

How do I continue to qualify for California Lifeline?

All California Lifeline participants must verify each year that they still are eligible for the program. You don't need to send proof of income when you are verifying your eligibility.

The California Lifeline Program will mail you a California Lifeline Annual Verification Form 104 days before your enrollment anniversary date. The verification form will be mailed in a pink envelope. To remain in the program, you complete either the Method 1 Program-Based or Method 2 Income-Based section of the Verification Form every 12 months. You must complete and return the form by the due date printed on the form.

If you are currently enrolled in any of the qualifying public assistance programs, you should complete the program-based verification form.

If you don't receive benefits from any of the covered assistance programs, you must use the income-based verification form.

If you or someone else in the household has a hearing disability, and you have two California Lifeline lines, you must also complete the appropriate section of the form to keep the discounts on the two lines.

It is very important that the certifying agent receive your completed form by the due date on the form. (Mail it in advance of the due date so that it arrives by the deadline.) Forms that arrive late will not be processed.

If you fail to verify your continued eligibility by the due date, your telephone company will:

- Remove you from the California Lifeline program.
- Change your service to full-priced residential service.
- Require a deposit from you, if applicable.

Notify your telephone company if you no longer qualify for California Lifeline discounts or a second California Lifeline connection or you might have to repay the difference. Your California Lifeline eligibility may be audited at any time. If the audit finds that you are not eligible, you will be removed from the California Lifeline program and billed for previous California Lifeline discounts that you should not have received, plus interest.

Deaf or hearing-impaired

If you are requesting a second California Lifeline connection for a deaf or hearing-impaired household member, you must complete the appropriate section of either form and determine, according to the instructions, whether you will need to attach a medical certificate that verifies the person's need for a teletypewriter or TTY.

The documents you send will not be returned, so send copies, not original documents.

Additional Information and assistance

The California Public Utilities Commission (www.cpuc.ca.gov), the state's utility regulator, oversees the Lifeline program. If you have a complaint that you cannot resolve with your telephone company or the certifying agent, contact the CPUC's Consumer Affairs Branch, 505 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco, CA 94102. Telephone: 800-649-7570 or 415-703-1170. Fax: 415-703-1158. E-mail: consumer-affairs@cpuc.ca.gov.

California Lifeline (www.CaliforniaLifeline.com) is the certifying agent's web site, providing general California Lifeline program information, sample forms and instructions, answers to frequently asked questions, telephone carrier listings and links to CPUC online information. For new service, call 866-272-0349 (English) or 866-272-0350 (Spanish). To check the status of an existing application, call 877-858-7463 (English/Spanish) or 888-858-7889 (TTY).

The California Telephone Access Program (www.ddtp.org/CTAP) distributes telecommunications equipment and services to individuals with hearing, vision, mobility or speech limitations. English: 800-806-1191 (voice); 800-806-4474 (TTY). Spanish: 800-949-5650 (voice); 800-896-7670 (TTY).

Consumer Action (www.consumer-action.org) provides consumer advice, guides consumers to complaint-handling agencies and distributes free consumer education publications. Chinese, English and Spanish spoken. Telephone: 415-777-9635 or 213-624-8327. E-mail: hotline@consumer-action.org.

Telephone companies. For more information, or to apply for California Lifeline, call your local telephone company. The number should be on your telephone bill or under "Telecommunications Carriers" in the Yellow Pages telephone directory. While there are 35 providers of California Lifeline services, two telephone companies serve most program participants:

- AT&T California: California Lifeline voice response system: 800-446-5651 (English)/800-882-0521 (Spanish); service orders: 800-288-2020 (English)/800-870-5855 (Spanish)/800-651-5111 (TTY); www.att.com/lifeline.

- Verizon: Telephone: 800-483-4000 (English)/800-743-2483 (Spanish)/800-974-6006 (TTY); www.verizon.com.

Annual California Lifeline verification audits

Under the new program, the CPUC required that a small number (3%) of California Lifeline verifications must be randomly audited each year. This means that the certifying agent might check your income or status as a benefits recipient. If you are one of the audited customers you will be asked for proof of income or benefits.

