

HOW TO: Get Discounted or Free Phones, Service, and Data



People whose income is 135% or less of the federal poverty guidelines might qualify for reduced-cost cell phones, phone service, and a good amount of data with the help of Lifeline and/or the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Two commonly used ACP providers are Lifeline and [Assurance Wireless](#).

Eligibility Criteria

1. Eligible applicants must live at 135% or below federal poverty guidelines; Documentation is required.
2. Only one Lifeline phone/service is allowed per household.
3. Applicants must have an address where a phone and SIM card can be delivered.

How to Apply

Step 1: Find a Lifeline Service Provider or ACP program. They can be found [here](#). Make sure they are listed as a “Mobile Lifeline Service”.

Step 2: Apply on the service provider’s website or, if needed, by calling the provider.

Step 3: Upon completion of the application, the service provider will refer you to [create an account](#) with the National Verifier and provide documentation to prove identity (via official documents showing your full name and date of birth).

Step 4: Applicants also need to provide eligibility documentation, which can be in either one of the two following categories:

A. Proof of 135% below federal poverty level status with:

- Prior year’s state, federal, or tribal tax return
- Current income statement from your employer or a paycheck stub
- A Social Security statement of benefits
- Veterans Administration statement of benefits
- Unemployment or Worker’s Compensation statement of benefits
- Divorce decree, child support award, or a similar official document showing your income
- A retirement/pension statement of benefits

OR

B. Proof of enrollment in SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, SSI, Federal Housing Programs, Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit, child enrollment in free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch, or receipt of a Pell Grant in the prior year.

Step 5: After documentation submission, it will take a few days for National Verifier to either approve the application or request further documentation (needs to be added to your National Verifier account).

Step 6: It might take a couple of days for the Lifeline Provider to process the National Verifier's approval.

Step 7: Once processed they will ship/mail the phone and SIM card.

Step 8: When the phone arrives, it should be started like you would a phone from a non-Lifeline service provider.

***NOTE:** If a person's income or program status changes, making them no longer eligible for the benefit, they are obligated to self-report the change and discontinue using the Lifeline benefit. They will also have to confirm their eligibility with the National Verifier on an annual basis to stay in the program.*

ACP Without Lifeline

Lifeline service providers offer a fantastic benefit because their services are entirely free. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean they don't come with some drawbacks. Because they're usually not as well-established as other providers, the quality of their services might not be as high. Additionally, since they exclusively provide Lifeline, individuals who no longer qualify for the program will have to switch to different carriers, which could result in losing their phones and phone numbers.

Another option is to apply for ACP without Lifeline. ACP on its own provides a \$30 discount on either phone data plans or home broadband plans. In some cases, providers may even offer additional perks like discounted tablets, laptops, or phones.

To start the application, you can look for the ACP program by searching [here](#). Check for service types like ACP Home Internet or ACP Phone Internet. The rest of the application steps remain unchanged.

Alternative to ACP/Lifeline

If you are unable to receive ACP/Lifeline, you can look for more affordable service providers [here](#).

Print List

1. "How to: Get Free Phones, Service, and Data"
Guide

Full Links/References (in order of appearance)

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Universal Service Companies Near Me:
<https://cnm.universalservice.org/>

Assurance Wireless:
<https://www.assurancewireless.com/>

National Verifier:
https://www.getinternet.gov/apply?id=nv_home&ln=RW5nbGlzaA%3D%3D

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Universal Service Companies Near Me:
<https://cnm.universalservice.org/>

Money Saving Pro 10 Cheap Cell Phone Plans:
<https://www.moneysavingpro.com/plans/cheap-phone-plans/>

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