



YES

you can afford

TELEPHONE SERVICE

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM YOUR
COMMUNITY BASED TELECOM PROVIDER

How do I apply to receive Lifeline, Link Up and TLS support discounts?

Contact your local telephone company. Consumers must apply for Lifeline, Link Up and TLS discounts through their local telephone company. The Universal Service Administrative Company's (USAC) web site contains state-specific Lifeline contact information for many companies at www.lifelinesupport.org. You also may call USAC toll free at 1-888-641-8722 with any questions about Lifeline, Link Up and TLS discounts.

- Residents of Indian reservations or tribal lands qualify if they participate in any of the programs listed inside, have a household income that is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines, or participate in one of these programs:
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) general assistance
 - Head Start (income eligible)
 - Tribal TANF

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Every person in America should have access to quality, affordable telecommunications service. This principle of “Universal Service” has been the goal of the telecommunications industry for decades. In 1934, the federal government codified the goal and reaffirmed it in 1996 by establishing policies for the “preservation and advancement of Universal Service.”

To achieve the Universal Service goal, carriers have access to a fund that is generated by contributions from the telecommunications providers in the United States. Telecommunications companies draw from the fund to provide four programs that support telecommunications services nationwide. Link-Up America (Link-Up) and the Lifeline Assistance Program (Lifeline) are part of the Fund’s Low-Income Program and are described in detail below. Toll Limitation Service is another program available to low income subscribers to help them control what they spend on telephone service.

Lifeline, Link Up, and Toll Limitation Service support provide discounts to eligible low-income consumers to help them establish and maintain telephone service.

What type of discount is available?

Lifeline assistance lowers the cost of basic monthly local telephone service. Eligible consumers can receive up to \$10 per month in discounts. Additional state support also may be available.

Eligible residents of Indian reservations or tribal lands can receive up to an additional \$25 in Lifeline support, but must pay at least \$1 for basic monthly service.

Link Up reduces the cost of initiating new telephone service. Eligible consumers can receive a 50% discount off of the one-time costs associated with initiating telephone service, up to a maximum of \$30. Eligible consumers also qualify for a deferred payment schedule for remaining costs of up to \$200.

Eligible low-income consumers living on tribal lands are eligible for an additional discount of up to \$70 to cover 100% of the charges between \$60 and \$130.

Toll Limitation Service (TLS) support allows eligible consumers who wish to avoid incurring large long distance fees to choose toll blocking or toll control at no cost.

How do I know whether I am eligible?

Eligibility for Lifeline, Link Up and TLS support varies by state. Individuals who reside in states that have their own discount programs qualify for federal Lifeline, Link Up and TLS support if they meet the eligibility criteria established by their state. In states that do not provide state support, an individual is eligible if he or she participates in one of the following programs:

- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance or Section 8
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp Program
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- National School Lunch free lunch program

In addition, a consumer may be eligible if his or her household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines:

2009 Income Requirements for a Household at or Below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines

Persons in Family Unit	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$14,621	\$18,266	\$16,821
2	\$19,670	\$24,584	\$22,626
3	\$24,719	\$30,902	\$28,431
4	\$29,768	\$37,220	\$34,236
5	\$34,817	\$43,538	\$40,041
6	\$39,866	\$49,856	\$45,846
7	\$44,915	\$56,174	\$51,651
8	\$49,964	\$62,492	\$57,456
For each additional person, add	\$5,049	\$6,318	\$5,805



Foundation for Rural Service

This brochure was produced by the Foundation for Rural Service, the philanthropic arm of the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association. Its mission is to promote, educate and advocate rural telecommunications in order to sustain and enhance the quality of life within communities throughout rural America. For additional information on the Foundation, visit www.frs.org. This advocacy campaign also is supported by the Rural Telephone Finance Cooperative, based in Herndon, VA.