Affordable Connectivity Program

An Informational Session

Revised September 14, 2022

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) provides statewide advocacy and leadership in advancing laws, policies, and practices that secure economic, racial, and social justice for low-income people and communities.

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- ❖ Massachusetts **anti-poverty law center** and **support center** for civil legal aid and community partners. MLRI.org

- ❖ Addressing & combating poverty, ensuring access to justice, and advancing racial equity frames MLRI's advocacy.

- ❖ MLRI engages in **state and legislative initiatives, administrative advocacy**/rulemaking with state and federal agencies, **class action litigation**, **trainings and coalition building** and **technical support**.

- ❖ MLRI manages online legal informational services:
  Mass Legal Help MassLegalHelp.org
  Free Legal Answers https://mass.freelegalanswers.org/
  MA Legal Resources Finder https://masslrf.org
  Mass Legal Services MassLegalServices.org

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MLRI advocacy focuses on the following **substantive law areas**:

- Race equity and language access law
- Food security (SNAP, child nutrition) and economic security (TANF, General Assistance) programs and law
- Employment and Unemployment Compensation law
- Immigration law
- Housing law - Public and private tenant rights
- Health care law
- Family law and domestic violence
- Child welfare law

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Racial Justice Project

- Lead policy advocacy, impact litigation and coalition-building to **advance a statewide race equity and justice agenda that will address structural racism in laws, policies and practices** that lead to and keep communities of color in conditions of poverty.

- Work collaboratively with MLRI's advocates, other legal aid programs, and community partners to **develop and advance a race equity agenda in the context of civil legal services and poverty law advocacy**.

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Access to the internet….is the civil rights issue of the 21st Century." Congressman John Lewis

What is the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)?

- A new national benefit program created by the **FCC** (Federal Communications Commission) providing a **discount on monthly internet bills** and a **one-time discount for a certain devices** for qualifying households.

- Discount paid **directly to the internet company**.

- Service can be **fixed** (home-based) or **mobile** (device-based)

Applications Now Accepted!
ACPBenefit.org and GetInternet.gov

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EBB from ACP

Emergency Broadband Benefit became the **Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)** on **January 1, 2022.**

The EBB Program ended on December 31, 2021.

$50 discount continued until **March 1, 2022** for those enrolled in EBB by **December 30, 2021**.

Major Differences between EBB and ACP

	EBB	ACP
Internet Discount	$50/monthly	$30/monthly
Device Discount	$100 one time	$100 one time (*includes w/ EBB*)
Plans to Apply Discount	Providers can limit plans	No limit on plans
Income Based Eligibility	130% of Federal Poverty Limit COVID-19 Related Hardship	200% of Federal Poverty Limit No COVID-19 Related Hardship
Federal Program Participation Eligibility	COVID-19 Related Program	No COVID-19 Related Programs Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
Enrollment	Ended 12/30/21@ 6:00pm $50 discount continued until March 1, 2022.	Starts 12/31/21

How much is the ACP discount?

Monthly Internet Bill	Device
Up to a **$30/mo discount** on broadband (internet) service and related equipment rentals Up to $75/mo for anyone living on eligible Tribal lands. They do not need to be a member of a Tribe.	One-time discount of **up to $100** for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer, with a **copayment of $10 - $50** *Not available with all providers *Cannot use if received a device through EBB

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What Services are Covered by ACP?

- **Bundle of Services:** ACP can be applied to the cost of a bundle of services that include broadband (internet), voice, texting and/or associated equipment.
  - ACP does **not** cover TV service.
  - Customers will be responsible for that portion of the bill, as well as any services that are above the monthly discount.

- **Equipment Rental Costs**: ACP covers routers, modems, hotspot devices, and antennas, if offered as monthly rental costs in addition to internet service cost. (One time equipment/set up costs are NOT covered).

- **Upgrades:** Available for existing customers. Talk to provider.

What companies are participating in ACP in MA?

