



Lifeline Support for Affordable Communications

Frequently Asked Questions



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## About

Since 1985, the [Lifeline program](#) has provided a discount on phone service for qualifying low-income consumers to ensure that all Americans have the opportunities and security that phone service brings, including being able to connect to jobs, family and emergency services.

Supported by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) the Lifeline program provides subscribers monthly telephone service, broadband Internet access service, or voice-broadband bundled service from participating carriers.

## Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic

USAC and the FCC have taken action to ensure that consumers have access to the connectivity services they need during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lifeline Support Center remains fully operational.

Additional support measures taken due to COVID-19 include:

- [More flexibility for consumers](#). The FCC and USAC have temporarily **adjusted the income and identification documentation requirements** to allow individuals recently unemployed or social distancing due to the pandemic to more easily complete their Lifeline application.
- [Continued service for consumers](#). The FCC temporarily paused through **August 31** Lifeline Program integrity reviews, as well as usage, recertification, reverification, and general de-enrollment requirements, to ensure consumers are not involuntarily de-enrolled from the Lifeline Program during the pandemic.
- [State agency access to the National Verifier](#). The FCC and USAC expanded access to the Lifeline National Verifier to enable state agencies to assist consumers with the Lifeline application process during the pandemic, much like Lifeline service providers do today.
- [Relief for rural, Tribal consumers](#). The FCC temporarily waived its rules to allow Lifeline providers to begin providing service to eligible consumers residing in rural areas on Tribal lands even if those consumers have not yet submitted certain supporting documentation to complete their Lifeline application.

## How Lifeline Works

Subscribers may receive a Lifeline account on either a wireline or a wireless service, but they may not receive an account on both services at the same time.

Lifeline also supports broadband Internet access service and broadband-voice bundles. **FCC rules prohibit more than one Lifeline service per household.**

## Who Administers the Program

The Lifeline program is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). USAC is responsible for data collection and maintenance, support calculation, disbursements, and assisting consumers with Lifeline eligibility and enrollment for the program. [USAC's website](#) provides additional information regarding the program, including program requirements.

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## Where Lifeline is Available

Lifeline is available to eligible in every state, commonwealth, territory, and on Tribal lands.

## National Verifier System

The National Verifier is a centralized system established by the FCC and operated by USAC that verifies Lifeline applicants' eligibility and recertifies subscriber eligibility annually.

To verify or recertify an application, the consumer can visit the National Verifier application system at <https://nationalverifier.servicenowservices.com/lifeline>.

## Who Can Qualify

To participate in the Lifeline program, consumers must either have an income that is at or below 135% of the [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#) or participate in certain federal assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Medicaid.

## Qualification Based on Income

If your household income is at 135% or less of the [federal poverty guidelines](#), you qualify for Lifeline. To prove your household income is at 135% or less of the federal poverty guidelines, you must submit one or more of the following documents:

- The prior year's state, federal, or Tribal tax return
- Current income statement from an employer or paycheck stub
- A Social Security statement of benefits
- A Veterans Administration statement of benefits
- A retirement/pension statement of benefits
- An Unemployment/Workers' Compensation statement of benefit
- Federal or Tribal notice letter of participation in General Assistance
- Divorce decree, child support award, or other official document containing income information

## Qualification Based on Federal Assistance Programs

You can get Lifeline if you (or someone in your household) show a card, letter, or official document, as proof that you participate in one of these programs when you apply for Lifeline:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Veterans Pension or Survivors Pension
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) General Assistance
- Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Tribal head Start
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

## One Per Household Limit

Only one Lifeline discount is allowed per independent economic household.

A household is a group of people who live together and share money (even if they are not related to each other).

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***If you live together and share money, you are one household. If you live together and don't share money, you are 2+ households.***

## Households Examples

### Examples of 1 household:

- A married couple who live together are one household. They must share one Lifeline discount.
- A parent/guardian and child who live together are one household. They must share one Lifeline discount.
- An adult who lives with friends or family who financially support him/her are one household. They must share one Lifeline discount.

### Examples of 2+ households:

- 4 roommates who live together but do not share money are 4 households. They can have one Lifeline discount each, 4 total.
- 30 seniors who live in an assisted-living home are 30 households. They can have one Lifeline discount each, 30 total.

***Note:*** These are general examples only. If you are unsure about your number of households, ask your company for an Independent Economic Household Worksheet.

