



Get Connected California sets out to bridge digital divide

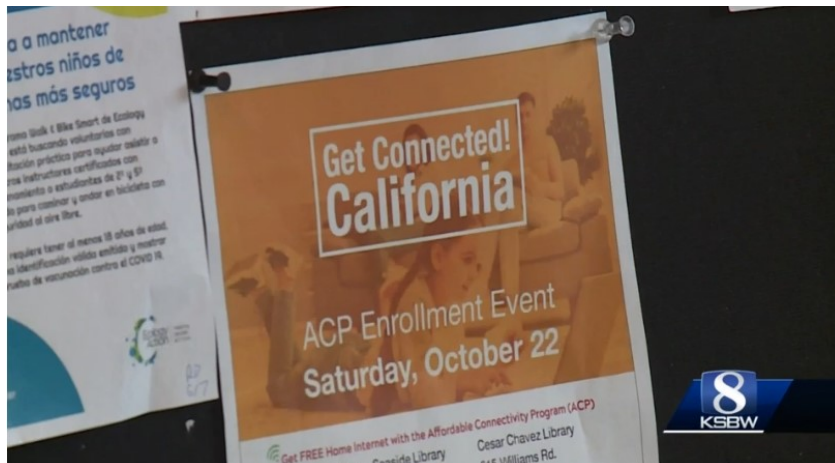
People lined up outside of Cesar Chavez Library in Salinas Saturday morning, hoping to qualify for free or reduced cost high speed internet access.



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Reporter



SALINAS, Calif. —

People lined up outside of Cesar Chavez Library in Salinas Saturday morning, hoping to qualify for free or reduced cost high-speed internet access.

The library is just one location in the state signing people up for the Get Connected program this weekend.

"It's a real opportunity for people who don't have service or their service is costing them a lot and they don't know where to go," said Karen Smith with the Monterey County Health Department.

The Get Connected incentive is a state program that was created to help inform people about how they can get access to affordable and sometimes free internet access.

On Saturday, the county was out administering a program helping people who qualify get up to \$30 a month in rebates.

One of those in line at Ceasar Chavez on Saturday was Estela Lopez. The Salinas mother says her old internet access was \$10 a month but it was too slow and her kids could not complete their school work. She now has faster internet but it's expensive.

"My daughter who mainly uses it, she couldn't get the internet, almost like she couldn't get into the programs she needed to do her homework, so she applied for the more expensive one that I'm paying right now \$30," Lopez said.

Smith said the pandemic shined a light on the digital divide and while schools have returned to in person, the need for internet to complete school work has not gone away.

"It has just shown a light on how people don't have access and if you don't have access to now what is a fundamental, you can't or there are a lot of things that you can't do, or you're slowed down so it puts you at a disadvantage it's really this is a movement towards closing that gap," Smith said.

You can find more information on the program [here](#).