What services are not included with the California Lifeline program?

Long distance calls are not included in the California Lifeline program. Long distance charges are higher than local calls and can add up fast. As a California Lifeline customer, you can make long distance calls but you won't receive a discount on them.

If you qualify for California Lifeline, you may be able to get free "toll blocking," which prevents you or anyone else from making long distance or local toll calls from your telephone. You can still receive long distance calls and you can call toll-free numbers. You can place long distance calls using a prepaid telephone card.

Convenience features are not included in the California Lifeline program. As a California Lifeline customer, you can order optional services such as call waiting or caller ID, but you can't get a discount on these services. Before ordering any optional services, consider whether you will use them enough to make the cost worthwhile.

Installation of new telephone jacks is not included in the California Lifeline program. California Lifeline gives you a discount on connection charges to start your telephone service. However, if you do not have a telephone outlet (jack) in your home already, you will have to pay a separate installation charge to the company that puts in your outlet.

Note: Under California law, landlords must provide one working jack for each rental unit.

Consumer Action

www.consumer-action.org

221 Main Street, Suite 480

San Francisco, CA 94105

415-777-9635

TTY: 415-777-9456

hotline@consumer-action.org

523 W. Sixth Street, Suite 1105

Los Angeles, CA 90014

213-624-8327

Chinese, English and Spanish spoken.

Consumer Action created this publication in partnership with AT&T California. © 2008

A CONSUMER ACTION PUBLICATION

Connect to Lifeline and Save!

DISCOUNTED LIFELINE
TELEPHONE SERVICE
HELPS LOW-INCOME
CALIFORNIANS



Universal Lifeline Telephone Service (ULTS), also known as California Lifeline, provides discounts on basic residential telephone service to eligible low-income households. Consumers who qualify for California Lifeline pay a fraction of the regular cost for telephone connection and monthly local telephone service.

All California telephone companies that provide residential service offer the California Lifeline program. In July 2006, new rules established by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) allow customers to qualify in one of two ways:

- By participating in an approved public assistance program.
- By meeting the California Lifeline program's household income limits.

Customers who qualify via income eligibility must provide supporting documentation such as tax returns and/or pay check stubs in order to qualify. In order to continue in the California Lifeline program, customers will have to verify their eligibility each year.

What benefits does California Lifeline offer?

California Lifeline offers significant discounts on local telephone service. These include:

- **Service connection discount:** Start telephone service for \$10 or half of the telephone company's regular connection charge for residential service, whichever is lower. You also might have the option to pay this charge in up to 12 monthly installments with no added interest.
- **Discount when you change or convert your existing service to Lifeline:** You pay: (1) \$10, or (2) half of the regular charge for service connection or the regular conversion charge, whichever is lower.
- **Flat-rate local telephone service discount:** Make unlimited local calls for as low as \$5.47 per month or half the telephone company's regular residential flat-rate local service, whichever is lower.
- **Measured local telephone service discount:** Make up to 60 local calls per month for as little as \$2.91 per month or half the telephone company's regular residential measured local service charge, whichever is lower. Additional local calls (more than 60 per month) cost 8¢ each.
- **An extra California Lifeline connection:** Qualify for a second California Lifeline line at the same discount if you or someone in your household needs a teletypewriter (TTY or TDD device) when using the telephone.
- **Subscriber Line Charge Waiver:** as a Lifeline customer you do not have to pay the monthly Federal Subscriber Line Charge.

What does California Lifeline offer for people with hearing disabilities?

If your household is eligible for the California Lifeline program and includes someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, and needs a telephone-text device (TTY) when using the phone, you may qualify for two telephone lines at California Lifeline rates. With two lines, a hearing-impaired person can communicate through a special relay service.

In order to qualify for two discounted telephone lines, you must meet the following requirements:

- Your household is eligible for the first California Lifeline line.
- The disabled person in your household must have and use a text telephone device (TTY) in the home.
- If the TTY in your home is not issued by the Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program (DDTP), then you must submit a medical certificate showing that you or another household member needs a TTY to use the telephone.

How do I start California Lifeline service?

