

Kansas Legal Services

A non-profit law firm and community education organization helping low and moderate income people in Kansas



www.kansaslegalservices.org

FCC Announces Emergency Broadband Benefit for Low Income Consumers

When can I sign up for the Emergency Broadband Benefit?



The program has been authorized by the FCC, **but the start date has not yet been established.**

The FCC is working to make the benefit available as quickly as possible, and you should be able to sign up by the end of April, 2021.

Please check the FCC website, www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit, regularly for the latest information.

Do I receive the funds directly each month?

No, the Emergency Broadband Benefit provides a monthly discount on broadband service of up to \$50 per eligible household (or up to \$75 per eligible household on Tribal lands).

The participating broadband service provider will receive the funds directly from the Emergency Broadband Benefit program.

Which broadband providers are participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit?

Various broadband providers, including those offering landline and wireless broadband, will be participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

Depending on where you live, you may have a choice of providers.

Check with the broadband providers in your area to learn about their plans for program participation and eligible service offerings.

You can also use the Companies Near Me tool found here.

What is the enhanced benefit amount for residents of Tribal Lands?

Eligible households on Tribal lands can receive a total monthly discount of up to \$75.

You can find out more about which areas are eligible Tribal lands by visiting this site: www.lifelinesupport.org/additional-support-for-tribal-land.

Eligibility

Who is eligible for the Emergency Broadband Benefit?

A household is eligible if one member of the household:

- Qualifies for the **Lifeline** program;
- Receives benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision, or did so in the 2019-2020 school year;
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;
- Experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020 and the household had a total income in 2020 below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating providers' existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

Can I apply for the Emergency Broadband Benefit if I have a past due balance with the provider?

Yes, eligible consumers with a past due balance or a balance in collections are eligible for the

benefit.

Can I sign up for the Emergency Broadband Benefit if I am already a customer or if I was a customer in the past?

Yes, the benefit is available to eligible new, prior and existing customers of participating providers.

Can my roommate and I each get a monthly discount?

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is limited to one monthly service discount per household, which is defined as any individual or group of individuals who are living together at the same address and share income and expenses.

A household is eligible if one member of the household:

- Qualifies for the **Lifeline** program;
- Receives benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision, or did so in the 2019-2020 school year;
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;
- Experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020 and the household had a total income in 2020 below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating providers' existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

What is Lifeline and how do I qualify?

Lifeline is the FCC's program to help make communications services more affordable for low-income consumers.

To participate in the Lifeline program, consumers must either have an income that is at or below 135% of the **Federal Poverty Guidelines** or participate in certain federal assistance programs, such as

- the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- Supplemental Security Income
- the Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit
- or certain Tribal Programs.

You can see if you are eligible by reviewing the information available at lifelinesupport.org (click "Do I Qualify?").

If I already receive Lifeline benefits will I automatically receive the Emergency Broadband Benefit?

No.

You must opt-in with your existing provider or request enrollment in the Emergency Broadband Benefit program with a participating broadband provider and chose an eligible service plan.

You can choose to receive the benefit from your current Lifeline service provider or another participating provider.

Can I receive both the Emergency Broadband Benefit and Lifeline benefits at the same time?

Yes.

You can also combine these benefits with other state and local benefits where available.

They can be applied to the same qualifying service or separately to a Lifeline service and an Emergency Broadband Benefit service with the same or different providers.

For example, an eligible household could have a Lifeline-supported mobile phone service and a separate home broadband service that is supported through the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

Everyone at my child's school receives breakfast and lunch at no cost. Do we qualify?

Yes.

Households with a student enrolled in a school or school district where every student receives this benefit are eligible for the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

I live in a multi-unit dwelling (for example, an apartment building) and we pay the property manager/landlord a monthly fee for our Internet. Can I get the Emergency Broadband Benefit?

Yes.

If you qualify for the Emergency Broadband Benefit, talk to your property manager/landlord and ask that they work with their broadband service provider to learn more about the benefits that might be available to you and other eligible residents.

I participated in a provider's COVID-19 program in the Spring of 2020, but I am no longer enrolled in that program. Does my past participation in that program qualify me for the Emergency Broadband Benefit?

Check with the provider for more information about whether you qualify for the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

Eligible Broadband Plans

How much does broadband service cost?

The Emergency Broadband Benefit provides a monthly discount for broadband service up to \$50 per eligible household, or up to \$75 per eligible household on Tribal lands.

