

## Continuity of Learning: Broadband Supports and Resources for Families

Rev. April 22, 2021

### Purpose

This document provides a list of resources for supervisory unions/districts (SU/SDs) to use when working with students and families who require internet access and other financial supports. This document is not an exhaustive list of resources, but rather a helpful guide to targeted programs related to internet and utilities. As new information emerges, we will add to this communication. Those needing a broader list of resources are directed to Vermont 2-1-1, a free and confidential service serving Vermonters statewide with information and resources to help maintain and improve their health and well-being. By dialing 2-1-1, callers are connected to trained representatives that provide referrals to a variety of local and statewide social services to help meet their needs. Information is also available online by visiting [Vermont 2-1-1 Find Resources](#).

### UPDATED Emergency Broadband Assistance Program Approved by FCC

School administrators may be aware of families struggling to afford the monthly cost for internet. This program may be helpful to these families. On Feb. 25, 2021, the FCC unanimously adopted a Report and Order that established the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program, a \$3.2 billion federal initiative to help lower the cost of high-speed internet for eligible households during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. The EBB program will provide a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible families. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer or tablet from participating providers if they contribute \$10-\$50 toward the purchase price. The FCC has not yet announced the start date for the program but anticipates it will be open by the end of April. For more information on the program and the eligibility requirements, go to [Emergency Broadband Benefit | Federal Communications Commission \(fcc.gov\)](#).

### Assistance with Internet Costs

Listed below are a variety of programs offered by broadband companies that aim to offer affordable connectivity options to schools and student households. Also listed are companies offering connection service in hard-to-reach areas of Vermont and companies working with the government [Lifeline](#) program. The list below is not an endorsement of any one vendor or program.

### UPDATED Contact Information

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information please contact: Lisa Helme, Student Pathways Division, at [lisa.helme@vermont.gov](mailto:lisa.helme@vermont.gov) or (802) 828-6956.

- [Cloud Alliance](#): Cloud Alliance provides a community-based fixed wireless internet network for select communities in central and northern Washington County, where

internet service may be difficult or non-existent. **Contact:** (888) 939-2568.

- **Comcast:** Internet Essentials program offers low service fees for student households eligible for public assistance programs. **Contact:** Customer service, (855) 846-8376.
- **Consolidated Communications (CC):** The Lifeline program is a government benefit program. Eligible subscribers can apply a monthly Lifeline program discount to a qualifying service. After applying and receiving approval, a subscriber may contact CC to add the discount. **Contact:** USAC (800) 234-9473, CC (844) 968-7224.
- **Kingdom Fiber:** **This program has expired.**
- **Mobile Beacon:** Bridging the Gap works to bring equal educational opportunity for all Americans through their connectivity program. The Digital Wish program provides donated mobile hotspots and low service fees to schools. **Contact:** Customer support, (401) 934-0500, [service@mobilebeacon.org](mailto:service@mobilebeacon.org).
- **T-Mobile:** Project 10 Million offers subsidized broadband service for student households meeting school eligibility requirements. Service is paid for by the local school. **Contact:** Ryan Lopes, Government Account Executive, (617) 564-1313, [Ryan.Lopes1@t-mobile.com](mailto:Ryan.Lopes1@t-mobile.com).
- **VTel:** The Vermont Telephone Company offers low income customers the VTel Lifeline Program. The government benefit program provides discounts on qualifying service. **Contact:** USAC (800) 234-9473, VTel, (802) 885-9000.

## Financial Support Programs

The Public Service Department has compiled a list of information and resources on the availability of telecommunication services during the COVID-19 emergency. Their connectivityresources support page includes information about what cable, telephone/DSL fiber and mobilecarriers are doing to assist Vermonters in economic need. Go to [New Connectivity Resources to Support You during the COVID-19 State of Emergency in Vermont | Department of Public Service](#).

### UPDATED Payment Assistance for Utility Customers

- **Vermont COVID-19 Arrearage Assistance Program:** **This program has expired.**
- **Vermont Temporary Broadband Subsidy Program:** **This program has expired.**
- **Programs for Consumers with Disabilities:** Vermont offers consumers with disabilities several programs to help stay connected to the telephone system.
- **Agencies Providing Financial Assistance:** Information about state and other agencies that offer financial assistance to consumers can be found on the “Where to Get Financial Assistance” web page provided by the Public Service Department.