

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 wireline (home phone) or wireless telephone service to eligible low-income households. Consumers who qualify for California LifeLine pay a fraction of the regular cost for telephone connection or activation and monthly service.

What benefits does California LifeLine offer?

California LifeLine offers significant discounts on telephone service. The final monthly cost to you will depend on whether you choose wireline (home phone) or wireless (mobile phone) service and which service plan you select.

WIRELINE TELEPHONE SERVICE

All California service providers providing traditional residential landline service offer the California LifeLine program.

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**

Discounts for landline service under California LifeLine 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 is lower.
- **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.
- **Monthly service discount:** The price for California LifeLine is no more than 50 percent of the California LifeLine service provider's regular rate for measured and flat rate service. Rates vary by service provider. Flat rate local telephone service allows for unlimited local calling. Measured local telephone service allows for 60 untimed local calls per month. 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 telephone 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, either.

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 deposit 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.

WIRELESS TELEPHONE SERVICE

Wireless service is also eligible for discounts under the California LifeLine program. However, service providers must first apply and be approved by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to offer Lifeline-eligible plans in California. Contact your wireless provider to see if it offers California LifeLine.

Discounts for wireless service will depend on the service provider and service plan you choose, but include:

- Up to \$15.00 off of plans that offer between 501 and 999 minutes of calling time per month if the service provider is an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC), which would qualify it for combined state and federal subsidies. If the provider is not an ETC, your total discount would be \$5.75 per month under California LifeLine alone (no additional federal support of \$9.25). (Most, if not all, approved California LifeLine wireless plans offer at least 1,000 minutes.)

- Up to \$23.00 off of plans that offer 1,000 or more minutes per month if the service provider is an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier. If the provider is not an ETC, your total discount would be \$13.75 per month under California LifeLine alone.

A wireless plan must provide a minimum of 501 minutes to be eligible for a California LifeLine discount. At least one California LifeLine-eligible plan offered by a participating provider must be available without requiring bundled video or data service.

Eligible households can receive a discount on, or reimbursement of, connection/activation charges for wireless service no more than twice per year. For any additional wireless connection/activation charges, which typically are incurred when switching carriers, the wireless provider either can waive the charge or they can charge you the full price for connection/activation.

California LifeLine does not offer a discount on wireless devices, but some carriers include a free handset with activation or contract renewal. (Participating carriers cannot require a contract that lasts longer than two years.) You cannot be charged a restocking fee if you return your Lifeline program device within three business days of activation.

You are entitled to free, unlimited access to customer service in the same language in which the California LifeLine service was originally sold or marketed.

Eligible for free toll blocking service

Toll blocking prevents you or anyone else from making long distance or local toll calls from your landline 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 waived

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

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) to use 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.)

It is also possible to use a wireless phone-compatible TTY with some wireless devices. In addition to being digital, the device also must have a 2.5mm audio or hands-free jack and a TTY mode/option in its menu. Not all digital cell phones are TTY-compatible. Ask the phone vendor or service provider about capabilities, or look for the TTY symbol on the phone's packaging or in the user manual.

How do I start California LifeLine service?

If you do not already have telephone service but believe you qualify for California LifeLine, contact either a service provider that provides local residential service for your area if you want a landline (check the Yellow Pages directory under "Telecommunications Carriers") or a wireless service provider that participates in California LifeLine if you want a cell phone.

The CPUC offers a tool on its website (www.californialifeline.com/PublicWebApp/en/provider_search) that enables consumers to search by ZIP code for California LifeLine service providers (wireline and wireless) that serve their area. For wireless service, it also lists each provider's plan(s), minutes, text messages, data offered and the price. Clicking the provider's name displays a pop-up window with the company's telephone number, website and languages served in case you have questions or are ready to sign up.

WIRESLINE TELEPHONE SERVICE

New landline 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 deposit for basic service, but interest-free payment plans are available to help pay for

these upfront costs. Once approved, 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 is lower. And you will receive a credit for any deposit paid for basic service.

If you already have regular landline telephone service, call your current provider at the number printed on your monthly telephone bill and ask to apply for California LifeLine. Once you are approved, there is a small one-time charge to convert your account from regular service to California LifeLine. A credit for program discounts will be applied to your account retroactive to the date you applied for California LifeLine.