- Over 45 Providers in Massachusetts (as of 9/22/22)
- Mobile and/or Fixed, Devices
- Contact the providers in your area to find out their specific plans and services

List of MA Providers:
https://www.fcc.gov/affordable-connectivity-program-providers#Massachusetts

Companies Near Me: https://acpbenefit.org/companies-near-me/

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No Out of Pocket Costs & No Data Caps

On May 9, Biden Administration announced a voluntary commitment by 20 internet service providers to offer all ACP families at least one high-speed plan for $30/month or less, with no additional fees and no data caps.

Allo Communications
AltaFiber (and Hawaiian Telecom)
Altice USA (Optimum and Suddenlink)
Astound
AT&T
Breezeline
Comcast
Comporium
Frontier
IdeaTek
Cox Communications
Jackson Energy Authority
Mediacom
MLGC
Spectrum (Charter Communications
Starry
Verizon (Fios only)
Vermont Telephone Company
Vexus Fiber
Wow! Internet, Cable, and TV

Massachusetts Providers –
No Out of Pocket Costs & No Data Caps

- **AT&T**
- **Comcast**
- **Cox Communications**
- **Spectrum** (Charter Communications)
- **Starry**
- **Verizon** (Fios only)

Free Internet with ACP

Provider	Plan	Monthly Service Cost	Cost w/ ACP Benefit	Speed (Download/Upload)	Service Type
AT&T	Access From AT&T	$30	$0	100/100	Fiber, DSL
Comcast	Internet Essentials Plus Internet Essentials	$29.95 $9.95	$0	100/10 50/10	Cable
Cox Communications	ConnectAssist Package Connect2Compete	$30 $9.95	$0	100/3 100/3	Cable
Spectrum (Charter Communications)	Spectrum Internet 100 Spectrum Internet Access	N.A. Location Dependent (minimum $17.99)	$0	100/10 100/10	Cable
Starry	Starry Select Starry Connect	$30 $15	$0	100/50 30/30	Fixed Wireless
Verizon	Fios Forward 300	N.A.	$0	300/300	Fiber

ACP
Who is eligible?
1 of 2

Income Based Eligibility

- Income is at or below 200% the Federal Poverty Level

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200% of Federal Poverty Level

Household Size	48 Contiguous States, D.C., and Territories	Alaska	Hawaii
1	$27,180	$33,980	$31,260
2	$36,620	$45,780	$42,120
3	$46,060	$57,580	$52,980
4	$55,500	$69,380	$63,840
5	$64,940	$81,180	$74,700
6	$74,380	$92,980	$85,560
7	$83,820	$104,780	$96,420
8	$93,260	$116,580	$107,280
For each additional person, add:	$9,440	$11,800	$10,860

ACP
Who is eligible?
2 of 2

Benefit Program
Participation Eligibility

*Or if household meets the criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income program.

If **any** member of the household gets*:

- Medicaid/Most types of MassHealth,
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**,**
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI),
- Federal Public Housing Assistance,
- Veterans' Pension and Survivors' Benefit
- Pell Grant (current award year)
- Lifeline
- Tribal Programs
- Free/Reduced School Lunch or Breakfast Program (SY 2019-20, 20-21, or 21-22)
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

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All Immigration Statuses are Eligible
&
No Negative Impact on Immigration

What is a Household?

- A household is defined as **any individual or group of individuals who are living together** at the same address and **share income and expenses**.

  - Any member of the household can qualify a household as eligible

  - A household **can qualify through dependent children** who meet eligibility criteria

- If you don't live together **or** you don't share money, you are two or more households.

- People in multi-unit dwellings who pay for their internet can apply

Getting ACP - 2 Step Process

(1) **Apply for ACP** + (2) **Enroll with a Provider** → **Receive ACP Benefit**

STEP 1: Apply for ACP (3 Ways to Apply)

1) Apply Online

acpbenefit.org

Available in English and Spanish

2) Apply by Mail

Available in English and Spanish, with instructions in 8 additional languages

3) Apply & Enroll with a Provider

Application differs by internet provider

Lifeline Program

Lifeline is a federal program that lowers monthly cost of phone and internet service - up to $9.25 (up to $34.25 on Tribal land) off of bills.

