays and administrative burdens.
- **Enrollment Streamlining:** Non-minor foster youth can now sign up independently, and authorized representatives may assist both minor and non-minor youth.
- **Extended Benefits:** Youth exiting foster care can continue receiving service for six months after turning 21.
- **Device Improvements:** All phones will be preloaded with the Family Urgent Response System (FURS) hotline for quick access to support.

- **Stronger Transition Pathways:** Youth turning 18 will now have the option to seamlessly move into the general [California LifeLine](#) program.
- **New Non-Usage Policy:** A 90-day usage rule ensures continued service for active users while allowing re-entry for youth who need replacement phones.

“These reforms make the LifeLine Foster Youth Program more accessible, more responsive, and better aligned with the real experiences of foster youth,” said CPUC President Alice Reynolds. “We’re eliminating red tape, expanding coverage, and providing young people with digital tools that are necessary for success and safety in foster care and beyond. Our staff will continue working closely with community partners to keep improving this program.”

“It is essential that foster youth have affordable and reliable communications services. These smartphones and free monthly plans help foster youth stay in contact with their caretakers, family members and one another, access education and healthcare, and contact emergency services if necessary,” said Commissioner Darcie L. Houck. “I am pleased that our decision will expand eligibility to more foster youth and streamline their participation in the California LifeLine program.”

These enhancements build on the CPUC’s [2024 decision](#) that formally transitioned the foster youth pilot into a long-term component of the California LifeLine program. The updates come in response to a petition from the Youth Law Center, with support from stakeholders including The Utility Reform Network (TURN), Verizon/TracFone, and county agencies.

More Information

- [California LifeLine Foster Youth Program](#)
- [California LifeLine Program](#)
- [Proposal Approved](#)
- [Proceeding Documents](#)

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