WIRELESS TELEPHONE SERVICE

New wireless customers establishing service and applying for California LifeLine may have the option of getting approved for LifeLine before establishing service. Check with the participating wireless providers to find out if you have to first establish regular service, or if you have to get approved for the program before establishing service, as processes vary by service provider.

If you have to establish regular service and pay regular rates first, once you are approved your account will be credited retroactively to the date service began or the date you applied for California LifeLine, whichever is later. If you get approved for California LifeLine first, then your discounts start immediately upon establishing service.

If you already have regular wireless service from a participating California LifeLine wireless provider, contact your service provider to see what service plans are eligible for California LifeLine. You must be on an eligible plan to receive the California LifeLine discount. Once approved for California LifeLine, discounts will be provided upon your approval date.

There is an enrollment request freeze of 30 days for wireless service applicants. Consumers who request to enroll in California LifeLine with a wireless service carrier cannot request to enroll with a different carrier for 30 days, giving the program administrator time to process the application and provide a final eligibility decision. The service provider must notify consumers of the policies regarding the enrollment request freeze.

ONLY ONE LIFELINE ACCOUNT PER HOUSEHOLD

A household must choose to get the Lifeline discount *either* on a home phone *or* on a cell phone, but not on both. Only households that are eligible for California LifeLine and include someone who needs a text telephone device (TTY/TDD) to use the phone may qualify for two lines at Lifeline rates. The discounts can only be for the primary residence. Households cannot get the discount from multiple phone companies. Discounts are non-transferable from one person to another.

Households that do not follow the California LifeLine “one discounted service per household” rule will lose their discounts and may face prosecution. Individuals can also be punished for giving false information to get the discounts.

APPLICATION PROCESS 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 so that it is received 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 (if you established service prior to applying for the program).

Am I eligible for California LifeLine service?

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

OPTION 1: PROGRAM-BASED CERTIFICATION

Complete the section of the application form titled “Program-based”

if you qualify for California LifeLine based on receipt of benefits under any of the listed public assistance programs. Just fill in the circle next to the appropriate public assistance program for your household. You will need to provide proof of participation in the program along with your application form. Acceptable forms of proof include a copy of the current or prior year's statement of benefits, a notice or letter of participation, a program ID card, or another official program document that shows your or your family member's enrollment.

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 "Income-based." You must provide proof that your total household income is at or below the California LifeLine maximum. Acceptable forms of proof include a copy of the front page of your prior year's tax return, income statements or pay stubs for three consecutive months within the last year, the statement of benefits from programs such as Social Security, VA, unemployment, workers' compensation, etc., or other documents that prove your household's annual income.

Make copies of all forms of proof before sending them with the application. Do not send your originals.

You also must provide your housing status (temporary or permanent), your date of birth and the last four digits of your Social Security number or Tribal ID number. The household in which you are applying for California LifeLine must be your primary residence and you cannot currently receive Lifeline discounts. You cannot be a dependent on someone else's income tax return.

Qualified participants with a household member using a TTY device may be eligible for two phone lines with the California LifeLine discount.

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**
- **Tribal TANF**

- **Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)**
- **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**
- **Federal Public Housing Assistance or Section 8**
- **National School Lunch Program (NSLP) (free, not reduced, lunch program)**
- **Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance**
- **Head Start Income Eligible (Tribal Only)**
- **Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)**
- **Federal Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit Program**
- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF):**
 - ❖ **California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKS)**
 - ❖ **Stanislaus Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (StanWORKS)**
 - ❖ **Welfare-to-Work (WTW)**
 - ❖ **Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN)**

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	\$27,500
3 members	\$31,900
4 members	\$38,800
Each additional member (over 4)	Add \$6,900 per person to \$38,800

** Valid 6/1/19 through 5/31/20. 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. 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 any individual or group of individuals who are living together at the same address as one economic unit. A household may include related and unrelated persons. An “economic unit” consists of all adult individuals (18 and older) contributing to and sharing in the income and expenses of a household. If an adult has no or minimal income, and lives with someone who provides financial support to him/her, both people shall be considered as part of the same household. Children under the age of eighteen living with their parents or guardians are considered to be part of the same household as their parents or guardians.

