

## Lifeline Program Fact Sheet

### What is Lifeline?

Lifeline is a government program that helps low-income families afford wired or wireless telephone service. Through a modest monthly subsidy (\$9.25), eligible families are able to access the service they need most. Established during the Reagan administration in 1985, the Lifeline program was reformed in 2005 under the George W. Bush administration to include wireless phone service. Over 13 million American families currently benefit from \$1.6 billion in Lifeline support.

### What is happening to the Lifeline program?

Recently, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced its intention to modernize the program to add broadband Internet as an eligible Lifeline service. That means that low-income families who meet the Lifeline income requirement or participate in certain other government programs could soon apply their benefit to access the Internet.

### Why is it important for the Lifeline Program to expand to broadband?

Like the telephone in the 1980s, the Internet today is an increasingly pivotal part of our daily lives. Applying for a job, finishing school assignments, and staying in touch with loved ones near and far requires Internet access. As more of our lives are directed online, those left behind face dire consequences. There are close to 100 million people in the United States who don't have Internet access at home. For many of them, the cost of an Internet connection is too financially prohibitive. In households that make less than \$25,000/yr, only 47% have access to the Internet. Only 64% of African Americans and 53% of Latinos have Internet access at home--that number dips down to 51% for households with limited English proficiency.

### What should the FCC do?

The FCC should modernize the Lifeline program by updating it to include broadband. That said, millions of people still depend on the program to afford a telephone connection. As the FCC potentially upgrades the program, it should ensure that families in need a telephone connection are still able to maintain service under the new modernized Lifeline. The FCC must also ensure that Lifeline subscribers get access to a first-class Internet connection that meets the needs of these families. Every eligible family should have access to Lifeline through existing social services such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) in a way that does not compromise their privacy.

### What can I do?

Join our campaign in partnership with the National Hispanic Media Coalition and [sign our petition](#) urging the FCC to modernize the Lifeline program.

