

COVID-19 Response from Broadband and Telephone Service Providers

The following information is intended to be a resource to help consumers concerned with service connectivity and limits to minutes and data caps in their service plans. The Appendix contains specific COVID-19 related actions announced by service providers serving Massachusetts.

The information is accurate as of the date of publication and will be updated if/when further information is available.

For current offerings and changes to terms and conditions, contact your provider.

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program - Temporary Discount for Internet Service

The Federal Communications Commission has launched the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program to help families and households struggling to afford internet service during the COVID-19 pandemic. The EBB Program opened for enrollment on May 12, 2021 and will conclude when the program’s funds are expended or six months after the end of the public health emergency.

Benefit Overview: The EBB provides a temporary discount of up to \$50 per month toward broadband service and associated equipment rentals for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100, with a \$10-\$50 required co-payment, to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from certain providers.

The EBB is limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per household.

Eligibility: A household is eligible if it has an income at or below 135% of the [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#) **OR** if any member of the household:

- Participates in a qualifying government assistance programs, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid (MassHealth), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance, Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit, or [Lifeline](#);
- Receives benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch or breakfast program;
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;
- Experienced a substantial loss of income due to job loss or furlough since February 29, 2020, and your total household income in 2020 was at or below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider’s existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

A full list of eligibility criteria is available here: <https://getemergencybroadband.org/do-i-qualify/>

Massachusetts Participating Providers: [**Offering Connected Devices (Laptop, Desktop, or Tablet)*]

Home Internet Service (Where Available)	Home or Mobile Internet Service (Where Available)	Mobile Internet Service
Charter (Spectrum)	T-Mobile	Assurance Wireless*
Comcast (Xfinity)	Verizon	AT&T Wireless
Cox*		Boost Mobile*
Greenfield Community Energy & Technology		Cricket Wireless
Hilltown Networks		Excess Telecom*
Otelco		Good2go mobile
RCN*		Human-I-T*
Starry		Metro by T-Mobile*
Whip City Fiber		PCs for People*
		QLink Wireless*
		Ready Wireless
		Sano Health
		Selectel Wireless*
		StandUp Wireless*
		Tracfone Wireless*
		TruConnect*
		UVNV

For assistance with the EBB application process, contact the **Emergency Broadband Support Center**, which operates 7 days a week from 9am to 9pm, by calling 1-833-511-0311.

Massachusetts consumers can also contact the **DTC's Consumer Hotline**, which operates Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, by calling 1-800-392-6066 with any questions about program eligibility, the application process or to get support with any challenges in enrolling in the EBB Program.

For additional information about the EBB Program, please visit <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>.

Enrollment: There are three ways to apply for the EBB Program:

1. Contact your preferred participating broadband provider directly to learn about their application process. You can find a list of participating service providers here: <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-providers#Massachusetts>
2. Go to [GetEmergencyBroadband.org](https://www.getemergencybroadband.org) to apply online. Once approved for the program, you will need to select a participating provider and contact them to complete enrollment.
3. Complete the application process by mail. You can download a copy of the EBB application in [English](#) or [Spanish](#) ([instructions](#) also available in 9 additional languages). Complete the application and send with [proof of eligibility](#) to:

USAC
Emergency Broadband Support Center
P.O. Box 7081
London, KY 40742

Once approved for the program, you will need to select a participating provider and contact them to complete enrollment.

Lifeline Program - Subsidized Phone and Internet Service

Lifeline is a federal program that provides free or low-cost phone or internet service to low-income households through a monthly service discount of up to \$9.25. Lifeline subscribers have the choice of applying their benefit discount to either (1) home phone service; (2) home internet service, where available; (3) wireless phone service; or (4) a wireless internet service (a data plan). The Lifeline Program subsidy does not cover the cost of a wireless device, but some Lifeline Providers may choose to offer an initial wireless device upon completing enrollment.

Only one Lifeline program discount is available per economic household, which is defined as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses. Therefore, if there are multiple people living at the same address, but they do not share income, each individual will be eligible for Lifeline service.

In response to COVID-19, the FCC has paused any involuntary de-enrollment of existing subscribers who would otherwise have been required to certify their continued eligibility until **December 31, 2021**. This includes subscribers who need to submit documentation to show they remain eligible to receive Lifeline service. The FCC has limited the waiver extension timeframe associated with the 30 day non-usage rule so that it does not extend beyond **May 1, 2021**. As a result, Lifeline providers are required to send notice to subscribers who, as of May 1, 2021, have not used their Lifeline service in the previous 30 days notifying them that their service must be used within 15 days or they will be de-enrolled.

