![Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel seal]

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

CONSUMER FACT SHEET

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

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TELEPHONE LIFELINE PROGRAMS IN OHIO

Lifeline programs provide a monthly benefit for income-eligible households to help ensure that they can afford communications services, either through a participating wireline, wireless, or broadband provider. Eligible customers can receive Lifeline assistance for only one type of service – landline, wireless, or broadband – per household. The benefits vary depending on the service selected.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) offers the following information about Lifeline assistance for basic local telephone service, including benefits, restrictions, qualification guidelines, and how to apply.

Lifeline available from participating local wireline carriers

Lifeline services are offered by participating local telephone carriers to consumers with a household income at or below 135 percent of the federal income guidelines or who participate in at least one of the following programs:

- ▶ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- ▶ Medicaid;
- ▶ Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- ▶ Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA) or Section 8; or
- ▶ Veterans Pension.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at www.occ.ohio.gov.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.

Applicants will need to provide proof of program participation or income eligibility.

For Lifeline programs based solely on income eligibility, any of the following documentation can be used as proof of income:

- ▶ The prior year's state or federal income tax return;
- ▶ A current income statement from an employer or W-2 form;
- ▶ Three consecutive months of current pay stubs;
- ▶ Statement of Social Security benefits;
- ▶ Statement of benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs;
- ▶ Statement of benefits for retirement/ pension;
- ▶ Statement of unemployment or workers' compensation benefits;
- ▶ Divorce decree; or child support award or other official documentation containing income information.

Lifeline customers of traditional wireline companies receive the following benefits:

- ▶ Waive service connection fees once per customer at a single address in a 12-month period;
- ▶ Waive deposit to establish service;
- ▶ Receive a monthly basic service charge discount of $5.25;
- ▶ Do not pay charges related to the Universal Service Fund and local number portability;
- ▶ Can receive free "toll blocking" and blocking for 900/976 telephone numbers to prohibit all outgoing long-distance calls; and
- ▶ Special payment arrangements (or can re-establish service if previously disconnected) by paying $25 and the remaining balance over six months.

Lifeline participants must recertify yearly and should receive notification via mail. Recertification must be done within 60 days or Lifeline benefits will cease.

Additional information about the Lifeline program can be found at www. lifelinesupport.org or by calling the Lifeline Support Center at (800) 234-9473. For questions and complaints regarding Telephone Lifeline in Ohio, contact the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) at (800) 686-7826.

2021 Income Guidelines

Size of household*	Total Gross Annual Household Income
	135%
1	$17,388
2	$23,517
3	$29,646
4	$35,775
5	$41,904
6	$48,033
7	$54,162
8	$60,291
* For families/households with more than 8 persons, please contact your local community action agency.	