



Town of Sudbury

Board of Health Social Work Department

DPW Building
275 Old Lancaster Road
Sudbury, MA 01776

Combating the High Cost of Utilities

On a daily basis, residents reach out for help or suggestions regarding the high cost of utilities, including internet, phone, cable, electricity and heating fuel. Here are some options that may be helpful. Please note that this handout is for informational purposes and not to provide endorsement. Please do your own research to determine which programs and services best meet your individual needs, and to explore other services that may be available.

Internet:

- **Comcast:** Offers internet for ~\$10/month for low-income families with school aged children
 - Cannot be bundled with any other Comcast offer
 - Must have a child in the home that is eligible for the free school lunch program
 - Must be able to provide a letter from the school verifying eligibility for free school lunch as well as child's birth certificate
- Other providers reported they do not have any low-income discounts at this time, but you can contact your current provider to inquire about current deals and promotions.

Landline:

- **Lifeline:** Very basic and discounted landline (If you are eligible for SNAP, SSI, Mass Health or certain other state/federal programs, you are eligible for this program)
 - Rates range from ~ \$2-\$9/month PLUS taxes, fees, and calls per minute. Includes very local calls only and requires signing up for a "regional toll provider" for longer distance calls. Signing up for a regional toll provider is free, and calls are charged per minute ranging from \$0.02-\$0.23/minute
 - Visit: https://www.verizon.com/support/consumer/consumer-education/lifeline?CMP=DMC-CVZ_ZZ_ZZ_Z_DO_N_X00363 for information and applications by state
 - Or call 1-800-837-4966
 - May be a good option for a landline solely for emergencies or for the use with medical alert buttons
 - NOTE: You cannot have a Lifeline landline with a Safelink or Budget Mobile cell phone. If you order one when you have the other, the initial service will be discontinued and you may end up getting a bill

Cell phone:

- **Safelink:** Provides free cell phones to those who meet income requirements. (If you are eligible for SNAP or certain other state/federal programs, you are eligible for this program)
 - Call 1-800-378-1684 for additional information or to sign up
 - Visit <https://www.safelinkwireless.com> for additional information or to sign up
 - Now compatible with both flip and smart phones
 - Phone will arrive in 7-10 business days after approval (approval takes ~ 5 days)

- Must make at least 1 call/month
- NOTE: You cannot have a Safelink cell phone and a Lifeline landline. If you order one when you have the other, the initial service will be discontinued and you may end up getting a bill
- **Budget Mobile:** Provides free cell phones to those who meet income requirements. (If you are eligible for SNAP or certain other state/federal programs, you are eligible for this program)
 - Call 1-888-777-4007
 - Visit <http://www.budgetmobile.com> for more information or to sign up
 - NOTE: You cannot have a free Budget Mobile cell phone and a Lifeline landline. If you order one when you have the other, the initial service will be discontinued and you may end up getting a bill
- **Commercial Plans:**
 - If you have a current cell phone plan, companies have advised calling in and speaking with a customer service representative to take a thorough look at your plan to determine if you can save money by adjusting your plan, avoiding overages, or switching to a new plan (this can at times be done without changing your contract). It's also helpful to ask if the company offers any additional discounts or low-income options.
 - When buying applications for a smart phone, be mindful to shop around, as free alternatives exist for many common applications
 - Many employers offer plan discounts between 10-20%. Ask your wireless provider if your current employer is part of an employee discount plan.
 - Family plans can also be a great way to save money.

