

3800 DIAGNOSTIC AND TREATMENT SERVICES

3802.5 Specialty Consultations

E. Mandatory Specialist Consultations

4. Hearing Aids. Hearing aids can be provided if directly related to the individual's ability to enter gainful employment or maintain gainful employment commensurate with the chosen vocational goal indicated on the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). The primary function of the hearing aid is to amplify and enhance residual hearing of the individual with hearing loss; it does not restore lost hearing. The technology involved with hearing aids changes rapidly and it is important that the individual's employment related communication requirements and the available options are understood when providing amplifications.

Eligibility for Hearing Aids

In order for an applicant to meet the eligibility criteria for substantial impediment to employment and the purchase of hearing aids, the applicant must experience at least one of the following conditions as verified by an Otolaryngologist (ENT) and a licensed Audiologist and demonstrate functional limitation(s) in communication, such as difficulty understanding speech, inability to participate in conversation without speech reading, sign language or other visual cues, cannot interpret telephone conversation, cannot hear or understand the content of spoken conversations or cannot be readily understood by others. These functional limitations in communication must result in a substantial impediment to employment.

1. Average pure tone loss of 40 dB (ANSI) or more in the worst ear in the speech range (500, 1,000, and 2,000 cycles per second), unaided; or

2. Average pure tone hearing loss of 20 dB (ANSI) or more in the better ear in the speech range when pure tone average loss in the other ear exceeds 80 dB (ANSI), unaided in best ear; or

3. Speech discrimination of 80%, or less, at the Most Comfortable Level (MCL) in an unaided environment regardless of pure tone average loss; or

4. ENT statement of rapidly progressive and/or chronic condition, not contingent on upon decibel loss in either ear but requires amplification.

West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts
DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

Exceptions to eligibility criteria for hearing aid purchase will be submitted to the Assistant Director of Field Services through supervisor channels for review and approval.

Diagnostic Evaluations Required for the Purchase of Hearing Aid(s)

The Division will only accept a comprehensive audiometric evaluation performed by a licensed audiologist. Diagnostic evaluations will include the following:

A. An audiological evaluation utilizing ANSI standards that includes tympanometry and a hearing aid selection & fitting evaluation. Additional evaluations, such as a tinnitus assessment, may be provided, if needed during assessment, and

B. An otological evaluation performed by a physician skilled in the diseases of the ear, an ENT. The otological report will include information regarding etiology of the hearing loss, diagnosis, and verification as to if the client is medically cleared for amplifications as well.

If the aforementioned evaluations have been performed within six (6) months; then the evaluations do not need to be replicated/authorized. Recency of records will not apply in a permanent condition such as Deafness. Individuals with Deafness can submit the last audiological evaluation performed for eligibility purposes, as deafness is considered a permanent condition.

Counseling, Guidance and Plan Development for Hearing Aid(s) and Devices

Hearing Aid(s) alone seldom resolve the communication barriers and other disability issues experienced by individuals with hearing loss, further discussion of the individual's functional limitations, coping skills, and accommodations, are necessary. The case record must document the need for and provision of counseling concerning functional limitations, coping skills, and accommodations relevant to the identified disability of hearing loss or deafness. Individuals who will be using hearing aid(s) for the first time, will need counseling in a variety of areas to ensure adjustment to the amplification. The Counselor of Record (COR) will complete the Communication Assessment along with the individual. In addition, the Counselor of Record (COR) will provide counseling to first time wearers of hearing aids regarding:

(1) Adjustment to the hearing loss, including helping the client understand the "social stigma" of wearing a hearing aid; accepting it may not "fix" every

West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts
DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

communication problem and the need to assertively request good communication behaviors from others; and

(2) Self advocacy, including, being aware of his/her rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how to discuss the effects of hearing loss and necessary accommodations with coworkers, supervisors and employers as needed; and

(3) Communication strategies, such as learning how to assess and modify communication barriers in the workplace; and

(4) Information on assistive technology, including awareness of other devices, techniques, resources for improving communication.

Considerations in Purchasing Hearing Aids

Certain considerations will be noted by the Counselor of Record, including the following:

A. The Division will only purchase hearing aids that are vocationally necessary for an individual to obtain or keep their employment status. The Division will not participate in additional costs for features chosen by the individual that are not required for their employment-related communication needs. The Counselor of Record must ensure that the audiology report indicates what treatment recommendations are made for the individual and indicate why the individual would benefit from these devices given their employment environment.

B. Warranty

1. The individual is responsible for any and all deductible costs associated with loss/damage and/or stolen claims.

2. The Division will not purchase an additional warranty for loss, damage, and/or repair over and above what the manufacturer provides when the hearing aid(s) are purchased.