If you do not already have telephone service but believe you qualify for California Lifeline, contact a telephone company that provides local service for your area (check the Yellow Pages directory under "Telecommunications Carriers").

If you already have regular (non-California Lifeline) local telephone service, call your current provider at the number printed on your monthly telephone bill and ask to apply for California Lifeline service. (When you change from basic residential service to California Lifeline, there is a small one-time charge to convert your account.)

The telephone company will notify the certifying agent for the CPUC. The certifying agent can approve or deny your application based on your eligibility.

Which local service plan should I choose?

Consider the flat rate option if you make three or more local calls per day. Measured service will be the better choice if you make only one or two calls each day.

Local toll call charges are extra. Local toll calls are calls you make outside of your local calling area but not far enough to be considered long distance. Local toll call rates depend on where you call and at what times you place the calls. Check your telephone directory for these rates.

Existing California Lifeline customers

If you were already enrolled in the California Lifeline program before July 2006, you will receive a verification form on your anniversary date. You can choose assistance program-based verification or income-based verification. Just check off your choice on the form and return it by the deadline. You do not need to send proof.

Am I eligible for California Lifeline service?

Customers must qualify for California Lifeline under either program-based or income-based eligibility requirements, AND:

- The California Lifeline connection must be in your primary residence, not a second home or business.
- You cannot be a dependent on someone else's income tax return.

Program-based guidelines

You qualify for California Lifeline if you or another person in your household is enrolled in any of the following public-assistance programs:

- Medicaid/Medi-Cal
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Food Stamps
- Healthy Families Category A
- Tribal TANF
- Women, Infant and Children Program (WIC)
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance or Section 8
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- National School Lunch's FREE Lunch Program (NSL)
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Head Start Income Eligible (Tribal Only)

Income-based guidelines

You qualify for California Lifeline if your total before-tax household income does not exceed these limits:

Household size	Yearly income*
1-2 members	\$22,900
3 members	\$26,900
4 members	\$32,400
Each additional member	Add \$5,500 to \$32,400

*Income limits are adjusted annually.

Household income includes all taxable and non-taxable income received by everyone in your household. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Wages and salaries
- Interest and dividends
- Spousal support (alimony) and child support
- Grants, gifts, allowances and stipends
- Social Security and pensions
- Public-assistance payments
- Rental income
- All cash and non-cash employment income (including self-employment)

A household is one family or an extended family that lives together as a group. If one or more families share a house, apartment or other living space, each family (or household) is eligible for its own California Lifeline telephone service.

Proof of Income

Acceptable proof-of-income includes one or more of the following:

- Last year's state, federal, or tribal tax return.
- Income statements or paycheck stubs for three consecutive months within the last 12 months.
- Child support documents.
- Statement of benefits from Social Security, Veterans Administration, retirement/pension, unemployment compensation or worker's compensation.
- A divorce decree.
- Other official documents that prove your income.

You will receive a letter from the California Lifeline Program notifying you whether you have been approved or denied for California Lifeline. If your application is denied, you will have to pay back any discounts you have received and you will be fully responsible for the cost of starting phone service.

The California Lifeline Program will send you a California Lifeline Certification Form, which is mailed in a pink envelope, that you must complete and return by the due date on the form (approximately 44 days) to the address provided. Do not send the Certification Form to your telephone company.

You may elect to qualify for California Lifeline based on assistance programs ("program-based") or on your household income ("income-based"). You need to use just one of these two methods to determine your eligibility—not both.

Program-based certification form

If your application is program-based, complete the section of the Certification Form titled "Method 1 Program-Based." Just fill in the circle next to the appropriate public assistance program for you or members of your household. Provide the name of the individual in your household who is enrolled in the assistance program. You do not need to provide proof unless the certifying agent contacts you again.

Income-based certification form

If you are not enrolled in any of the qualifying public assistance programs, you must apply for California Lifeline based on your household income. Complete the section of the Certification Form titled "Method 2 Income-Based." You must provide proof that your total household income is at or below the California Lifeline maximum. (Make copies of all papers before sending them with the application. Do not send your originals.)