



Telephone Lifeline Programs in Ohio

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Lifeline programs provide financial assistance to low-income residents and help ensure that those customers can afford telephone service. The traditional home telephone Lifeline programs provide discounts when establishing service, lower monthly service charges and special payment arrangements.

Recently, TracFone – a wireless telephone company – received permission to provide Lifeline assistance to low-income residential consumers for wireless service. Customers cannot have both traditional home telephone Lifeline service and wireless Lifeline service. Consumers should compare the two choices to determine which service best meets their needs.

The following information outlines the Lifeline programs including benefits, restrictions, qualification guidelines and how to apply, in addition to answers to frequently asked questions.



Program	Benefits	Restrictions and qualifications	
<p>Traditional home telephone service Lifeline for customers of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AT&T Ohio • CenturyLink (Includes CenturyTel & Embarq) • Champaign Telephone (CTC) • Chillicothe Telephone • Cincinnati Bell • McClure Telephone • Telephone Service Company • Verizon • Windstream (formerly Alltel and Western Reserve) <p>This state Lifeline program assists low-income customers of these companies with obtaining and maintaining local home telephone service.</p> <p>For more information about Lifeline or to obtain an application, consumers can call their telephone company or the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel toll free at 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622).</p>	<p>Customers of these Lifeline programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not pay service connection charges. • Do not pay a deposit to establish service. • Do not pay the federal subscriber line charge. • Do not pay the intrastate access fee. (Embarq customers only) • Do not pay the access recovery charge. (Verizon customers only) • Receive a discount off the monthly basic service charge. • Do not pay charges related to the Universal Service Fund and local number portability. • Can receive free "toll blocking and blocking for 900/976 telephone numbers," which prohibits all long-distance calls. • Can purchase Call Waiting (no discount is provided for this calling feature). • Can re-establish service if previously disconnected for non-payment by paying \$25 and agreeing to pay the remainder of the past due amount over six months. 	<p>Customers cannot subscribe to services such as Caller ID and Call Forwarding unless they certify a medical or safety need. However AT&T Ohio and Embarq customers, at this time, may purchase any features without certifying a need. Discounts are available on only one account or one line per household.</p> <p>Customers can qualify for Lifeline if their income is at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Customers also may qualify if they are enrolled in one of the following programs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Medicaid 2) Food Stamps 3) Supplemental Security Income 4) Federal public housing assistance 5) Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) or Low Income-HEAP 6) National Free School Lunch Program 7) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Ohio Works First) 8) Disability assistance 9) Social Security Disability Income 	<p>Consumers who enroll in Lifeline based solely on income-eligibility must submit documentation showing proof of income. Documents accepted as proof include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a prior year's state or federal income tax return • a current income statement from an employer or W-2 • three consecutive months of current pay stubs • statement of benefits from Social Security • statement of benefits from the Veteran's Administration • statement of benefits for retirement/pension • statement of benefits for Unemployment/Workmen's compensation • divorce decree • child support documentation

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<p>Lifeline for customers of other traditional home telephone companies</p> <p>The federal Lifeline program offers monthly discounts for qualified customers served by a telephone company not listed above.</p> <p>Consumers should contact their local telephone company to apply for Lifeline. For more information about Lifeline, consumers can call the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel toll free at 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622). When applying for this program, consumers may be asked to submit proof of eligibility.</p>	<p>Customers of the federal Lifeline program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a waiver of the federal subscriber line charge. • Receive a discount off the monthly basic service charge. • Do not pay a deposit to establish service if they select the toll blocking feature, which prohibits all long-distance calls. • Can purchase any features, such as Caller ID or Call Waiting, but no discount is provided for these services. • Do not pay charges related to the Universal Service Fund and local number portability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discounts are available only on one account or one line per household. 	<p>Customers may qualify for federal Lifeline assistance if your income is at or below 135 percent of the federal poverty guidelines and provide proof of income. Customers also may qualify if they are enrolled in one of the following programs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Medicaid 2) Food Stamps 3) Supplemental Security Income 4) Federal public housing assistance 5) Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) or Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) 6) National Free School Lunch Program 7) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Ohio Works First) 8) Disability assistance 9) Social Security Disability Income
<p>Wireless Lifeline for any eligible consumers throughout Ohio not currently on other Lifeline programs.</p> <p>In May 2009, TracFone became the first company approved by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio to provide Lifeline service to wireless customers. TracFone's Lifeline service is called SafeLink Wireless and available throughout Ohio.</p> <p>Consumers may apply for service by visiting www.safelink.com and completing the on-line application form, or by calling 1-800-SAFELINK (1-800-723-3546) toll free and following the prompts.</p>	<p>Customers of TracFone's Safelink program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a free wireless handset • Receive Caller ID, voice mail and text messaging capability • Receive 68 minutes of airtime per month. The minutes can be used for local or long-distance calling. Unused minutes roll over to the next month. If a customer does not exceed 68 minutes, the service is free. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wireless Lifeline is available only to one consumer per household. • Customers cannot have both traditional home telephone Lifeline service and wireless Lifeline service. • Only the allotted 68 minutes per month are free. Additional minutes can be obtained on a pre-paid basis for 20 cents per minute. 	<p>Customers may qualify if the total household income is at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.</p> <p>To qualify for the program in Ohio, a household must participate in at least one of the following programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicaid • Food Stamps • Supplemental Security Income • Federal Public Housing Assistance • Free National School Lunch Program • General Assistance/Disability Assistance • Home Energy Assistance • Supplemental Security Disability Income • Ohio Works First or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families <p>Consumers who enroll in Lifeline based solely on income-eligibility must submit documentation showing proof of income. Documents accepted as proof include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a prior year's state or federal income tax return • a current income statement from an employer or W-2 • three consecutive months of current pay stubs • statement of benefits from Social Security • statement of benefits from the Veteran's Administration • statement of benefits for retirement/pension • statement of benefits for Unemployment/Workmen's compensation • divorce decree • child support documentation

