



COVID-19 Telecom Policies

Mike DeWine, Governor
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Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) is committed to supporting a full continuum of mental health and addiction treatment services for all Ohioans during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to maintain critical access to prevention, treatment and recovery services, OhioMHAS has expanded telehealth rules to reduce barriers experienced due to recommended physical distancing. However, not all Ohioans have equal access to phone, internet, or cell service. OhioMHAS has compiled this reference sheet to assist the behavioral health community in removing barriers to individuals accessing successful telehealth services.

Accessing free wi-fi telecommunication resources

Innovate Ohio, in partnership with Broadband Ohio has compiled a list of easy to access locations where Ohioans can connect to free wi-fi hotspots. A list of Ohio's free wi-fi hotspot locations, and how to access the services, [can be found here](#).

A variety of connectivity resources can also be found at <https://connectednation.org/coronavirus/>.

Telecommunication carrier COVID-19 policies and resources

In addition to publicly provided free wi-fi access, to date, over 700 private telecommunication companies have signed the FCC's Keep Americans Connected Pledge. This means that for 60 days, these companies pledge to not terminate residential or small business services due to non-payment, to waive late fees, and to open Wi-Fi hotspots to anyone who needs them. More information on this pledge can be found [here](#).

Many telecom companies have adopted temporary COVID-19 policies and are offering free or reduced services and increased data usage limits during the coronavirus pandemic, and more. For the most up-to-date information on these policies, click the links below for the following providers:

- Charter Communications (Spectrum): Free Spectrum Internet and Wi-Fi for 60 days to households with K-12 and/or college students and educators: <https://policy.charter.com/press-releases/charter-offer-free-access-spectrum-broadband-wifi-60-days-new-k-12-college-student-households/>
- CenturyLink: Suspended data usage limits, offering increased broadband speeds: <https://news.centurylink.com/covid-19>
- Cincinnati Bell: Providing free speed upgrades: <https://www.cincinnati-bell.com/special-pages/coronavirus/prevention>
- AT&T: Two months of free service, and waiving data usage overage fees: <https://www.att.com/shop/internet/access/index.html?source=ECmj000000000mbU&wtExtndSource=access#!/>
- Verizon: Automatically adding hotspot data for customers: <https://www.verizonwireless.com/support/covid-19-faqs/>
- Consolidated Communications: Two months of free home internet to low-income families: <https://>

www.consolidated.com/support/alerts/coronavirus-updates

- Windstream Ohio, Inc / Kinetic: Discounts to any new Kinetic Internet customer who is qualified for Lifeline benefits: <https://www.windstream.com/about/windstream-information/lifeline-assistance-program>

Publicly subsidized telecommunication services (Lifeline) access during the COVID-19 pandemic

Lifeline is the FCC's program to help make communications services more affordable for low-income consumers. Lifeline provides subscribers a discount on monthly telephone service, broadband Internet access service, or voice-broadband bundled service purchased from participating providers.

To help keep Americans connected during the coronavirus pandemic, the FCC has temporarily waived Lifeline usage requirements and general de-enrollment procedures until May 29, 2020. An FCC order, released on March 30, will help ensure that no current Lifeline subscribers are involuntarily removed from the Lifeline program during this time of national crisis. The order also extended a recent waiver of the program's recertification and reverification requirements to May 29, 2020, and directed the Lifeline program administrator to pause any involuntary de-enrollment of existing subscribers until that date.

OhioMHAS contacted Ohio's Lifeline services providers about their specific COVID-19 policies. The following list details the findings, and includes contact information for each company.



Ohio Lifeline Wireless Providers and FCC Pledge – COVID-19 Policy Search

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Ohio Lifeline Provider Companies*	Company Phone	Service	Research/Call Results and Comments
Air Voice/Feel Safe	877-247-7799	Wireless	<p>https://www.feelsafewireless.com/ohio-free-government-phone</p> <p>No COVID-19 policy found.</p> <p>Other notes: Normal plan offers qualified Ohio customers can receive 1,000 voice minutes, 500 text messages, 3GB data. Due to COVID-19, product shipments occur only twice weekly.</p> <p>Customer service hours: Mon-Sat 10:00 a.m. EST – 7:00 p.m. EST. Company based in Michigan.</p>
American Broadband & Telecommunications/American Assistance	877-266-7212	Wireless	<p>https://www.americanassistance.com/</p> <p>COVID-19 policy: 5GB free monthly data, offer expires May 31, 2020.</p> <p>Other notes: Normal offers include eligible customers provided a free wireless phone (with \$25 activation fee), 500 free monthly minutes, 3GB data, and unlimited free texts each month.</p>
Boomerang Wireless/enTouch	866-488-8719	Wireless	<p>https://www.entouchwireless.com/</p> <p>COVID-19 policy: For existing customers, unlimited voice and text, 10GB data until May 16, 2020.</p> <p>Other notes: Variety of plans. Customers can apply a \$10 discount to talk, text and data plans every month. enTouch Wireless will give customers \$10 for every friend or family member the customer refers and who signs-up for mobile service. Once they are approved the customer’s referral will get 1/2 GB of Internet, 250 Minutes and 100 Texts every month.</p> <p>Customer service hours: Mon-Fri 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., Sat. 11:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. CST. Company based in IA.</p>

