

20 Providers to Offer \$30-a-Month High-Speed Internet Access

President cites new benefits for \$14.2 billion Affordable Connectivity Program

by Ed Waldman, [AARP](#), Updated May 10, 2022

Twenty internet service providers have committed to offering high-speed internet access for no more than \$30 a month to all U.S. households eligible for the federal government's \$14.2 billion Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).

More than 11.7 million households are already enrolled in the program, which replaced 2021's temporary, pandemic-inspired Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. The rate is specifically offered for ACP enrollees, who qualify because of their lower household income.

"The need for high-speed internet is a little bit like it probably used to be like my grandfather talked about the need to have a telephone," President Joe Biden said Monday at a White House ceremony. "It's pretty consequential. High-speed internet is not a luxury any longer. It's a necessity."

Nearly 40 percent of the households in America qualify for the \$30-a-month credit, which means "most folks will get on for nothing," the president said. Among the 20 providers that have committed to offer all ACP-eligible families at least one high-speed plan for \$30 a month or less are both huge carriers, including AT&T, Comcast, Cox Communications and Verizon (Fios only), and smaller providers, including IdeaTek in Kansas and Jackson Energy Authority in Tennessee.

Internet speeds at that price must be at least [100 megabits per second \(Mbps\)](#) where a company's infrastructure supports it. That's fast enough for a family of four to work from home, browse the web and [stream high-definition video](#), the administration says.

The 20 firms collectively offer high-speed internet in areas where more than 80 percent of the U.S. population lives, including nearly 50 percent of the rural population, according to a White House news release. In addition, Biden announced the launch of a website, [GetInternet.gov](#), that has details on how Americans can sign up for the ACP and how they can find participating internet providers in their area.

“AARP is pleased to see the commitment from the White House to ensure that high-speed internet is not only accessible but affordable for all Americans — including older adults,” says Dawit Kahsai, senior legislative representative for AARP. “We are pleased to work with the administration and the FCC to increase enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program to expand broadband access to all.”

Higher income limits for many

Both the ACP and the previous Emergency Broadband Benefit Program provide subsidies to low-income households to enable them to afford high-speed internet access, but they aren’t identical.

Income guidelines. Households with incomes of up to 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines are eligible for the ACP. Under the old rules, income was capped at 135 percent of federal poverty guidelines, except for those who experienced a significant loss of income because of job loss or furlough after Feb. 29, 2020.

That job loss exception was eliminated in the ACP. So to qualify, a family of three can have an income of up to \$46,060 this year, compared with \$29,646 in 2021.

Benefit: The maximum monthly benefit changed to \$30 a month from \$50 a month for households not located on tribal lands. Households on Native American tribal lands qualify for up to \$75 a month. Alaska, New Mexico and Oklahoma are the states with the highest percentages of Native Americans, according to the Census Bureau.

Eligible households also can receive a onetime discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer or tablet from participating providers if the consumer contributes \$10 to \$50 toward the purchase price.

Transparency. The new program prohibits upselling — telling customers that they can’t use the benefit on their older, less expensive data plans — or requirements for extended service contracts. These are complaints that some beneficiaries had about their carriers under the old program.

It also requires companies to provide standard labeling for internet download and upload speeds, monthly service costs, taxes, and any equipment and other fees. Nutrition labels on food inspired the move.

“If [internet providers] have the more affordable plan that works for you, you can choose it,” AARP’s Kahsai says. So participants in the new program may pay less or receive free subsidized internet, even with the lower subsidy. The White House has asked providers not to add fees or data caps to their \$30 plans.

“The [FCC] should monitor labels to ensure that ISP ‘explanations and context’ or efforts to make labels more ‘understandable’ do not result in misleading or confusing information being provided in the labels,” AARP wrote in a March 24 [submission to the FCC](#). AARP has long worked for low-cost internet solutions for older Americans, who need high-speed [broadband for teleworking](#), medical

and health-related information and news, [online health care consultations](#) with doctors and nurses, and interacting with loved ones and friends.

The FCC defines high-speed broadband as 25 Mbps for download speed and 3 Mbps for uploads. All of a company's internet plans that meet the FCC standard are eligible for the subsidy.