## Someone in My Home Already Gets Lifeline

If you live with another adult who gets Lifeline and you want your own, complete and submit the [Independent Economic House Worksheet](#) (scroll down for worksheet).

The worksheet asks about your relationship with the other adult(s) to count the number of households. After you complete the worksheet, your company will re-submit your application.

Your application will be approved if the worksheet shows there is more than one household at your address.

## Independent Economic Household Worksheet

Use this worksheet if someone else at your address gets Lifeline. The answers to these questions will help you find out if there is more than one household at your address.

Click [here](#) for worksheet (scroll down for worksheet).

## Application Process

Customers have two ways to apply for Lifeline on their own using the National Verifier. If a customer wants more support applying, they can also ask a participating phone or internet company to help submit an application. Click [here](#) for a list of phone companies in NYS. Download Excel spreadsheet and search for company by county and city.

## How to Apply

There are three ways to apply for Lifeline. Select one below:

1. **Apply Online.**

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You can apply online by going to the [National Verifier consumer portal](#) and creating an account. You may find out if you qualify for Lifeline through the website immediately after applying online.

## 2. Mail in Your Application

- Print an application in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).
- Complete the application and send with [proof of eligibility](#) to:  
Lifeline Support Center  
P.O. Box 7081  
London, KY 40742

## 3. Contact a Phone or Internet Company

Ask your provider if they offer Lifeline or use our [online tool](#) to find a company near you.

## After You Apply

After you submit an application, we will share the results with you. If you apply online, you may receive an immediate approval. If we cannot prove your eligibility automatically, you will need to share some [more information](#) with us.

## Once You Are Enrolled

Once you are qualified and enrolled for Lifeline, you can choose a phone or internet company that offers the Lifeline benefit to enroll in the program.

You may enroll by visiting a phone or internet company in-store, online, or via phone.

## Error Messages

### Eligibility Error Message

For more information on an error message relating to your eligibility, click [here](#).

### Identify Error Message

For more information on an error message relating to your identity, click [here](#).

### Address Error Message

For more information on an error message relating to your address, click [here](#).

**Note:** If you are mailing in documents, always include the [Error Message Resolution cover page](#) or a letter with your application ID and name so that we can match your documents to your application.

## Documents Needed to Prove Your Identity

All documents must include your name or your child or dependent's name.

All documents must be issued by the state, federal, or Tribal government.

Never submit original copies of your documents.

If your identity is verified, you can get Lifeline. If your identity cannot be verified, your Lifeline application will be denied.

- Driver's license (unexpired)
- Birth certificate

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- W-2
- Prior year's state, federal, or Tribal tax return
- Social Security card
- Certificate of Naturalization
- Certificate of U.S. Citizenship
- Permanent resident card (unexpired)
- Permanent resident alien card (unexpired)
- U.S. government, military, state, or Tribal issued ID (unexpired)
- Passport (unexpired)
- Military discharge documentation
- Weapons permit (unexpired)
- Government assistance program document (that includes proof of identity)
- Statement of benefits from a qualifying program (that includes proof of identity)
- Unemployment or worker's compensation statement of benefits

## How to Submit Your Documents

To submit your copies, you can:

1. Log in to the National Verifier [online portal](#) and upload your copies.
2. Contact your telephone or Internet service provider and provide them with your copies.
3. Mail your copies to this address:  
Lifeline Support Center  
PO Box 7081  
London, KY 40742

## If You Do Not Qualify

If the National Verifier cannot prove your eligibility automatically, you will need to show proof by uploading a copy of the additional information requested to the National Verifier online portal or by mailing a copy to the Lifeline Support Center. USAC will contact you to let you know what type of additional information you will need to submit. The type of information requested will relate to your eligibility, identity, or address.

## Carriers That Offer Lifeline Assistance in NYS

37 companies offer Lifeline Assistance in the New York State. Click [here](#) to see a list of companies that offer Lifeline Assistance.

Some of the companies listed may not offer service to your zip code. Please contact the company to find out if they offer service to your address.

The list is random. Check the list often to verify if carrier still offers the benefit.

## Questions

If you have questions about your application, or would like an application mailed to you, please contact us at 1 (800) 234-9473 or [LifelineSupport@usac.org](mailto:LifelineSupport@usac.org).

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