

INTERNET ESSENTIALS UPDATE FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY SCHOOLS
COVID-19 INCIDENT TEAM
3/17/2020

- The Internet Essentials (IE) national call center added representatives to assist callers with applications for Internet Essentials (IE). Volume continues to be very high.
- Comcast appreciates everyone's patience and continues to emphasize that the simplest, fastest, and easiest way to apply for the program is by visiting the IE portal at www.InternetEssentials.com from a mobile device. Roughly 70% of low income families have some kind of access to an Internet enabled device, usually a mobile phone, and can use it to sign up for IE service. (Pew Research Center)
- A majority of schools in Miami-Dade County are Title I schools and are eligible for expedited review. Applicants from those schools will be approved faster and receive Welcome Kits in less than the stated 7 to 10 day period.
- Most of the information applicants and new customers need to help them get online can also be found on the IE portal in the "Get Help" section:
<https://www.internetessentials.com/get-help#search-results>.
- Spanish speakers can apply for Comcast Internet Essentials by visiting the Spanish language version of the portal <https://es.internetessentials.com/covid19> and will find information for getting online in the "Ayuda" section:
<https://es.internetessentials.com/get-help>.
- When customers are in the English language version of the Internet Essentials portal, they can change from English to a variety of other languages by clicking "Language" at the top right of the IE landing page, scrolling down, selecting the desired language, and clicking "continue".
- Comcast is honoring the offer of two free months of Internet Essentials service for anyone who signed up after 4PM on Thursday of last week, when the initial announcement was made.
- Once approved for IE and even prior to receiving a Welcome Kit containing the in-house WiFi modem, customers can immediately use their Chromebook or other Internet enabled device to access the Xfinity WiFi network, connect to the web, and undertake school work.
- Rather than continuing to use Xfinity WiFi as a primary source for service, customers are encouraged to install and use their in-house WiFi modem as soon as they receive it. For instructions to configure a device for using the private home WiFi network/modem at home and Xfinity WiFi while on the go, please visit https://WiFi.xfinity.com/connect-devices.php#connect_xfinity_WiFi

Open Xfinity WiFi for COVID-19

- As part of Comcast's comprehensive COVID-19 response, more than 1 million public and small business-based Xfinity WiFi hotspots across the country are open for the next 60 days and available free of charge to anyone who needs them – including non-Xfinity Internet customers.
 - Xfinity customers can download the Xfinity WiFi app and find the nearest hotspot on the map view. Non-customers can find their nearest hotspot by visiting <https://xfinity.com/WiFi> and entering their zip code.
 - Once at a hotspot, consumers should select the “xfinityWiFi” network name in the list of available hotspots, and then launch a browser.
 - The Xfinity WiFi network has both public and private hotspots. Only hotspots located in business and outdoor locations like parks, shopping areas and transportation platforms, are open to everyone, including non-customers, at this time.
 - If a hotspot appears on the Xfinity WiFi map and does not have an address, it is private. Most Xfinity private hotspots are residential and not a part of the COVID-19 open access initiative.
 - Many things can affect WiFi connections; including how close the device is to the WiFi hotspot, whether buildings, trees, or other things are in the way, and the type of device type being used.
 - If “xfinityWiFi” is on the available network list, and a customer still can't connect, they should check their device to see how many signal bars there are. If they only have one or two bars, they might have to move closer to where the signal is coming from.
 - During the period in which access to Xfinity outdoor and small business-based hotspots is free to the public, users will be prompted to login via a single click portal.
 - For non-Xfinity customers, each usage session on Xfinity WiFi is timed at two hours. At the end of that period, the consumer can immediately log back into the hotspot and continue to use it.
 - Any consumer being denied access, asked to login after an hour of use, or pay for additional time is most likely trying to connect to a residential Xfinity WiFi hotspot. Comcast's standard protocol is to give non-customers a one-hour free pass on the nearest open hotspot, then charge the non-customer for use going forward. If a consumer is asked for more information, like payment details, they are likely trying to access an Xfinity residential hotspot that is closed to the public.
 - Xfinity WiFi public hotspots are open for 60 days. As the end date approaches, Comcast will evaluate whether free access should be extended based on the situation at that time.

Additional COVID-19 Initiatives from Comcast

- Comcast automatically raised speeds for all Internet Essentials customers at no additional cost, going from 15 to 25/3. This will remain the base speed of the service moving forward.
- The company is pausing data plans so customers can use their service as much as they need to during this time. With so many people working and educating from home, Comcast wants customers to be able to access the internet and stay connected without thinking about data plans and for customers with children to know that they can study, stream, and learn virtually, as much as they need to while schools are closed.
- Comcast will not disconnect internet service or charge late fees if customers can't pay their bills during this time period. Customers should contact the company and advise that they cannot pay. Representatives will work with them to offer flexible payment options and help them find other solutions.
- The InternetEssentials.com website contains very helpful information on topics such as online safety, education, employment, and financial resources. Just click on the Learning Center at www.internetessentials.com. In Spanish, visit Centro de Aprendizaje at <https://es.internetessentials.com/learning>.
- For school-age students at home, Comcast created new educational collections for all grade levels in partnership with Common Sense Media. Customers just say "education" into their X1 or Flex voice remote.
- To help customers stay informed, Comcast created a collection of the most current news and information on Coronavirus. Customers just say "Coronavirus" into their X1 or Flex voice remote.

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For additional information or questions, please contact Comcast Director of External Affairs
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