

CENTRE FOR PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES &
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

SEMINAR

**Discounting Telephone Service:
An Examination of Participation in
Florida's Lifeline Program Using Panel Data**

(in English)

by

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Abstract

This paper examines a distinctive public assistance program, the Lifeline Assistance Program, to consider factors that cause people not to participate in a program that provides them with financial benefits. Lifeline is a nationwide program created by the Federal Communications Commission to provide price discounts to low-income telephone subscribers. Recently there has been concern that program participation rates are too low. Using a unique database of county-level data from Florida, we consider reasons why a large number of Floridians who qualify for the program are not signing up. Our ability to focus on characteristics of the eligible population by county (rather than the county population as a whole) allows us to add to existing literature more specific conclusions regarding participation rates than similar studies and to more directly target the effects of telecommunications providers' efforts to increase participation in the program. Our findings should directly affect implementation of regulatory policy surrounding the Lifeline program and universal service programs generally.