C. Technology Changes. The Division will not purchase hearing aids based on technology changes merely because the client prefers new technology.

Required Providers

West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts
DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

A. Criteria. When considering purchase of hearing aids, the Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD) or Counselor of Record (COR) will utilize providers who have met the following criteria:

1. The provider is a licensed audiologist, and
2. A licensed physician specializing in diseases of the ear nose and throat, and
3. Must utilize ANSI standards

B. Memoranda of Understanding. The Division has Memoranda of Understanding with Oticon, Phonak, Siemens, Widex, Resound, and Starkey as well as their affiliates. These agreements include hearing aid accessories and FM/ALD's. Extended warranties are included in the agreements. A hearing aid from any other manufacturer will require an exception from the Assistant Director of Field Services through supervisory channels.

Replacement of Hearing Aids

The Division will replace current hearing aid(s) only when the individual has met the eligibility criteria above and has shown that the aids have been cared for properly, have not been misused or neglected, and that the individual has followed the manufacturer's instructions. Individuals need to demonstrate that they have appropriately cared for the hearing aids, if they are seeking replacement aid(s) by submitting documentation of records showing repairs or annual checks of the aids. Hearing aids may be replaced if the individual's hearing aids meet one or more of the following criteria;

1. No longer work to specification and repairs will not restore the aids to proper working order; or
2. The individual's hearing loss has changed significantly requiring different amplification; or
3. Communication needs of the job have changed requiring different amplification.

Repair of Hearing Aids

West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts
DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

The Division will not participate in paying for repairs for hearing aid(s); repairs are considered normal upkeep and care for the aids, and are the responsibility of the individual. It is expected that the individual will plan for regular care and upkeep, including repairs, and planning for the cost of repairs as part of their Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). Any exceptions must be approved by Assistant Director of Field Services through supervisory channels.

~~Hearing aids will be purchased only after an individual has had both otological and audiological evaluations indicating the need for hearing aids. A copy of the report(s) must be placed in the record of services. A visual examination is required for all individuals with either a primary or secondary disability impairment code of 03 (Deafness, Primary Communication Visual), 04 (Deafness, Primary Communication Auditory) or 08 (Deaf Blindness). Individuals with disability impairment codes of 05 (Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Visual), 06 (Hearing Loss, Primary Communication, and Auditory), 07 (Other Hearing Impairments) or 09 (Communicative Impairments [expressive/receptive]) also may need visual examinations if any one of the following applies:~~

- ~~a. at least a 55 dB loss, unaided, speech reception threshold (SRT) in the better ear; or, in the better ear; or~~
- ~~b. at least a 55 dB loss, unaided, pure tone average~~

3803.2 Special Considerations for Treatment and Services

A. Deafness and Hearing Loss: Physical Restoration Services. A visual examination is required for individuals with deafness or a severe hearing loss as a primary or secondary disability impairment when one of the following is met:

1. at least a 55 dB loss, unaided, speech reception threshold (SRT) in the better ear; or,
2. at least a 55 dB loss, unaided, pure tone average

B. Provision of Cochlear Implants and Processors. The use of cochlear implants (CI) has been a successful type of therapy for those with severe to profound sensorineural hearing loss and for those who are unable to be helped with conventional hearing aids. The physician involved in the cochlear implant surgery must be a board certified otolaryngologist, licensed by the state they work in, with specialized training in cochlear implants. The audiologist involved in cochlear implants must be licensed by the state they work in, with specialized training in cochlear implants. If it has been determined that all other treatment options, as documented by an ENT, will not reduce,

West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts
DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

circumvent, or alleviate the hearing impairment, and the Cochlear Implants or Processors are vocationally necessary; the Cochlear Implants and Processors may be provided on an exception basis from the Assistant Director of Field Services through supervisory channels. The following criteria will be met when assessing candidates for cochlear implants:

1. The client must have a severe or profound sensorineural hearing loss, and not be able to benefit from any type of hearing aid, and

2. The client must have post-lingual deafness, be of working age, and have the potential to become employable. Those with pre-lingual deafness must demonstrate the ability to use speech for every day communication, and

3. The client must not have any mental or medical condition that would preclude optimal use of the cochlear implant such as: middle ear infections, cochlear ossification that prevents electrode insertion, absence of cochlear development, or tympanic membrane deformation, and

4. The client must receive prior counseling concerning benefits and risks of the cochlear implant and acknowledge the changes that may occur in one's life as a result of this procedure, and

5. The client, if qualified for the cochlear implant, must agree to attend all scheduled rehabilitation sessions, in addition to the initial programming of the speech processor following the recuperation period after surgery, and

6. If a second device and speech processors are recommended, the Division will require an additional justification from the physician who specializes in cochlear implantation.