
WASHINGTON TELEPHONE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (WTAP)

COLUMBIA LEGAL SERVICES

SEPTEMBER 2010

1. What is Washington Telephone Assistance Program (WTAP)?

WTAP is a benefit program that provides discounts on telephone fees for eligible households. There must be at least one adult in the household receiving help from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), including:

- Basic Food Assistance (Food Stamps)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- State Family Assistance (SFA)
- Disability Lifeline
- Refugee Assistance
- DSHS Chore Services
- SSI
- Former clients of community service voice mail that have been referred by their community agency
- Specific types of Medical Assistance (Medicaid), including:
 - COPES
 - Any of the DDD Waivers
 - Medicaid Personal Care (MPC)
 - Medicare Cost-Sharing (QMB, SLMB, or QI-1 aka ESLMB)
 - Medically Needy (“Spenddown Program”)
 - Medicaid received by someone on SSI
 - Take Charge

2. How do I apply for WTAP?

It’s easy to apply for WTAP. Call the residential customer service number for the telephone company that provides local service in your town to sign up. Most major telephone companies provide the WTAP discount. Be ready to give your name, date of birth and DSHS Client ID number to the customer service representative. The telephone company will contact DSHS to verify that you are eligible for WTAP.

After verification that you are eligible, if you don’t already have telephone service, the telephone company will tell you when your phone will be connected and what your telephone number will be and how much you will pay each month. If you already have telephone service, the WTAP discount will be added to your account by the phone company.

3. How much will it cost?

- Monthly cost:

Unlimited local service costs \$8.00, plus taxes. Most telephone companies in Washington provide WTAP customers basic service at a discount when compared to non-WTAP customers.
- Other benefits:

- Waiver of deposit for local service
- 50% discount for the first connection fee, and 50% on connection fee for each subsequent physical move. There is a federal program called Link Up that may help with the other 50% on connection fee.

4. Can I apply for WTAP for someone else?

Advocates, relatives and others can contact the phone company to apply for WTAP. If you want to apply for WTAP for someone else, you must be prepared to be listed as a contact person in the phone company's records. The telephone billing however, must be in the name of the person qualifying for WTAP.

5. What if I have an outstanding bill with the phone company?

A phone company generally cannot refuse WTAP service to anyone with an outstanding bill who is eligible for WTAP. You will have to agree to payment arrangements with the phone company on your old bill as a condition to have your phone reconnected. The maximum amount the phone company can charge you per month is 1 ½ times the basic cost of the service, plus the cost of basic service.

Example: *If you owe on an outstanding bill, the phone company may charge \$20. \$12 will go toward the outstanding bill, and \$8 will go toward basic monthly service until the outstanding bill is paid off.*

6. If I have a complaint, is there someone I can call?

If your phone company participates in WTAP, but won't sign you up, and you think you may be eligible, call DSHS WTAP at 1-888-700-8880 for help. WTAP representatives can assist with a 3-way call to the telephone company if you ask for help. If you have a complaint about a telephone company, call the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC). WUTC's consumer complaint number is 1-800-562-6150.

7. What if I need help?

If you have a question about WTAP, including whether a phone company participates in WTAP, call DSHS WTAP at 1-888-700-8880 for help.

8. What if my telephone company requires a written application for WTAP?

Some companies may not allow you to sign up for WTAP over the phone. They may require a written application. And some may fail to process an application promptly. If you try to apply for WTAP and there is a problem, you can call the WUTC consumer complaint line (1-800-562-6150) for help. You can also consider switching to another company.

8. What rules govern WTAP?

Rules governing WTAP are located in the Washington Administrative Code at Chapter 388-273 and 480-122.

WTAP 09-01-10