

CELL PHONE SERVICE

Many residential consumers are choosing to use wireless telephone service (“**cell phone**” or “cellular phone” service). Most individuals with cell phones also have a landline phone, although an increasing number of consumers have cell phone service only.

Cell phone providers are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission (www.fcc.gov) to provide service in designated geographic areas, but they are not subject to price regulation.

Service Plans: There are three types of calling plans: local, regional and national. In each plan you usually have a set number of minutes you can use to make calls within the particular geographic area. If you go outside the area, you will be charged additional fees, called “roaming charges.” You usually will have to sign a 1 or 2 year contract, and there may be a large cancellation fee.

TIP: Check the coverage map with the service provider before you sign up for a plan. In Maryland, **Verizon Wireless** and **Sprint** have agreed with the Maryland Attorney General to give you a coverage map and to give you a 14 day trial period, with no cancellation fee, to make sure that the coverage area is right for you.

Who Regulates Cell Phone Service in Maryland?

The Maryland Public Service Commission (www.psc.state.md.us) does not regulate cell phone service.

Cell phone providers must comply with the consumer protection laws of Maryland, which prohibit unfair and deceptive practices. (www.oag.state.md.us).

How Can I Get Information about Cell Phone Offers in My Community?

Wireless carriers (cell phone companies) are fully competitive and there is no official list of these companies. You can check advertisements and the Internet. You may also try www.wirelessadvisor.com to locate a company in your area.

For more information: http://www.fcc.gov/wcb/consumer_facts.html and <http://www.oag.state.md.us/consumer/edge110.htm>.