



California LifeLine vs. Federal Lifeline What's Changing, What's Not, and What It Means for You

There has been recent public discussion about proposed changes to the federal Lifeline program, led by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). These developments have caused some confusion about whether California LifeLine is changing.

The key takeaway: There are no changes to the California LifeLine program.

California LifeLine is administered by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and is separate from the federal Lifeline program, which is overseen by the FCC. While the FCC is considering changes to the federal program, those actions do not change California LifeLine discounts or eligibility.

Here are some commonly asked questions about California LifeLine and the federal Lifeline program:

Q: What is the difference between California LifeLine and Federal Lifeline?

A: California LifeLine and Federal Lifeline are separate programs that work together to provide phone and broadband discounts to eligible households. For most Lifeline eligible subscribers, a total subsidy of up to \$28.25 per month is available:

- California LifeLine subsidy: up to \$19 per month
- Federal Lifeline subsidy: up to \$9.25 per month
- Total combined subsidy: up to \$28.25 per month (for customers receiving both)

California LifeLine is administered by the CPUC. Federal Lifeline is administered by the FCC.

Q: Are there any changes to the California LifeLine benefit?

A: No. There are no changes to the California LifeLine benefit at this time. Discounts, eligibility rules, and program operations remain the same.

Q: Is the FCC taking over California LifeLine?

A: No. The FCC does not administer California LifeLine, and it cannot eliminate or change the California LifeLine program.

Q: Is a separate enrollment process now required for California LifeLine and federal Lifeline? What does this mean for customers?

A: Yes, as of February 1, 2026, the California LifeLine and federal Lifeline programs will require two separate enrollment processes.

- **Existing customers:** If you are already enrolled in California and federal Lifeline, you do not need to re-enroll now. You will keep your discounts until your annual renewal is requested. When your renewal period begins, you must complete the renewal process separately for each program to maintain your benefits.
- **New customers (as of Feb. 1, 2026):** New subscribers must enroll separately in each program. This ensures customers can receive the full combined subsidy.

Q: Does enrolling twice mean customers are losing benefits?

A: No. Eligible customers can still receive the full combined monthly subsidy of up to \$28.25 by enrolling in both programs. The change affects enrollment steps, not discount amounts.

Resources

For information on enrollment and program offerings please use following links:

- California LifeLine (state program): www.californialifeline.com
- Federal Lifeline (federal program): www.lifelinesupport.org

For information about the new CPUC California LifeLine Rulemaking, proceeding number R.25-11-005, please use the following link

- Docket Card: https://apps.cpuc.ca.gov/apex/f?p=401:56:::RP,57,RIR:P5_PROCEEDING_SELECT:R2511005
- How to participate:
 - You can make comment on the Docket Card: [R.25-11-005](https://apps.cpuc.ca.gov/apex/f?p=401:56:::RP,57,RIR:P5_PROCEEDING_SELECT:R2511005)
 - You can subscribe for free to receive documents related to the proceeding to stay up to date on CPUC actions: <https://subscribecpuc.cpuc.ca.gov>

FCC Action: On Feb. 18, 2026, the FCC opened a Rulemaking into the federal Lifeline program. The Rulemaking is available here: <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-418282A1.pdf>