Eligibility based on income or on participation in federal programs:

- 135% of Federal Poverty Income

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps

- Medicaid

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)

- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit

**For more information visit
CheckLifeline.org**

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Application Process for Lifeline Customers

Lifeline customers can **opt-in** ACP with their existing provider

OR

Request enrollment in the ACP through another participating provider.

- Can combine Lifeline & ACP benefits!

For more information visit
CheckLifeline.org

Applying Online - National Eligibility Verifier

National Verifier is the ACP and Lifeline's centralized application system

Supporting Documents to Prove ACP Eligibility (1/2)

- **Proof of Identity** (adult household member applying for ACP and qualifying dependent)
  - SSN not required
  - With a SSN, no need for additional proof of identity
  - Without a SSN, need to provide proof of identity (driver's license, military ID, passport, ITIN, or other government issued document)
- **Proof of Address** (paper application only)
  - Only need separate documentation for paper application
- **Proof of Household** (paper application only)
  - Only need separate documentation for paper application

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Supporting Documents to Prove ACP Eligibility (2/2)

- **Proof of Income-Based Eligibility**
  - Document that shows annual income at or below 200% FPL

- **Proof of Eligible Benefits Program Participation**
  - Letter showing name of qualifying person, name of program, name of program administrator, and issue date within last 12 months

  - **Automatic verification** for Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, **SNAP**, and **WIC**.

    https://acpbenefit.org/how-to-apply/show-you-qualify/

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Tips to Applying on Online

- Have documents to prove identity and eligibility on hand.

- **Ensure name and address matches exactly with proof of eligibility!!**

- ACP and internet service must be under the same except if ACP eligibility is based on dependent.

- If applying through https://acpbenefit.org/, you need to upload proof of ID to create an account and proceed with application if you don't have a SSN.

- Submit online app during USAC working hours to get an immediate decision.

- Utilize alternate email options.

- Applicants who get Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, SNAP or WIC do not need proof documents, so easier to apply through these programs.

- Cannot apply for someone else without them present.

Applying Online: Step-by-Step Guide

To allow data matching, your name must appear the same here as it does in other official documents <u>and</u> with the internet provider.

English | Español   **Consumer Sign In**

ⓘ Applications for the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program are no longer available. Starting on Friday, December 31, 2021 you may apply for the Affordable Connectivity Program. To learn more about the Affordable Connectivity Program, please visit ACPBenefit.org. You may still apply for the Lifeline program during this time.

Your Information

We will use this information to find out if you qualify for the Lifeline Program or the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).

What is your full legal name?

The name you use on official documents, like your Social Security Card or State ID. Not a nickname.

First Name

Middle Name (Optional)

Last Name

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Need Help? Contact ACP Support Center

If you have a disability and need assistance with your application, contact **Affordable Connectivity Program Support Center**.

Assistance is available in 198 languages.

The ACP Support Center can help with questions about:

- The status of your ACP application
- Documents needed to show you qualify
- Companies in your area
- Assistance with the ACP Household Worksheet
- Resetting your account

Reach ACP Support Center
7 days a week, from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET

By Phone: **(877) 384-2575**

By Email:
ACPSupport@usac.org

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Decision on Eligibility

If you apply through USAC:
USAC will notify applicants of their eligibility after submission of application.

- Online applicants may receive an **immediate** approval.
- If not, USAC will request additional documentation with directions on how to submit the supporting documents.
- Applicants should log into the portal to check their application status.

Tip! If you do not receive a decision within 2 business days, follow up!

If you apply through a provider:
Provider will notify applicant if they are eligible over the phone or in person.

