

Connect to California LifeLine and Save!

**Discounted telephone service
can help your family stay in touch**



A CONSUMER ACTION PUBLICATION

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 service providers providing traditional wired residential service offer the California LifeLine program. Additionally, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is working to include other alternative technologies such as wireless phones in the California LifeLine program. Already, some wireless providers have been approved in California to offer discounts under the federal Lifeline program. Contact your wireless provider to see if it offers federal Lifeline.

Customers can qualify in one of two ways:

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

When you enroll in California LifeLine, you will pay the regular rates for basic phone service and connection until your California LifeLine application is approved. (Ask for an interest-free payment plan to help pay any service connection charges and/or deposit for basic service.) Once approved, you will receive a bill credit with the California LifeLine discount retroactive to the date your service began or the date you applied for California LifeLine, whichever is later. Additionally, any deposits you paid for basic service will be refunded with a credit on your bill. If your bill has a net credit balance of \$10 or more, you may request a refund check from your California LifeLine service provider.

What benefits does California LifeLine offer?

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

Service connection discount: For new phone customers, once approved for California LifeLine, you will be credited for all but \$10 or half of the California LifeLine service provider's regular service connection charge, whichever results in the higher credit and the lower cost to you.

Discount when you change or convert your existing service to California LifeLine: You pay: (1) \$10, or (2) half of the regular charge for service connection or the regular conversion charge, whichever is lower, once you are approved for California LifeLine.

Through December 2012 the price for California LifeLine will be no more than its current level of \$3.66 for “measured” service and \$6.84 for “flat” service, for most customers. As of 2013, these rates could increase, but will be capped at 50% of the California LifeLine service provider’s regular rate for flat and measured rate service. Regular rates vary by service provider.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2013, California LifeLine service providers must establish the California LifeLine rates they will charge for that year. Each January, service providers may adjust their California LifeLine rates as long as the rates are no more than one-half of the California LifeLine service provider’s regular rates for flat and measured service.

Flat rate local telephone service allows for unlimited local calling. Prices vary by service provider but are never lower than \$5 per month and can’t exceed 50% of the California LifeLine service provider’s regular flat rate local service price.

Measured local telephone service allows for 60 untimed local calls per month. Prices vary by service provider but are never lower than \$2.50 per month, and can’t exceed 50% of the California LifeLine service provider’s regular measured local service price. 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.

As a California LifeLine customer, you are not assessed the following surcharges on your California LifeLine service: Federal Universal Service Fee, California LifeLine Telephone Service, California High Cost Fund-A, California High Cost Fund-B, California Advanced Services Fund, California Teleconnect Fund, California Relay Service and Communications Devices Fund, 911 Emergency System, State Regulatory Fee and various state/local taxes.

California LifeLine customers do not have to pay the monthly Federal Subscriber Line Charge.

Eligible for free toll blocking service

Toll blocking 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.

Deposits for basic service waiver

As a California LifeLine customer, you do not have to pay deposits for basic service. If you are initially charged for a deposit for basic service when establishing service and applying for California LifeLine, the deposit will be credited back to you once you are approved for California LifeLine.

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 text telephone device (TTY/TDD) 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 has and uses a text telephone device in the home.**

If your TTY/TDD 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/TDD to use the telephone. (Make copies to send with the application. Do not send your originals.)

How do I start California LifeLine service?

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

New customers establishing service and applying for California LifeLine will pay regular rates until approved. You will be required to pay the regular price for the service connection, and any deposits for basic service, but interest-free payment plans are available to help pay for these upfront costs. Once approved for LifeLine, you will receive a bill credit with the California LifeLine discount retroactive to the date service began or the date you applied for California LifeLine, whichever

is later. You will also be credited for all but \$10 or half of the California LifeLine service provider's regular connection charge, whichever results in the higher credit and the lower cost to you. And you will receive a credit for any deposits paid for basic service.

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. Once you are approved for California LifeLine, there is a small one-time charge to convert your account from regular service to California LifeLine. A credit for LifeLine discounts will be applied to your account retroactive to the date you applied for California LifeLine.

The California LifeLine service provider will notify the California LifeLine Administrator for the CPUC. The Administrator will approve or deny your application based on your stated eligibility. The Administrator will send you a California LifeLine application form, which is mailed in a pink envelope. You must either complete the form online using the personal identification number (PIN) that came with the application or mail your completed form to the address provided by the due date printed on the form (approximately 44 days). Do not send the application form to your service provider.

You may elect to qualify for California LifeLine based on assistance program enrollment ("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. (See guidelines in the next section.)