Global Connection Inc of America/ Stand Up Wireless	800-544-4441	Wireless	<p>https://standupwireless.com/</p> <p>COVID-19 policy: All current customers will receive an additional 5GB of high-speed data through May 15, 2020. This was effective March 18, 2020 to all customers bringing plans to a total of 8GB through May 15, 2020. All current customers should already have had this additional service added to their accounts.</p> <p>Other notes: Variety of plans, including a plan with free monthly minutes, unlimited text, 8 GB of high-speed data.</p> <p>Customer service hours: Mon-Sat 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m., Sun 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. EST. Company based in GA.</p>
i-Wireless/Access Wireless	800-464-6010	Wireless	<p>https://www.accesswireless.com/</p> <p>COVID-19 policy: Providing all active Lifeline customers with unlimited minutes & additional monthly data until June 21, 2020.</p> <p>Other notes: Variety of plans.</p> <p>Currently Access Wireless customers are eligible to participate in the FREE Wireless Rewards program when they shop at Kroger-owned stores. To participate: Register Shopper's Card/Loyalty Card/Alternate ID/1-2-3 Rewards Visa with your Access Wireless account; For every 100 points earned from shopping in participating stores, a Wireless Reward of 20 free minutes (or MB of data depending on State) will be added to your Access Wireless account</p> <p>free Wireless Rewards are earned on qualifying purchases only. Food Stamp purchases may apply for loyalty rewards program. Restrictions apply.</p> <p>Customer service hours: 8:00 a.m. – Midnight, Sat. 9:00 a.m. – Midnight, Sun. 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. EST.</p>

Q Link Wireless/Q Link:	855-754-6543	Wireless	<p>https://qlinkwireless.com</p> <p>COVID-19 policy: Providing all current and new customers with an additional 5G of high-speed data and unlimited talk and text until April 30, 2020.</p> <p>Other notes: Offers the “Always on Plan” with unlimited text and talk and 3GB of data per month. Customers who refer a friend will receive an additional 100 free minutes and 100 MB of data when the friend signs up.</p> <p>Customer service hours: Monday-Friday 8:00a.m. – Midnight, Sat. & Sun. 9:00 a.m. – 6 p.m. EST.</p>
Sage Telecom/Sage Wireless	866-385-7281	Wireless	<p>https://www.freegovernmentcellphones.net/lifeline-discount-cell-phone-providers/sage-telecom</p> <p>NO COVID-19 Policy found.</p> <p>Other notes: Variety of monthly plans and prepaid cell phone plans starting at \$15 per month. Sage customers will receive a \$25 account credit for each friend or family member referred that stays for at least 90 days.</p> <p>Directs customers to ask questions through website and/or Facebook.</p>
Telerite/Life Wireless	888-543-3620	Wireless	<p>https://lifewireless.com</p> <p>COVID-10 Policy: Providing emergency minutes and extra data during the COVID-19 emergency declaration; customer must call to request.</p> <p>Other notes: Variety of plans that include nationwide calling, unlimited texts. Lots of fine print restrictions, such as unlimited text messaging does not include picture messaging and certain residents may be eligible for a free cell phone.</p> <p>Customer service hours: Mon. – Fri. 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. EST</p>

Tempo Telecom LLC/Now Communications	866-580-8411	Wireless	<p>https://mytempo.com/lifeline-wireless/</p> <p>COVID-19 Policy: Increased data from 3GB to 8GB until May 17, 2020.</p> <p>Other notes: Variety of plans that include unlimited monthly minutes and text, and nationwide calling.</p> <p>Customer service hours: Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Central</p>
TracFone/Safelink	800-SAFELINK	Wireless	<p>https://www.tracfone.com/covid/</p> <p>COVID-19 Policy: Providing an extra 5GB of data in March and April.</p> <p>Other notes: Unlimited talk & text, 5GB of free data for customers, offer valid until 04/28/2020.</p> <p>- Unused data does not carry over month to month, or every 30 days.</p> <p>-Variety of plans and options to add on more benefits.</p> <p>Customer service hours: 8:00 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. EST 7 days a week</p> <p>-Online chat available from 8:00 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. EST 7 days a week</p>
Virgin Mobile USA/Assurance Wireless	800-395-2108	Wireless	<p>https://www.assurancewireless.com</p> <p>COVID-19 Policy: Free unlimited calls and texts, additional 20GB of free data through May 20, 2020.</p> <p>Other notes: Variety of plans with unlimited talk and text, and free monthly data plus a free Android smartphone based on phone availability.</p> <p>Customer service hours: Monday – Friday 5:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Sat. & Sun. 5:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Experiencing longer wait times due to limited staff as a result of COVID-19.</p>

Highlighted companies have signed the pledge listed on <https://www.fcc.gov/keep-americans-connected>

*<https://www.puco.ohio.gov/be-informed/consumer-topics/lifeline-telephone-assistance-program-help-with-paying-your-telephone-bill>