



Wi-Fi Access and Telecommunication 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/>. Additionally, resources from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) can be found at <https://fcc.gov/keep-americans-connected>.

Telecommunication carrier COVID-19 policies and resources

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): <https://policy.charter.com/press-releases/charter-offer-free-access-spectrum-broadband-wifi-60-days-new-k-12-college-student-households/>

CenturyLink/Lumen: <https://news.centurylink.com/covid-19>

Cincinnati Bell: <https://www.cincinnati-bell.com/special-pages/coronavirus/prevention>

AT&T: https://about.att.com/newsroom/2020/att_consumer_connected_together.html and <https://about.att.com/pages/COVID-19.html>.

Verizon: <https://www.verizonwireless.com/support/covid-19-faqs/>

Consolidated Communications: <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.

OhioMHAS contacted Ohio's Lifeline services providers about their specific COVID-19 policies. The information listed in the table at the end of this telecommunications policy update includes contact information for each company.

Continued Lifeline Service

In Orders issued on March 17, March 30, April 29, June 1 and on August 17, 2020, the FCC temporarily paused periodic

program integrity reviews and made temporary changes to general de-enrollment, non-usage de-enrollment, recertification, and reverification requirements. These changes, which were recently extended in the FCC Order issued on November 16, 2020, will help Lifeline consumers from being involuntarily de-enrolled from the Lifeline Program during the pandemic.

The November 16, 2020, waiver notes that these temporary changes to the program will remain in effect through February 28, 2021.

This means that through February 28, 2021:

- Involuntary de-enrollments of existing subscribers should not occur.
- There will be no new Lifeline Program integrity reviews announced.
- Recertification is now on hold for subscribers with anniversary dates between April 14, 2020, and May 29, 2021.
- Reverification outreach to subscribers and reverification de-enrollments are on hold.
- Consumers should not be de-enrolled for not using their Lifeline service during the waiver period.

Income Eligibility Documentation

One way that a consumer who qualifies for Lifeline based on their income can prove eligibility is to provide three (3) consecutive months of income documentation. Due to the pandemic and recent unemployment, there may be eligible consumers who are unable to meet this requirement.

Through February 28, 2021, consumers who do not have three (3) consecutive months of income documentation may provide an official document that confirms their current income information. This may include a notice of unemployment benefit payments or a notice of a successfully submitted application for unemployment benefits.

To prove a consumer's current household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines, as an alternative to acceptable documentation already allowed by the Lifeline Program's rules, consumers may submit an official document that, at a minimum, includes:

- The consumer's name, or the name of the consumer's benefit qualifying person (BQP);
- Their current income information; and
- A date within the last 3 months.

For additional details, consumers may visit: <https://www.usac.org/lifeline/additional-requirements/covid-19-response/>

Ohio Lifeline Provider Information – Updated December 2020

Ohio Lifeline Provider Companies	Company Contact	Research/Call Results and Comments
FeelSafe Wireless	Phone: 1-877-247-7799	https://www.feelsafewireless.com/ohio-free-government-phone Eligibility benefits may include 1,000 voice minutes, 500 text messages and 4.5 3GB of data.
American Assistance	Phone: 1-877-266-7212	https://www.americanassistance.com/ Interested Ohio customers should contact American Assistance as eligibility varies from state to state: https://www.americanassistance.com/lifeline-program/how-to-qualify/
enTouch Wireless	Phone: 1-866-488-8719 Email: support@enTouchWireless.com	https://www.entouchwireless.com/ Eligibility benefits may include 1,000 voice minutes, unlimited text and 3-4GB of data. Qualified customers may receive free cell phone service. Certain residents may be eligible for a free cell phone.
Stand Up Wireless	Phone: 1-800-544-4441 Email: support@standupwireless.com	https://standupwireless.com/ When you bring your own phone, eligibility benefits may include 1,000 minutes, unlimited text and 3GB of data.
Access Wireless	Phone (for new service): 1-888-900-5899 Phone (for current service): 1-866-594-3644	https://www.accesswireless.com/lifeline Eligibility benefits may include 1,000 free monthly minutes, unlimited text and 4.5GB of free data.

Q Link Wireless	Phone: 1-855-754-6543	https://qlinkwireless.com Eligibility benefits may include free unlimited talk, text and 3GB of free data.
Sage Telecom	Phone: 1-888-449-4940	https://www.freegovernmentcellphones.net/lifeline-discount-cell-phone-providers/sage-telecom Sage Telecom is now offering Lifeline Discounts to financially-struggling residents of 11 states, including Ohio. Monthly cell plans start at \$15 per month and include: a free cell phone, nationwide coverage, no contracts, free talk time, free caller ID, call waiting and voicemail, free or discounted text messages and inexpensive data options.
Life Wireless	Phone: 1-888-543-3620 Email: info@lifewireless.com	https://www.lifewireless.com/plans/ohio-lifeline-free-phone-service Life Wireless offers government assisted wireless services to low income families and individuals in Ohio. Qualified customers receive free cell phone service. Certain residents may be eligible for a free cell phone. Your Lifeline benefit is limited to one per household and cannot be combined with any other Lifeline offer. Eligibility benefits may include free 500 monthly minutes, unlimited text and 4.5GB of data

Tempo Telecom	Phone: 1-833-998-3676	https://mytempo.com/lifeline-wireless/ The Tempo Lifeline wireless plan is a Lifeline supported service. Only eligible customers may enroll in the program. Service is limited to one discount per household, consisting of either home phone or wireless service. Eligibility benefits may include free Lifeline Data Bundle with unlimited monthly minutes and text messages and 3GB of data.
Safelink Wireless/ Tracfone	Phone: 1-800-Safelink	https://media.tracfone.com/wps/wcm/connect/phones/safelink/unemployment https://support.safelinkwireless.com/expresshelp/lifeline/3086504 If you are receiving unemployment benefits, you may qualify for Lifeline service by submitting a notice of unemployment benefit payments.
Assurance Wireless	Phone: 1-888-321-5880 Email: ourteamassurancewireless@sprint.com	https://www.assurancewireless.com For a limited time, new customers who activate their phone by 1/14/21 will receive an additional 8.75GB data for a total of 11.75GB for 1 month. Beginning 1/15/2021 and/or starting on your next monthly cycle date, your data allotment will be 3GB of data per month. Cancellation or interruption of service voids the additional 8.75GB data offer. Only one Lifeline discounted service (landline or wireless) available per household and is non-transferable.