

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Program Name: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Policy Number: VR-13.5-v4

Effective Date: July 1, 2008

Last Revision: July 8, 2024

CHAPTER 13: Assistive Technology Services

Section 13.5: Hearing Aids

I. Policy Statement

This policy provides guidelines for the provision of fitting, follow-up, and repair of hearing aids and ear molds for clients who have documented hearing loss and who require these services to achieve a successful employment outcome as listed on their most recent and approved Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

II. Authority

Authorities for policies contained in this document include the following:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), 29 U.S.C. § 3101 et seq.
- Title IV Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.
- State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program, 34 C.F.R. §§:
 - 361.48 (b)(17) Scope of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities
 - 361.53 (b)(5) Comparable services and benefits
 - 361.54 (b)(1-2) Participation of individuals in cost of services based on financial need
- United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Policy Directive RSA-PD-16-04, Other Service Data Elements, Rehabilitation Technology XIV (C)
- A.R.S. §§ 23-502 and 503
- Arizona Administrative Code, Title 6, Chapter 4:
 - General considerations R6-4-201 (A)(1)(j)

III. Applicability

This policy applies when hearing aids and related services are requested and determined necessary for a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) client to achieve a successful employment outcome.

IV. Standards

A. General Provisions

1. The VR Counselor must determine the vocational necessity of the hearing aid(s), for the employment outcome based on the following:
 - a) Medical documentation from a licensed audiologist and/or Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) physician,
 - b) Information provided by the client.
2. Economic need does not apply.
3. Comparable benefits do not apply.
4. The client must:
 - a) Actively participate in an assessment or planned VR service,
 - b) Complete a comprehensive audiology assessment,
 - c) Be responsible for the cost difference when a more expensive or cosmetically desirable hearing aid, other than what is approved by VR, is selected,
 - d) Be responsible for extended warranties,
 - e) Complete and sign the agency Equipment Contract form, and
 - f) Adhere to the Client Purchase Agreement (CPA) terms, when applicable.
5. Clients must be referred to a VR contracted audiology service provider to complete a comprehensive audiological evaluation when the client:
 - a) Has not yet utilized hearing aids,
 - b) Has progressive hearing loss,
 - c) Needs hearing aids, and the most current audiological exam is more than one (1) year old, or
 - d) Needs hearing aid repair.
6. In instances when the audiologist recommends an ENT exam, the VR Counselor must refer the client to an ENT.

B. VR Audiology Consultations

1. A VR Audiology Consultation is required when the VR Counselor has concerns about the audiologist's recommendation, or when the audiologist recommends:

- a) Cochlear implants,
 - b) Bone-anchored hearing aids (BAHA), or
 - c) Updates to implants.
2. A VR Audiology Consultation is not required for a standard hearing aid recommendation.
 3. See Section 9.2: Treatments: Cochlear/BAHA of this manual for additional information about cochlear implants and bone-anchored hearing aids (BAHA).

C. Hearing Aid Devices

1. One (1) initial purchase of hearing aids is allowed per client, for the duration of the current VR case.
2. A CPA to purchase hearing aids is only allowable when the manufacturer is not a contracted vendor.
3. Policy exceptions must be pursued when a CPA will be utilized for hearing aid testing, ear molds, or hearing aid repairs.
4. The manufacturer's warranty must be included with the initial purchase of hearing aids and must guarantee repair and/or replacement of parts or the entire device, equipment, or product when the parts and/or workmanship are faulty.
5. VR must support the client's decision in instances when the client prefers and elects to use only one (1) hearing aid for environmental sound awareness, despite a licensed audiologist's recommendation for two (2) hearing aids.
6. Hearing aids may be used for a trial period, before purchase, to determine whether the client can benefit from hearing aids in an employment setting.
7. Hearing aid fitting and follow-up appointments must be approved on the IPE and listed on an RSA Purchase Authorization to the service provider, before making the appointment(s).
8. The client must be informed of the benefits of obtaining an extended warranty to cover unexpected repairs once the initial manufacturer warranty expires.
9. Existing warranties must be utilized for hearing aid repair before VR approval to fund any repairs for the device.
10. Hearing aid repairs are only allowable when it is necessary for the successful completion of an IPE goal.

11. In instances when the client's existing hearing aid cannot be repaired, and as per audiological consultant review, a new hearing aid replacement may be recommended for purchase.
12. A policy exception must be pursued for the hearing aid replacement if VR purchased the client's existing hearing aid during the duration of the current VR case.
13. Ear molds may be covered under the following circumstances:
 - a) When it is part of a new hearing aid purchase and fitting, or
 - b) To replace old or broken ear molds with existing hearing aids, as recommended as a result of hearing aid testing or evaluation.

V. Procedure

- A.** Refer to Standard Work, if available.
- B.** Refer to the RSA Allowable Services Document and Audiology Services Service Specifications (MSP contract).

C. Hearing Aids Procedures

1. Upon receipt of the Audiology Services Audiology Evaluation Report and Audiology Services Hearing Aid Recommendation Report, the VR Counselor will approve or disapprove the recommended hearing aid(s) purchase.
2. If an audiology consultation is required, the VR Counselor will submit the following documentation to the VR Audiology Consultant for review and consultation report:
 - a) Hearing Aid Recommendation Report,
 - b) Audiology Evaluation Report,
 - c) ENT Report (if applicable), and
 - d) Counselor/Consultant Worksheet-Audiology form.
3. If the hearing aid recommendation is approved, the recommended hearing aid(s) is purchased from the manufacturer via a State or Arizona Department of Economic Security (ADES) contract.
4. The hearing aid(s) and a new RSA Purchase Authorization are sent to the vendor identified for fitting and follow-up services.
5. The Equipment Contract with Client form must be completed and signed by the client and VR Counselor.

VI. Documentation Requirements

The client's ECF must include the following:

- A.** Audiology Services Audiology Evaluation Report,
- B.** Counselor/Consultant Worksheet-Audiology form, if applicable,
- C.** Audiology Services Hearing Aid Recommendation Report,
- D.** Manufacturer's warranty,
- E.** Audiology Services Hearing Aid Fitting and Follow-up Report, and
- F.** Equipment Contract with Client form.