

Access to Mobile Phones for Refugee Families in Sacramento



A refugee family usually acquires a cell phone within their first week or two in Sacramento, primarily for the head of the household's use. Typically, a friend or relative assists them in obtaining the cell phone and SIM card. These initial devices often come with brand name plans such as T-Mobile or Sprint. Once the family receives their Social Security cards—usually within two to four weeks of their arrival—they become eligible for free phones for other family members.

- **Pop-Up Booths for Free Phones:** At certain 99-cent store locations, there are pop-up booths at the front of the store where refugees can apply for a free phone without needing a Social Security card. They must present photo identification and their EBT card to receive a smartphone with 2GB of data.
- [California Lifeline](#): This state program offers discounted home and cell phone services to eligible households. To qualify, families must either be enrolled in a support program or meet specific income requirements.
- [SafeLink Wireless](#): SafeLink provides one free phone per household for families that meet the State of California's eligibility criteria. These requirements are based on participation in support programs such as MediCal, WIC, or TANF, as well as income qualifications.

Families benefit from unlimited voice calls and unlimited text messages, along with 500 MB of data each month. This monthly allowance is valid for 12 months, after which the family must re-qualify annually.

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