PROOF OF INCOME

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

- **Last year’s state, federal or tribal tax return**
- **Current income statement from an employer 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, deeper discounts apply on service plans, and they may be available for as low as \$0 per month. Contact your wireline or participating wireless provider for specific rate information.

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. The process of enrolling in Enhanced Lifeline or Tribal Lands Lifeline varies by service provider. Some providers allow for a one-step process in which you apply for Enhanced Lifeline through the California LifeLine Administrator. Others require a two-step process in which you must get approved for California LifeLine first. Once you are approved, your California LifeLine service provider will 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. However, you don't need to send proof of income or public assistance program participation when you are verifying your eligibility.

The California LifeLine Administrator will mail you an 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 "Program-based" or "Income-based" section of the renewal form every 12 months. You can complete the form online or mail it in, but it must be received by the California LifeLine Administrator 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 both discounted 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;**
- **change your service to full-priced 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.

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 service plan should I choose?

For local landline service, 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. Optional features such as caller ID, call waiting and voicemail are an extra cost.

Wireless plans typically include nationwide calling as part of their service offering. Use the CPUC's online comparison tool (www.californialifeline.com/PublicWebApp/en/provider_search) to do a side-by-side comparison of the wireless plans available to you—it compares minutes, text messages, data offered and price. Access the tool by entering your ZIP code in the box under "Cell Phone Service" and then click the "Compare" button at the right side of the page for each of the plans you want to compare (up to three at a time).

Annual California LifeLine eligibility renewal

Each year, you will be sent a form that you must fill out to renew your California LifeLine eligibility. You must "self-certify" your continuing

eligibility by completing the brief form (print or online) and submitting it so it's received by the due date. The CPUC does not require that you submit proof of income or public assistance program participation when you renew.

What services are not included with the California LifeLine program?

WIRESERVICE TELEPHONE SERVICE

For residential landline service, 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 wireline home 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.

WIRESERVICE TELEPHONE SERVICE

Wireless service offerings typically include nationwide calling, caller ID and voicemail. Some service offerings may include an allotment of domestic text messaging. Check with participating wireless providers to find out exactly what each carrier's plans include. Discounts on handsets are not included in California LifeLine.

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. 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), 866-272-0350 (Spanish) or 866-272-0356 (Chinese). To check the status of an existing application, call the California LifeLine Administrator at 877-858-7463 (English/Spanish), 888-765-1566 (Chinese) 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) and 800-806-4474 (TTY). Spanish: 800-949-5650 (voice) and 844-867-1135 (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. Webmail: <https://complaints.consumer-action.org/forms/english-form>.

Call your local service provider for more information or to apply for California LifeLine discounts on your wireline (home) telephone service. The number should be on your telephone bill or under "Telecommunications Carriers" in the Yellow Pages telephone directory.

AT&T is a large provider of California LifeLine discounts:

- **AT&T California:** California LifeLine voice response system (Lifeline eligibility information): 800-446-5651 (English)/800-882-0521 (Spanish)/888-765-1566 (Chinese). Service orders: 800-288-2020 (English)/800-870-5855 (Spanish)/800-281-2288 (Chinese)/800-651-5111 (TTY).

For contact information for other wireline and wireless service providers, visit www.californialifeline.com/PublicWebApp/en/provider_search and enter your ZIP code in the field under "Home Phone Service" or "Cell Phone Service." (Visit www.californialifeline.com/PublicWebApp/

es/provider_search for Spanish and www.californialifeline.com/PublicWebApp/ch/provider_search for Chinese.) If you do not have Internet access, contact the California LifeLine Call Center at: 866-272-0349 (English), 866-272-0350 (Spanish) or 866-272-0356 (Chinese).

Consumer Action

www.consumer-action.org

Through multilingual consumer education materials, community outreach and issue-focused advocacy, Consumer Action empowers underrepresented consumers nationwide to assert their rights and financially prosper.

Consumer advice and referral hotline

Submit consumer complaints to our advice and referral hotline:
<https://complaints.consumer-action.org/forms/english-form>
or 415-777-9635

Chinese, English and Spanish spoken

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