Participating providers

Internet providers that have committed to offer all ACP-eligible families high-speed internet access for \$30 a month or less:

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 Co.
Vexus Fiber
Wow! Internet, Cable, and TV

\$65 billion for improving broadband access

The Affordable Connectivity Program is just a part of the roughly \$65 billion to improve access to high-quality, high-speed internet access contained in the [bipartisan infrastructure bill](#) that Biden signed into law last Nov. 15.

Some of that money will go toward what Kahsai calls “digital equity.” The new law allocates \$2.75 billion for digital literacy training to make sure that everyone — regardless of language, ability or age — has the skills needed to take advantage of their connection to the internet.

About \$42.5 billion is being allocated to bring high-speed internet to unserved areas that will benefit families of all incomes. These often include rural areas where population density is low and mountainous areas that can be challenging for companies to reach.

This new service also must have speeds of at least 100 Mbps for downloads and 20 Mbps for uploads. Each state will start out with \$100 million from that pot of

money and will be able to get more based on its unserved and underserved needs.

With the new law, “we have an opportunity to put a dent ... in the digital divide,” Kahsai says.

More than 11.7 million enrolled in ACP

About 14.5 million Americans — and 22 percent of those 65 and older — don’t have [access to high-speed internet](#), the FCC estimates. Other estimates say that as many as 42 million people in the U.S. are on the wrong side of the digital divide. The FCC is updating its high-speed broadband map to provide a more accurate picture of access.

More than 11.7 million households were enrolled in the ACP as of May 9, according to the ACP website.

Puerto Rico has the highest rate of ACP enrollment per 1,000 households as of May 9, according to the website. It has second-highest poverty rate, behind American Samoa, among states and territories that are part of the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.

Louisiana, New Mexico, the District of Columbia and Mississippi round out the top five for ACP enrollment rate. Those jurisdictions have the fourth-, fifth-, 15th- and third-highest percentages of residents living in poverty.

Who is eligible for the ACP?

Households that have an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. For a family of four, 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline is \$55,500.

People who use certain federal assistance programs, including Federal Public Housing Assistance, Lifeline, Medicaid, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Lifeline offers up to a \$9.25 discount off monthly phone or internet bills to households that make less than 135 percent of the federal poverty guidelines or have at least one family member in some public assistance program, such as Medicaid, SNAP or SSI. For a family of four to qualify based on 135 percent of this year’s federal poverty guidelines, its annual income would need to be below \$37,463.

People who already use a discounted internet service from a high-speed internet provider that is aimed at low-income households. For example, AT&T offers internet access for \$10 or less a month to households in which at least one person participates in SNAP. Cox offers internet service for \$9.95 a month to new customers with at least one K-12 student in the household who qualifies for public assistance.

Households whose children get free or low-cost school meals.

Households that participate in programs specifically for tribes, such as Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, or Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

College students who receive student aid in the form of federal Pell grants.

Where to apply

[ACPbenefit.org](https://www.acpbenefit.org). Check your qualifications, apply online and explore local internet providers.

Check providers in your area

Federal Communications Commission

Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) from AARP through its [AgingConnected](#) service

[EveryoneOn](#), a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit

Need help figuring it out?

Universal Service Administrative Co., a nonprofit that operates the Lifeline fund created from a tax on phone service, has a toll-free information number for the ACP program, at 833-511-0311.

Look at longer-term program

If your income is low, also apply for the existing federal Lifeline program, which offers less of a discount.

[Lifeline](#). A printable form also is available after selecting your state.

Ready to learn?

Senior Planet from AARP has [free classes](#) for anyone who wants to learn the basics after getting online.

The AARP Virtual Community Center also has regularly scheduled [free technology classes](#).

Seek other help

[AARP Foundation](#) offers programs and services to help older adults secure jobs, benefits, refunds and social connections.

[Connect2Affect](#) from AARP Foundation can help you combat social isolation.

John Waggoner and Linda Dono contributed to this story. Originally published March 2, 2021, it has been updated to add information about the new Affordable Connectivity Program, which replaced the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. The number of program subscribers is also regularly updated.

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