Television services:

- There are now many alternatives to paying for cable monthly.
 - Indoor Digital Antennas: Allow you access to basic television channels for a one-time cost of about \$60. It's important to inquire about the needed range of the antenna to get desired channels.
 - Devices that use an internet connection to enable access to streaming videos such as: Xbox, Roku, Playstation and Chrome Cast
 - Streaming services such as: Hulu, Netflix and Amazon Prime

Free Streaming Services:

- **Crackle:** Movies and TV: <https://www.sonycrackle.com/>
- **Tubi:** Movies and TV: <https://tubitv.com/>
- **Pluto TV:** Live TV: <http://pluto.tv/watch>
- **Popcorn Flix:** Movies and TV: <https://www.popcornflix.com/pages/discover/d/movies>
- **Yahoo View:** Movies and TV: <https://view.yahoo.com/>
- **Live News On:** Live News from multiple sources/channels: <http://www.livenewson.com/>
- **Major Networks with free episodes online**
 - PBS Kids: <http://pbskids.org/>

- ABC: <https://abc.go.com/shows>
- NBC: <https://www.nbc.com/video>
- FOX: <https://www.fox.com/shows/>
- CBS: <https://www.cbs.com/watch/>

Low-Cost Live TV Alternatives:

- Sling TV: Starts at \$25/month: <https://www.sling.com/>
- PlayStation Vue: starts at \$45/month: <https://www.playstation.com/en-us/>
- YouTube TV: Starts at \$40/month: <https://tv.youtube.com/welcome/>
- Hulu Live TV: starts at \$40/month: <https://www.hulu.com/live>

Electricity:

- **Eversource:**
 - Offers a Discount Rate each month for those who meet eligibility guidelines. (If you are eligible for SNAP, you are eligible for this program.)
 - Those on the Discount Rate are also eligible for the New Start Program. If you are more than 1 month and \$100 overdue on your bill, they can help set up a payment plan that reduces the amount you pay each month and develops a plan to pay off the balance within 12 months.
 - Call 1-800-592-2000 for more information
 - Visit: <https://www.eversource.com/Content/ema-c/residential/programs-services/financial-assistance> for more information on financial assistance programs
- **Appliance Management Program:** Funded through Eversource or NGrid, an energy auditor will come to your home and will review your energy usage, especially your refrigerator
 - While at your home, the auditor will...
 - Complete an in-home appliance assessment
 - Provide free efficient light bulbs for the entire home
 - Discuss the possibility of a free high use refrigerator replacement
 - Offer other energy saving measures including “smart” power strips
 - Contact SMOC Energy at (866) 397-8478
- **Shut off Notice:** If you are having difficulty paying your bill, reach out to the electric company immediately and attempt to work out a payment plan. Often times people wait until they have a shut off notice when there is less flexibility. Even if you do have a shut off notice, be proactive and call the electric company. Once electricity is shut off, full payment is often required to turn it back on.

Heating fuel:

- **National Grid:** Offers a low-income discount of 25% off for those who meet eligibility guidelines. (If you are eligible for SNAP, Mass Health, Chapter 115 Veterans benefits, School Lunch Program or a variety of other state programs, you are eligible for this program.)
 - Call 1-800-231-5325 for additional information or to sign up

- Visit: <https://www.nationalgridus.com/ma-gas-home/bill-help/payment-assistance-programs> for additional payment assistance program information
- **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** (Also known as Fuel Assistance)
 - Need to meet income requirements; Not eligible if paying less than 32% of income toward rent (i.e. those living in subsidized housing)
 - Program administered by SMOC: 7 Bishop St. Framingham, 508-620-1230
 - Sudbury senior residents, contact Anne Manning at the senior center at 978-639 -3268
 - All other Sudbury residents, contact Bethany Hadvab, town social worker, at 978-440-5476
- **Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Task Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP):** provides heating system repair and replacement services to low-income households
 - Need to meet income requirements. Note: You are eligible for this program if you are eligible for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP or Fuel Assistance) program
- **Good Neighbor Energy Fund:** Heating fuel assistance for people slightly over the income limits for LIHEAP
 - Opens in December for emergency shut-offs, and January for all other inquiries
 - To determine eligibility, call the Salvation Army and request the service unit at 339-502-5900. Be prepared with *household* gross income and number of people in the household

For additional questions, or suggested additions to this list, please call Bethany Hadvab, Sudbury Town Social Worker, at 978-440-5476. Please visit www.sudbury.ma.us/socialworker for additional up-to-date resources and information