

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 information contained herein 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.

The Appendix contains specific COVID-19 related actions announced by service providers serving Massachusetts.

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, or (3) a wireless phone plan with data. 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 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 extended benefit recertification deadlines until **November 30, 2020** to ease the burden on current Lifeline subscribers who need to submit documentation to show they remain eligible to receive Lifeline service. The FCC has also waived the 30 day usage rule until **November 30, 2020**, and directed the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) to pause any involuntary de-enrollment of existing subscribers.

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 (Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Supplemental Security Income, Federal Public Housing Assistance, Certain Federally-Recognized/State Tribal Assistance Programs, and Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension benefit). A full list of eligibility criteria, including the federal poverty guidelines, is available here: <https://www.lifelinesupport.org/do-i-qualify/>.

Enrolling in Lifeline: As of January 22, 2020, 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 online by visiting www.CheckLifeline.org/lifeline/.

Note: Until **November 30, 2020**, 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, 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	Covid-19 Response
Assurance Wireless	-350 voice minutes -Unlimited texts -3GB data -Courtesy mobile device upon enrollment	<p>New Subscribers: Through November 30, 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>Existing Subscribers: Through November 30, current Lifeline subscribers will not be de-enrolled for failing to submit documentation showing that they remain eligible for the service, or for lack of usage.</p>
SafeLink Wireless	-350 voice minutes -Unlimited texts -3GB data	
StandUp Wireless	-300 voice minutes -Unlimited texts -3GB data -Courtesy mobile device upon enrollment	

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

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APPENDIX: WIRED LIFELINE IN MASSACHUSETTS

Service Provider	Lifeline Monthly Plan	Covid 19 Response
Verizon	<p>Home phone: -Unlimited landline minutes, including long distance</p> <p>Home internet: -Fios internet service at a speed of 18 megabits per second or above - 250GB monthly data cap</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning April 3, 2020, new Fios Broadband Internet customers that are enrolled in Lifeline may select Mix and Match 200, 400, or Gigabit plans and receive a \$20 monthly discount

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

Verizon customers may be able to place an order and schedule a technician to visit; if this option is not available, customers may be provided with self-install or technician-assisted options

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