



PUBLIC NOTICE

Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Internet: <https://www.fcc.gov>
TTY: 1-888-835-5322

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WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU ANNOUNCES EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT PROGRAM LAUNCH DATE

WC Docket No. 20-445

By this Public Notice, the Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) announces the launch of the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB Program). The EBB Program is a \$3.2 billion federal initiative created by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021,¹ to help lower the cost of high-speed internet for eligible households during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.²

Starting on May 12, 2021, providers participating in the EBB Program can begin enrolling eligible households into the program to receive EBB-supported service, and households will also be able to check their eligibility directly by using the National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier (National Verifier) consumer portal available at www.GetEmergencyBroadband.org. Starting on April 19, 2021, participating providers have had access to EBB Program systems to enable them to conduct sample transactions, train their employees for readiness,³ and familiarize themselves with the newly developed EBB Program application and enrollment systems before the program begins.

Snapshot date for reimbursement. The EBB Program will use a uniform snapshot date to form the basis of participating providers' reimbursement claims.⁴ The first snapshot date will be on June 1, 2021 and participating providers must submit certified reimbursement claims by June 15, 2021 for service discounts provided to eligible households in the month of May and discounted connected devices delivered to households on or between May 12, 2021 and May 31, 2021. The snapshot date for subsequent months will occur on the first day of the month for services and connected devices provided to households during the previous month.

Application and enrollment. Participating providers can assist households in applying for the EBB Program through the National Verifier or through the provider's own application process. Households should contact the provider they are interested in receiving EBB-supported broadband service

¹ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-260, div. N, tit. IX, § 904, 134 Stat. 1182, 2130 (2020), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/133/text> (Consolidated Appropriations Act).

² See *Emergency Broadband Benefit Program*, WC Docket No. 20-445, Report and Order, FCC 21-29 (2021) (*EBB Program Order*).

³ In contrast to the production environment workflows that will become available when the systems open to applications and enrollments on May 12, 2021, to which providers should only submit true data for consumers seeking to sign up for the EBB Program, the pre-production environment allows providers to use test data that does not reflect actual EBB Program applicants. Please note that Lifeline Claims System workflows for the EBB Program are in the final stages of development and will be deployed in advance of the first snapshot date. The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) will provide additional information to participating providers as it becomes available.

⁴ See *EBB Program Order*, para. 90.

from to learn more about how to apply and enroll with the provider. To view a list of participating providers in each state, visit <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-providers>.⁵ Current Lifeline customers and households already enrolled in a provider's existing low-income broadband program also may not need to apply for the benefit, but households should contact their provider for more information on how to enroll in the EBB Program and to apply their benefit to their existing broadband service. Current Lifeline subscribers may choose to apply their Emergency Broadband Benefit with their Lifeline provider or another participating provider, and Lifeline providers cannot require their Lifeline subscribers to apply their Emergency Broadband Benefit with their Lifeline provider in order to continue receiving Lifeline service.

Consumer notice and consent. Prior to enrolling an existing subscriber in the EBB Program, the participating provider must clearly disclose to the subscriber that “the EBB Program is a government program that reduces the consumer’s broadband Internet access Service bill, is temporary in nature, that the household will be subject to the provider’s undiscounted rates and general terms and conditions at the end of the program if they continue to receive service.”⁶ The participating provider must also disclose to the subscriber that they may obtain EBB-supported broadband service from any participating provider of their choosing and that the subscriber can transfer their Emergency Broadband Benefit to another provider at any time. The participating provider is required to retain the documentation showing that, after receiving these disclosures, the subscriber provided their affirmative consent to apply their Emergency Broadband Benefit to the broadband service offered by the participating provider.⁷ Since these requirements are designed to enable households to make informed judgments as to how to apply their Emergency Broadband Benefit, notices that inform a subscriber that they have been enrolled in the EBB Program prior to the subscriber giving their affirmative consent are not sufficient to enroll the subscriber in the Program. Providers must also obtain consent from all EBB Program subscribers, whether existing or new, before they transmit the subscriber’s information to the National Lifeline Accountability Database to enroll them in the EBB Program.⁸

Providers may not obtain consent from subscribers to enroll them in the EBB Program until the provider’s election notice has been fully processed by USAC. Only participating providers that have completed their election notice with USAC may collect consent from existing subscribers to enroll in the EBB Program.⁹ This notice and consent may be completed prior to the date on which the program opens for enrollment. Additionally, any communications that providers send to or share with the subscribers before May 12, 2021 should include a notice that the EBB Program discount will begin on that date.

For more information about the EBB Program, consumers and public stakeholders are encouraged to visit the FCC’s consumer page dedicated to the EBB Program, www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit and USAC’s consumer page, www.GetEmergencyBroadband.org. Consumer groups, service organizations, and government partners will also be able to access consumer

⁵ The list of participating providers includes those providers that have fully completed their election notice review process. Providers will continue to be added to the list as election notice reviews are completed by USAC. See Press Release, FCC, *FCC Announces First Slate of Emergency Broadband Benefit Providers* (Apr. 1, 2021), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-371292A1.pdf>.

⁶ *EBB Program Order*, at para. 38.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ 47 CFR § 54.1606(d)(6).

⁹ See 47 CFR § 54.1600(r) (defining participating provider as a provider that is either an eligible telecommunications carrier or has received approval from the Commission, and also has elected to participate in the EBB Program); *EBB Program Order*, para. 38 (requiring participating providers to make certain disclosures and collect consent prior to enrolling existing subscribers in the EBB Program).

outreach materials for the EBB Program from the FCC and USAC.¹⁰ Individuals or organizations interested in becoming outreach partners with the FCC can sign up at www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit.

For further information, please contact Jessica Campbell of the Wireline Competition Bureau's Telecommunication Access Policy Division at (202) 418-3609 or Jessica.Campbell@fcc.gov.

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¹⁰ See USAC, Resources, Consumer Outreach Toolkit, <https://getemergencybroadband.org/help/resources/> (last visited Apr. 28, 2021).