

**Office of People's Counsel**  
**CONSUMER ALERT**  
**Telephone Bill Assistance**

**LIFELINE** is a federal program, funded by all telephone customers, that helps to make telephone service more affordable. The program provides eligible customers with a discount on service or free minutes. **The FCC has revised the program effective June 1, 2012.** For information, see [www.usac.org](http://www.usac.org).

**Eligibility:** Maryland residents who receive TANF, DTAP, SSI, PAA, MEAP/EUSP, Medicaid, Section 8 or School Lunch Free Lunch assistance, or whose incomes are certified at or below 135% of the federal poverty level.

**Telephone companies:** Lifeline is available to customers of **landline (wired)** and **wireless** companies. Verizon offers Lifeline service for either landline or wireless service. All wireless companies must be certified as Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (**ETCs**) by the MD PSC to market and provide Lifeline service. See <http://webapp.psc.state.md.us/intranet/Info/brochures/lifeline.pdf> for a current list of ETCs.

**Things to know about the Lifeline program (revised):**

- All telephone customers pay for the Lifeline program through a Universal Service Fund (USF) charge on the bill.
- The program reimburses companies with a flat rate of \$9.25.
- Lifeline customers get a discount on services or receive free minutes (wireless).
- **Service discounts can be applied to any service plan**, including bundles of voice and data services and optional calling services.
- **Data and optional calling services are much more expensive than voice services, and Lifeline customers usually must pay for these services**, even if they get free or discounted “voice” minutes or service.
- **Link-Up** service (landline installation discount) is no longer available, except on Tribal Lands.
- There is a **new** annual re-certification requirement for **all** Lifeline customers.
- Only **one** Lifeline connection is allowed per household. This means only one landline OR wireless connection per household. A **“household”** is an economic unit of **all adult** individuals who contribute to and share income and expenses.
- **A resident in a group home, nursing home, assisted living or similar facility can be certified as one household for purposes of Lifeline eligibility. A worksheet must be filled out to establish eligibility at <http://www.usac.org/li/>.**

**OPC recommends: Always compare service offers of different companies before you sign up.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION call 1-800-525-0145.

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