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STEP 2: Enroll with a Provider

After USAC finds you eligible for ACP, **contact provider to sign up for the plan that meets your needs**.

- You have **90 days to enroll** or you will have to go through the eligibility process.
- Provider will verify eligibility.
- If customer no longer qualifies for ACP, they must notify provider within 30 days.
- Note that a provider may require a deposit, set up fee, or one-time equipment fee. **ACP does not cover these.**
- Discount should be applied immediately.

Consumer Protections

- **Past Disconnects and Bad Credit** Internet companies cannot deny internet services to ACP eligible households because of past disconnects, current or past arrearages, or a credit check.
- **No Early Termination Fees** ACP household is not liable for an early termination fees and can switch from existing plans to a different plan without additional costs.
- **Stay Where It's Good** A provider cannot pressure a consumer to change from an existing plan or engage in upselling/downselling
- **Limits on Disconnection.** A provider cannot terminate service until the consumer is 90 days or more late on a payment.
- **Portability** ACP benefit can be transferred to a different service and/or different provider.

Be a Savvy Consumer!

FCC Informal Complaint Process

https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/articles/4412582232980-Need-Help-with-an-Affordable-Connectivity-Program-ACP-or-Emergency-Broadband-Benefit-EBB-complaint-

MA Attorney General

https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/10/05/Consumer%20Complaint%20CARD%20100218.pdf

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Annual Recertification

Automated Database Eligibility Check

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If passed, no action required!

Self-Certify
- **Failed both automated database checks**

↓

ACP Certification Form

Self-Certify
- **Passed automated database checks during sign up**
- **Failed during recertification**

↓

ACP Certification Form & Documentation

White House's New ACP Website

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) Enrollment Process

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a temporary federal government program designed to help income constrained households connect to the Internet and/or mobile. Xfinity is proud to support the Affordable Connectivity Program and has made it available for all tiers of Xfinity Internet service.

We're making it simple for both new and existing customers to apply.

1. **Qualify:** All non-Internet Essentials Xfinity Internet customers must complete an eligibility form with the federal National Verifier.
2. **Connect:** Sign up for Internet services. If you're already a customer, continue to the next step.
3. **Access Your Bill Credit:** Once you've completed the eligibility form, confirmed that you're qualified, and connected to Internet services, fill out the application to enroll. You'll receive a status update within 48 hours of applying. Start your ACP application.

For more information, visit www.xfinity.com/ACP or review the details below.

RELATED ARTICLES

Affordable Connectivity Program Error Message FAQs

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Sign in

Everyone deserves ultra-fast internet.

We're keeping people connected by participation in the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program. Qualifying households will be able to get up to $30/mo plans with internet access.

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SPECIAL NOTICE! AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

See if you qualify for FREE Cox internet, save up to $30/mo.

Find out if you qualify for FREE Cox internet, after credit from the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) which provides eligible households with up to $30/mo. toward Cox Internet and equipment. This discount is available with select internet plans at all speeds and means you can choose an internet plan today, apply for the Affordable Connectivity Program, and if you're approved, you'll receive a monthly notification when your credit has been applied. Our participation in the program is part of our commitment to affordable internet for all. credit applied w/in 1-2 billing cycles; limited-time program and subject to change; other restrictions apply. Learn more at cox.com/acp. See terms.

Check your eligibility

Feedback

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Resources

Affordable Connectivity Program → **https://acpbenefit.org/**

FCC ACP Website → **https://www.fcc.gov/acp**

White House → **https://getinternet.gov**

FCC Outreach Toolkit (written, audio, and video) →
https://www.fcc.gov/acp-consumer-outreach-toolkit

MassLegalHelp → **https://www.masslegalhelp.org/acp**

MA Department of Telecommunications and Cable →
 mass.gov/orgs/department-of-telecommunications-and-cable
 Consumer hotline (800) 392-6066

Questions and Answers

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Join the **Mass Digital Equity Email List** for updates!

tinyurl.com/MADigEqList

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