You will receive a letter from the California LifeLine Administrator notifying you whether you have been approved or denied for California LifeLine. If your application is denied, you will remain on full-priced regular service.

OPTION 1: PROGRAM-BASED CERTIFICATION

If your application is program-based, complete the section of the application 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 California LifeLine Administrator contacts you again.

OPTION 2: INCOME-BASED CERTIFICATION

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 application 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.)

Am I eligible for California LifeLine service?

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

The household in which you are applying for California LifeLine is your primary residence and you do not currently receive LifeLine discounts. Qualified participants with a household member using a TTY device may be eligible for two phone lines with the California LifeLine discount.

Note: 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)**
- **CalFresh Program, formerly known as Food Stamps**
- **Healthy Families Category A**
- **Tribal TANF**
- **Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)**
- **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**
- **Federal Public Housing Assistance or Section 8**
- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), also known as:**
 - ❖ **California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs)**
 - ❖ **Stanislaus County Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (StanWORKs)**
 - ❖ **Welfare-to-Work (WTW)**

❖ **Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN)**

- **National School Lunch Program (NSLP) (free, not reduced, lunch program)**
- **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	\$24,000
3 members	\$28,200
4 members	\$34,000
For each additional member after 4 members	Add \$5,800 for each additional person to \$34,000

** Valid through 5/31/12. Income limits are adjusted annually.*

Income-eligible Lifeline applicants must provide supporting documentation such as tax returns and/or paycheck stubs in order to qualify. (See “Proof of Income.”) Make copies of all papers before sending them with your application. Do not send originals.

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 workers' compensation**
- **A divorce decree**
- **Other official documents that prove your income**

Residents of Tribal Lands

If you are living on federally recognized tribal lands, flat rate service is available for \$1 a month for unlimited local calling.

Ask your California LifeLine service provider about Enhanced Lifeline or Tribal Lands Lifeline when you apply for California LifeLine service. Your service provider may require additional information from you, such as the name of the tribal lands you live on. In order to obtain the Tribal Lands discount, the California LifeLine Administrator must first approve you for California LifeLine. Once you are approved, your California LifeLine service provider may ask you to complete and return a Tribal Lands request form in order to receive the deeper discount.

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 Administrator will mail you a California LifeLine Annual Renewal Form 105 days before your enrollment anniversary date. The renewal 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 renewal form every 12 months.

You must either complete the form online or mail it 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 section of the renewal form.

If you don't receive benefits from any of the covered assistance programs, you must complete the income-based section of the renewal 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 California LifeLine Administrator receive your completed form by the due date on the form. (Complete it online or 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 service provider will:

- **remove you from the California LifeLine program, and**
- **change your service to full-priced residential service, and**
- **may require a deposit from you.**

Notify your California LifeLine service provider if you no longer qualify for California LifeLine discounts or a second California LifeLine connection or you might have to repay the difference between discounts you received and the full price for regular service. 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.

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.

Annual California LifeLine renewal audits

The CPUC requires that a small number (3%) of California LifeLine renewals must be randomly audited each year. This means that the California LifeLine Administrator 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 are eligible for 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 (outlets) 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 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.

For more information

The California Public Utilities Commission, the state’s utility regulator, oversees the LifeLine program. If you have a complaint that you cannot resolve with your telephone company or the California LifeLine Administrator, contact the CPUC’s Consumer Affairs Branch, 505 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco, CA 94102. Telephone: 800-649-7570 or 415-703-1170; 415-703-2032 (TTY). Fax: 415-703-1158. E-mail: consumer-affairs@cpuc.ca.gov.

The California LifeLine Administrator’s website, www.CaliforniaLifeLine.com, provides 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 the California LifeLine Call Center at: 866-272-0349 (English) or 866-272-0350 (Spanish). To check the status of an existing application, call the California LifeLine Administrator at: 877-858-7463 (English/Spanish) or 888-858-7889 (TTY).

The California Telephone Access Program 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 provides consumer advice, guides consumers to complaint-handling agencies and distributes free consumer education publications. Chinese, English and Spanish are spoken. Telephone: 415-777-9635 or 213-624-8327. E-mail: hotline@consumer-action.org.

Call your local service provider for more information or to apply for California LifeLine. The number should be on your telephone bill or under “Telecommunications Carriers” in the Yellow Pages telephone directory. While there are over 40 providers of California LifeLine service, two service providers 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).**
- **Verizon: 800-483-4000 (English)/800-743-2483 (Spanish)/800-974-6006 (TTY).**

Consumer Action

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Consumer advice and referral hotline

Submit consumer complaints about consumer problems to our advice and referral hotline:
hotline@consumer-action.org or 415-777-9635

Chinese, English and Spanish spoken

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