

The Lifeline Program: Putting Veterans on the Right Side of the Digital Divide

Lifeline is a federal program created in 1985 to help low-income consumers afford telephone service. The program now includes wireless service and broadband internet, and helps low-income veterans in every state and territory afford voice and broadband service. But the FCC may devastate the program by drastically reducing the number of eligible service providers and limiting the reach of Lifeline. The FCC's proposals would increase costs and boot nearly 70% of Lifeline households from their current carrier.

The Lifeline program helps veterans stay connected. [An estimated 10%-13% of current Lifeline beneficiaries are veterans](#) of U.S. military service, according to filings at the FCC. Lifeline provides an essential service to veterans, active-duty servicemembers, and their families.



Lifeline increases access to veteran employment programs. Affordable broadband internet opens the door to employment opportunities for veterans. [74% of Lifeline subscribers](#) enjoy broadband access on their smartphone or computer – allowing veterans to access online job boards and other online resources to help find work when they return home. Without affordable phone and broadband service, veterans can't set up phone and in-person interviews or receive the much-anticipated call or email that they got the job. After a veteran lands a job, the unfortunate reality of today's workplace often demands they have wireless phone access to receive "[just-in-time](#)" schedule changes and other updates.



Lifeline helps veterans manage chronic health conditions at home. Through Lifeline veterans can access video telemedicine services provided by the Veterans Health Administration to manage chronic conditions by monitoring vital signs and medications from home. Access to affordable communications services also makes some treatments for depression and post-traumatic stress disorder readily available to veterans 24/7.

Lifeline allows veterans to get the emotional help they need. Veterans often face difficult reentry back into civilian life and turn to support hotlines to get their questions answered and to connect with other veterans. [Suicide risks among veterans remain high](#), with male veterans at a 19% higher risk for suicide than non-veteran men, and female veterans at 2.5 times the risk for suicide as female

non-veterans. Affordable wireless phone allows low-income veterans to pick up the phone and ask for help.

Affordable broadband is critical for veterans. Affordable broadband for low-income veterans keeps them connected with their community and essential life-supporting programs.

Rationing Lifeline benefits and limiting service providers will harm our nation's veterans. The FCC must keep the Lifeline program's focus on people, and maintain affordable voice and broadband service for all.