The discount will be applied to your broadband service, but the ultimate cost to you will depend on the eligible plan you select from a participating provider.

Can I upgrade my current plan to take advantage of the full \$50 per month (or \$75 per month on Tribal lands)?

You may be able to do so.

Talk to your provider about the plans they have available as part of the Emergency Broadband Benefit program.

If the service plan I pick is \$40 per month, do I get the extra money?

No. The provider is only reimbursed for the cost of the plan up to \$50 per eligible household, or up to \$75 per eligible household on Tribal lands.

If the plan I pick is more than the monthly discount for broadband service, do I pay the extra myself?

Yes. You are responsible for any amount over \$50 per month (or over \$75 per month on Tribal lands) for broadband service under the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

I currently subscribe to a bundle of services that includes internet, TV, and phone. Can I apply the Emergency Broadband Benefit to my monthly bill?

The Emergency Broadband Benefit can be applied to the cost of a bundle of services that include broadband, voice, texting and/or associated equipment.

If your bundle also includes a TV service, you will be responsible for that portion of your bill, as well as any services that are above the monthly discount.

Can part of the monthly discount cover my router rental fee?

Yes. The monthly discount can be used to cover routers, modems, hotspot devices, and antennas, if offered as monthly rental costs in addition to your broadband service cost. Keep in mind the total monthly discount remains \$50 (or \$75 on Tribal lands).

Connected Devices

How does the \$100 device benefit work?

Participating broadband service providers can be reimbursed up to \$100 if they supply a

connected device to a household, as long as the household pays more than \$10 but less than \$50 for the device.

In other words, to take advantage of this benefit, it must be done through your participating broadband provider, and you must contribute a portion of the cost.

The device benefit is limited to a laptop, a desktop computer, or a tablet. It does not include cell phones, large phones, or “phablets” that can make cellular calls.

If my child and I are part of the same household, can we each get our own connected device through the Emergency Broadband Benefit?

No. Each household is limited to a single device discount.

Tribal

Do individuals have to be Tribal members to qualify for the enhanced Tribal benefit?

No. Anyone living on eligible Tribal lands can receive the enhanced Tribal benefit. They do not need to be a member of a Tribe.

How do I know if my household is eligible for the enhanced Tribal benefit?

You can find out more about which areas are eligible Tribal lands by visiting this site:
<https://www.lifelinesupport.org/additional-support-for-tribal-lands>.

Can I receive both the enhanced Tribal Lifeline Benefit and the \$75 Emergency Broadband Benefit each month?

Yes.

An eligible household on Tribal lands can receive both the \$34.25 Lifeline Tribal benefit and the \$75 Emergency Broadband Benefit.

They can be applied to the same qualifying service or separately to a Lifeline service and a broadband service with the same or different providers as long as the provider is participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit program.

For example, an eligible household could have a Lifeline-supported mobile service and a separate home broadband service that is supported through the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

Program Length

How long will the Emergency Broadband Benefit program last?

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is an emergency program developed in response to the

COVID-19 pandemic.

The program will end once the program funds are exhausted, or six months after the Department of Health and Human Services declares an end to the pandemic, whichever comes first.

How will I know the Emergency Broadband Benefit program is ending?

Your participating provider must give you notice about the last date or billing cycle that the full benefit will apply to your bill and the date or billing cycle that a partial benefit will apply to your bill, in addition to information about the cost of your broadband service after the program ends.

What if the program funding runs out during my monthly billing cycle?

The end of the program may not be timed to your billing cycle for service. This may result in you receiving less than the full monthly service discount in the final month of the program.

In the event that you might receive a partial benefit in the last month of the program, your participating provider must receive your permission before they can charge you an amount higher than what you would pay if the full Emergency Broadband Benefit is applied to your broadband bill.

In other words, if you were receiving a \$50 discount off of your broadband bill, but based on the available funds in the program, there is only enough to provide you with a \$40 discount, your provider must have your permission to charge you the additional \$10.

Can I continue to receive broadband service when the Emergency Broadband Benefit program ends?

Households will need to opt-in or request to continue broadband services with their provider.

If you don't opt-in or select a new service plan with your provider, your broadband service will end once the program ends.

Will I be charged for service when the Emergency Broadband Benefit program ends?

Yes, if you agree to continue receiving service from your provider.

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<http://www.kansaslegalservices.org/node/2439/fcc-announces-emergency-broadband-benefit-low-income-consumers>

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