

You might be eligible for
discounted phone and internet service

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National Lifeline Awareness Week September 9 – 13, 2019

The purpose of **Lifeline Awareness Week** is to ensure that eligible low-income families and individuals are aware of the Lifeline Program, eligibility criteria, non-duplication rules, and annual recertification requirements, and to encourage enrollment. Lifeline is a government program supported by the federal Universal Service Fund that provides discounted wireline or wireless phone or discounted broadband and broadband-voice bundles to eligible low-income subscribers. **An eligible subscriber may receive a discount on either a wireline or wireless service (but not both), or on broadband or bundled service.**

Modernizing Lifeline: On March 31, 2016, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted an Order to modernize the FCC's Lifeline Program to efficiently and effectively meet a critical 21st Century need: making broadband more affordable for low-income consumers.

Congress directed the FCC to ensure that all Americans have access to advanced telecommunications and information services. With affordability still the largest single barrier to broadband adoption in low-income households, the Order will reboot Lifeline to enable all Americans to share in the opportunities broadband connectivity provides, while building on recent reforms to the program. ***The Order, for the first time, allows low-income consumers to apply Lifeline's \$9.25 per month discount to stand-alone broadband service as well as bundled voice and data service packages.*** The Order frees up the Lifeline marketplace to encourage wide participation in the program by broadband providers, giving consumers competitive service options. Minimum service standards will ensure that supported services meet modern needs.

Building substantially on the FCC's landmark 2012 reforms of the program, the Order establishes a **National Eligibility Verifier** to further deter waste, fraud and abuse, while reducing provider burden. The National Eligibility Verifier has been deployed for North Carolina consumers. North Carolina consumers can check their eligibility directly in the National Verifier consumer portal at www.checklifeline.org.

Income and eligibility requirements: The Lifeline Program is available to qualifying consumers in every state, territory and commonwealth.

The baseline eligibility criteria are that subscribers must either have an income that is at or below 135 percent of the federal Poverty Guidelines, **or** participate in one of the following assistance programs:

- Medicaid;
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps or SNAP);
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA); or
- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit.

Tribal Lifeline¹:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance;
- Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANF);
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR); or
- Head Start (if income eligibility criteria are met).

Additional eligibility requirements, program rules and recertification requirement:

The Lifeline Program has undergone transformations in recent years to improve program

¹ Tribal Lifeline takes up to \$25 off your monthly bill in addition to the standard Lifeline amount.

efficiency and combat waste, fraud and abuse to ensure that only those eligible are receiving this vital support. Additionally, the program has been expanded to cover broadband and broadband-voice bundled services. Program rules and requirements that consumers should know include:

- Lifeline is available only to eligible subscribers.
- Only low-income subscribers with proof of eligibility are qualified to enroll.
- Only one Lifeline benefit is permitted per household. Federal rules prohibit subscribers from receiving more than one Lifeline service. If a subscriber or his or her household currently has more than one Lifeline discounted service, they must select a single provider immediately or be subject to penalties.
- Participating low-income subscribers may choose to apply the monthly discount to their voice, broadband, or voice-broadband bundled service.
- Existing Lifeline subscribers must recertify their eligibility every year and should respond to their Lifeline Provider's or the Universal Service Administrative Company's attempts to recertify eligibility. Subscribers must verify that they remain eligible to participate in the Lifeline Program once each calendar year. Subscribers who fail to recertify their eligibility by the deadline will be de-enrolled from the Lifeline Program.

For more information, please visit the following websites:

<http://www.fcc.gov/lifeline>

<http://www.lifelinesupport.org/lis/>



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