

Emergency program to give people \$50 off internet bill

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Americans can begin applying for \$50 off their monthly internet bill on Wednesday as part of an emergency government program to keep people connected during the pandemic.

The \$3.2 billion program is part of the \$900 billion December pandemic-relief package. The government is increasing spending on broadband as the pandemic made stark that millions of Americans did not have access to, and could not afford, broadband at a time when jobs, school and health care was moving online.

It's unclear how long the money will last but it's expected to be several months. Tens of millions of people are eligible, although the Federal Communications Commission, which is administering the program, did not specify a number.

For example, your household is eligible if you receive food stamps, have a child in the free or reduced-price school lunch program, use Medicaid, or lost income during the pandemic and made \$99,000 for single filers, or \$198,000 for joint filers, or less.

There are other eligibility requirements, too — see <https://getemergencybroadband.org> to find out if you qualify.

You can get the discount even if you owe your phone or cable company money. That's important because some people have been barred from low-cost plans offered by internet service providers when they owed their service provider money. More than 800 cellphone and home-internet companies are participating, including AT&T, Charter, Comcast, T-Mobile and Verizon.

People in tribal areas are eligible for up to \$75 off their bill. There is also a \$100 reimbursement for desktop computers, laptops or tablets — in that case, you must pay between \$10 and \$50 of the cost of the device yourself and buy it through your broadband provider.

The discount could apply to a household's whole bill, or you can use it to trade up to a more expensive offering and your bill is partly covered.

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is a more robust, although temporary, program to help people afford internet than Lifeline, the FCC's other affordability program, which subtracts only \$9.25 a month from phone or internet bills. A household can use both the Lifeline and EBB programs.

The Biden administration has proposed \$100 billion to get Americans connected, and even before that, billions of dollars are going to improve internet access.

The FCC on Tuesday approved a \$7.2 billion program for schools and libraries to connect students in their homes. The Treasury Department is also setting up a \$10 billion fund for improving internet connectivity. The money for both came from the \$1.9 trillion March pandemic relief package.

There has also been hundreds of billions more in general funds sent to states that could be spent on broadband access.

Do I Qualify?

From <https://getemergencybroadband.org/do-i-qualify/>



Your household qualifies for the Emergency Broadband Benefit if it has an income at or below 135% of the [federal poverty guidelines](#) **OR** any member of the household:

- Qualifies for Lifeline benefits through participation in SNAP, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, Federal Public Housing Assistance, or Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit;
- Participates in one of several **Tribal specific programs**: Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal Head Start (only households meeting the relevant income qualifying standard), Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Tribal TANF), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations;
- Experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020 with a total household income in 2020 at or below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers;
- Received a federal Pell Grant in the current award year;
- Received approval for benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision, in the 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 school year; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income or COVID-19 program, and that provider received FCC approval for its eligibility verification process.

Only one monthly service discount and one device discount is allowed per [household](#). Program rules acknowledge there may be more than one eligible household residing at the same address.

Qualify Through Your Child or Dependent

Any member of your household can make your household eligible. For example, if [your child or dependent](#) participates in the Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program, your household qualifies for the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

If You Already Receive Lifeline Benefits

[Lifeline is a program to help make communications services more affordable for low-income consumers](#). If you currently receive Lifeline benefits, you automatically qualify for the Emergency Broadband Benefit, and you can receive both benefits at the same time. You can apply your Emergency Broadband Benefit and your Lifeline benefit to the same or separate services. Talk to your broadband provider to learn how to start receiving EBB Program discounts.

If Your Broadband Provider Already Has Its Own Low-Income or COVID-19 Relief Program

If your broadband provider already has its own low-income or COVID-19 relief program, you may be able to qualify through this program as well. Talk to your broadband provider for more information.

If You Use SNAP, Medicaid, or Other Programs

You can receive the Emergency Broadband Benefit if you (or someone in your household) participates in one of these federal assistance programs:

- 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
- Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program
- [Tribal Specific Programs](#):
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance,

- Tribal Head Start (only households meeting the relevant income qualifying standard),
- Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Tribal TANF)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
- Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program, including at US Department of Agriculture Community Eligibility Provision schools
- Received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year

You may need to show a card, letter, or official document as [proof that you participate](#) in one of these programs when you apply for the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

If Your Household Income Is a Certain Amount

You can get the Emergency Broadband Benefit if your income is 135% or less than the [federal poverty guidelines](#). The guideline is based on your household size and state.

You will have to show [proof of income](#), like pay stubs or a tax return, when you apply for the EBB Program.

If You Experienced a Substantial Loss of Income

If you experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020 because you lost your job or were furloughed, you may qualify for the EBB Program. To qualify in this way, your total household income in 2020 must be at or below \$99,000 (for single tax filers) and \$198,000 (for joint tax filers).

You will have to show [proof](#) of your total income, like a tax return or official documentation containing income information, as well as proof of the loss of income, like a termination letter or furlough notice, when you apply for the EBB Program.

Are you ready to get started with the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program?

You can apply online or with the assistance of your phone or internet company.

More Information from FCC/Federal Communications Commission Website

<https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>