Eligibility: There are two ways to qualify for the Lifeline program: income-based eligibility (household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines) or program-based eligibility (a current recipient of Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Supplemental Security Income, Federal Public Housing Assistance, certain Federally-Recognized/State Tribal Assistance Programs, or a Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension benefit). A full list of eligibility criteria, including the current federal poverty guidelines, is available here:

<https://www.lifelinesupport.org/do-i-qualify/>.

Enrolling in Lifeline: Prior to enrolling with a Lifeline service provider, Massachusetts Lifeline applicants need to first verify their eligibility for the Lifeline Program using the National Verifier, a centralized system that is managed directly by USAC, the administrator of the Lifeline Program under the direction of the FCC. In order to verify eligibility, consumers will need to complete the standard Lifeline Program application as well as submit a copy of their proof of eligibility documentation. A full list of acceptable proof of eligibility documentation can be found here:

<https://www.lifelinesupport.org/do-i-qualify/how-to-prove-participation/>.

Consumers can apply with the National Verifier online by visiting www.CheckLifeline.org/lifeline/. Once approved, they will have 90 days to complete enrollment with an approved Lifeline service provider.

Note: Until **December 31, 2021**, the FCC will waive its requirement that consumers seeking to demonstrate income-based qualification for the Lifeline program must provide at least three consecutive months of documentation to confirm their income. Instead, consumers can now present an official document that confirms their current income information such as a notice of unemployment benefit payments or notice of a successfully submitted application for unemployment benefits

For more information on how to enroll, Massachusetts consumers can visit the [Department of Telecommunications and Cable's website](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-discounted-communications-service-through-the-lifeline-program) for guidance (<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-discounted-communications-service-through-the-lifeline-program>). Additionally, consumers can call the DTC's hotline, 1-800-392-6066, for assistance in applying or to get support with any challenges in the process (e.g., eligibility verification).

APPENDIX: WIRELESS LIFELINE IN MASSACHUSETTS

Service Provider	Lifeline Monthly Plan(s)	COVID-19 Response
Assurance Wireless	<p>Offers one Lifeline Plan that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 350 voice minutes per month • Unlimited text messaging • 4.5GB data plan per month <p><i>Plan does not require payment from subscribers. Assurance Wireless currently offers a courtesy mobile device upon enrollment</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>For All Providers:</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">New Subscribers:</p> <p>Through December 31, 2021, recently unemployed people may submit an Unemployment Benefit Letter or other official document that confirms their current income information to qualify for Lifeline benefits (provided that their income falls within program guidelines)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Existing Subscribers:</p> <p>Through December 31, 2021, current Lifeline subscribers will not be de-enrolled for failing to submit documentation showing that they remain eligible for the service.</p>
SafeLink Wireless	<p>Offers one Lifeline Plan that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 350 voice minutes per month • Unlimited text messaging • 4.5GB data plan per month <p><i>Plan does not require payment from subscribers.</i></p>	
StandUp Wireless	<p>Offers 2 Lifeline Plans to choose from:</p> <p>Voice Bundle Plan that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,000 Voice Minutes per month • Unlimited text messaging • 100MB data plan per month <p><i>Plan does not require payment from subscribers.</i></p> <p>Broadband Bundle Plan that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,000 Voice Minutes • Unlimited texts • 4.5GB data <p><i>Plan costs \$10.00 per month</i></p>	
TruConnect	<p>Offers one Lifeline plan that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlimited voice minutes • Unlimited text messaging • 4.5GB data plan per month <p><i>Plan does not require payment from subscribers.</i></p>	

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Service Provider	Lifeline Monthly Plan	COVID-19 Response
Verizon	<p>Home phone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice Lifeline Flat Rate Unlimited • Voice Lifeline Measured <p>Home internet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discounted Fios internet service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current FiOS Internet Lifeline offerings are available here: https://www.verizon.com/info/low-income-internet/

Eligibility and enrollment information available online at <https://www.lifelinesupport.org/>

For more information on how to enroll, Massachusetts consumers can visit the [Department of Telecommunications and Cable's website](#) for guidance (<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-discounted-communications-service-through-the-lifeline-program>). Additionally, consumers can call the DTC's hotline, 1-800-392-6066, for assistance in applying or to get support with any challenges in the process (e.g., eligibility verification).