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<p>Link-Up</p> <p>The federal Link-Up program provides discounts on telephone connection charges.</p> <p>Consumers should contact their local telephone company to apply for Link-Up. For more information about Link-Up, consumers can call the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel toll free at 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622). When applying for this program, consumers may be asked to submit proof of eligibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a 50 percent or \$30 (whichever is less) discount off basic local service connection charges. • Allows an interest-free payment plan of up to 12 months if service connection charges are less than \$200. Customers may still be responsible for paying a security deposit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used only once per household unless service is being established at a new address. 	<p>If your income is at or below 135 percent of the federal poverty guidelines and you provide proof of income you can qualify for Link-Up. You also can qualify if you are enrolled in any of the programs listed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Medicaid 2) Food Stamps 3) Supplemental Security Income 4) Federal public housing assistance 5) Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) or Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) 6) National Free School Lunch Program 7) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Ohio Works First) 8) Disability assistance 9) Social Security Disability Income
<p>Service Connection Assistance (SCA)</p> <p>Ohio's Service Connection Assistance program provides customers with discounts on installation of telephone service.</p> <p>Consumers should contact their local telephone company to apply for Service Connection Assistance. For more information about SCA, consumers can call the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel toll free at 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622). When applying for this program, consumers may be asked to submit proof of eligibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers do not pay a deposit to establish service. • Customers receive up to \$60 off of service connection charges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discounts are available only on one account or one line per household. • Can be used only once every 12 months at the same address. • Customers are not eligible for this program if they are claimed as a dependent on anyone else's income tax return, unless they are at least 60 years of age. 	<p>You also can qualify if you are enrolled in any of the programs listed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Medicaid 2) Food Stamps 3) Supplemental Security Income 4) Federal public housing assistance 5) Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) or Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) 6) Disability assistance 7) Social Security Disability Income

Lifeline FAQ

Q. What features can a consumer have while on Lifeline?

A. Consumers on one of the traditional state plans can subscribe to Call Waiting. Other features such as Caller ID or 3-Way Calling require consumers to submit a medical or safety statement certifying a need. Customers of AT&T and Embarq have no restrictions on service. For companies offering the federal plan, there are no restrictions to the number or type of features to which a customer can subscribe. No discounts for these types of features are offered. Customers of TracFone's wireless Lifeline service receive free Caller ID, voicemail and texting capability.

Q. Can a customer with a past due amount for local charges still sign up for a traditional state Lifeline program?

A. Yes, but the customer will be required to make an initial payment of \$25 and pay the remaining amount owed for local service in six equal payments. This is in addition to the customer paying the current charges for local service.

Q. If a customer does not keep current on a payment arrangement for traditional Lifeline does the company have to provide another payment assistance option?

A. No. In most cases if the customer does not keep current with a payment arrangement, the company will require the customer to pay off all of the past due local charges in order to have service restored or to avoid disconnection.

Q. Can a customer qualify for Lifeline using another household member's eligibility (i.e. a son or daughter receiving Medicaid)?

A. No. The customer who is named on the telephone account must be the person who qualifies for Lifeline. In addition, for a customer to be eligible for Lifeline, they cannot be claimed as a dependent on another person's taxes. In addition, a customer can only receive one Lifeline discount, for either traditional home telephone service or for TracFone's Safelink wireless service.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts. The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues and resolves complaints from individuals. To receive utility information, brochures, schedule a presentation or file a utility complaint, residential consumers may call 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622) toll free in Ohio or visit the OCC website at www.pickocc.org.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.

For additional information from the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel:

Call: 1-877-PICKOCC (1-877-742-5622) toll free or (614) 466-8574

Write: 10 West Broad Street, Suite 1800, Columbus, Ohio 43215-3485

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