

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Program Name: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

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CHAPTER 9: Treatments

Section 9.2: Treatments: Cochlear/BAHA

I. Policy Statement

This policy outlines the guidelines regarding the provision of cochlear implants and Baha devices for clients with a documented hearing loss and may need these items in order to obtain and achieve a successful employment outcome as listed on their most recent and approved Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE).

II. Authority

Authority for policies contained in this document includes 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. §§:
 - Applicable definitions 361.5 (c)(39)(i)(v) and (xvi)
 - Scope of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities 361.48 (b)(5)
 - Comparable services and benefits 361.53 (a) and (c-e)
 - Participation of individuals in cost of services based on financial need 361.54 (b)(1-2)
- A.R.S. §§ 23-502 and 503
- Arizona Administrative Code, Title 6, Chapter 4
 - General considerations, R6-4-201(A)(1)(c)
 - Provision of services R6-4-206 (B)
 - Service and provider standards, service authorizations equipment purchasing, Workers' Compensation R6-4-402 (A)(1)(g-h) and (B)(1)(e)
 - Economic need and similar benefits R6-4-403 (A)(1)(a)(i) and (2-5); (B)(1) and (2)(a)(i) and (c-e) and (3).

III. Applicability

This applies to circumstances when a cochlear implant or Baha device may be determined necessary in order to achieve a successful employment outcome.

The client must:

- A. Meet economic need,
- B. Explore and utilize comparable benefits,
- C. Complete a comprehensive audiological evaluation,
- D. Participate in counseling and education regarding the implications of receiving either implant,
- E. Be in good general health, as evaluated by general history and physical examination, and do not have any serious medical problems that would preclude surgery or the aural rehabilitation program,
- F. Participate in aural-rehabilitation and post-implant services to ensure the successful outcome of an implant use, and
- G. Participate in any additional evaluation(s) as recommended by a medical professional.
- H. For a cochlear implant, the client must have:
 - 1. A moderate to profound sensorineural hearing loss in both ears and is unable to effectively utilize hearing aids.
- I. For a Baha implant, the client must have:
 - 1. Mixed hearing loss,
 - 2. Conductive hearing loss,
 - 3. Unilateral sensorineural hearing loss (single sided deafness), or
 - 4. Normal hearing in the contra lateral ear (normal hearing is defined at a PTA AC threshold equal to or better than 20dB at .5, 1, 2 and 3Khz).

IV. Standards

- A. Prior to proceeding with cochlear or Baha Implant service(s), the VR Counselor must ensure the assessment requirements are completed, refer to section 8.2 Assessments-Audiology/ENT.
- B. The VR Counselor must ensure the preceding recommendation was reviewed by a VR contracted consultant, as applicable.
- C. A cochlear or Baha implant recommendation must:
 - 1. Have justification for pursuing as a treatment service,

2. Be directly related to ameliorating the client's disability related barrier to employment,
 3. Be warranted and necessary for successful completion of the IPE, and
 4. Be for obtaining and maintaining gainful employment.
- D. The following items must be addressed prior to pursuing an implant option to ensure the client fully understands:
1. The prescribed cochlear or Baha implant process,
 2. The commitment required to complete the program,
 3. Side effects and similar communication enhancements with tactile stimulation instruments,
 4. The realistic expectation that an implant may be enhanced by a hearing aid in the better ear and/or use of other assistive listening devices, and
 5. The implant only creates the perception of sound and will not restore normal hearing.
- E. The VR Counselor must provide sufficient information regarding cochlear or Baha implants to ensure the client is making an informed choice as per Section 1.5, of this manual.
- F. All clients must be referred to a VR contracted audiologist consultant for a comprehensive exam to:
1. Confirm that hearing aid use is not feasible, and
 2. Obtain referral to an implant team for a cochlear or Baha implant evaluation either using VR contracted implant team or client's own medical provider/private insurance.
- G. The implant team must consist of a licensed and board-certified Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) Surgeon or otolaryngologist and audiologist with specialty expertise in cochlear and Baha implants to:
1. Evaluate the client's potential for the implant,
 2. Provide counseling and guidance regarding the implications of the implant, and
 3. To assist them in making an informed decision.
- H. All pre and post cochlear or Baha implant related services must be performed by the implant team.
- I. The VR Counselor is not responsible if clients do not fully understand the implications of these implants at any time and must refer the client back to the implant team as necessary for further assessment.

- J. The determination as to whether the client would be an appropriate candidate for an implant and would benefit from it must be made by the implant team.
- K. Medical clearance by ENT or Otolaryngologist must be obtained.
- L. Economic need is a requirement for the provision of implant procedure.
- M. Economic need does not apply to the external cochlear or Baha implant processors, refer to Section 13.1 Rehabilitation Technology for purchase of cochlear or Baha devices
- N. Comparable benefits must be explored and utilized (i.e. Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), Medicare/Medicaid or private insurance) for additional evaluations, all surgical costs and internal implant processors, refer to section 7.2 Comparable Benefits for more information.
- O. VR will not pay for surgical costs or internal implant processors.
- P. The following documents are required for review and pre-approval prior to adding to the client's IPE in Status 13 by Region 3 Program Manager:
 - 1. All audiological consultant and ENT/Otolaryngologist reports,
 - 2. Medical insurance coverage information (i.e. denial or partial approval of surgery/processors), and
 - 3. Documentation confirming the implant is feasibly appropriate and required to meet the client's specific employment outcome.
- Q. High-cost case approval policies apply and must be followed after Region 3 Program Manager approval.
- R. VR Counselor must document and provide justification how a cochlear or Baha implant will ameliorate the barriers to employment in the following areas of client's:
 - 1. Understanding of spoken communication,
 - 2. Job performance,
 - 3. Job security,
 - 4. Increased confidence, and/or
 - 5. Expanded capability.
- S. VR must support twelve (12) post-implant aural rehabilitation with a certified speech pathologist/audiologist with specialty expertise in cochlear and Baha implants.
- T. Approval for additional sessions requested by a specialist (e.g. audiologist or Speech-Language Pathologist) must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

- U. Replacement of an external cochlear or Baha implant processor when the processor has either been lost or stolen and an extended warranty is no longer available is allowed only once per client.
- V. A policy exception must be pursued for any subsequent replacements of an external cochlear or Baha implant processor. Refer to section 7.5, Policy Exceptions to Allowable Services for more information.
- W. External cochlear or Baha implant processor(s) upgrades are covered when:
 - 1. The client's current processor is beyond repair, and
 - 2. The specific processor model is obsolete, or
 - 3. When it is warranted for the client to maintain their current educational or specific employment outcomes.
- X. VR must consult with the contracted Audiological consultant prior to authorizing and purchasing of all cochlear implant processors.

V. Procedure

- A. Refer to section IV, C-D, G, L, N, O, P, and U above.
- B. Refer to Standard Work (if available).
- C. Refer to the RSA Allowable Services Spreadsheets, contracts (Audiology, and AT Aids/Devices) and provider requirements.
- D. The VR Counselor must complete the agency Referral for Services form for each service: Treatment – General/Medical Specialty for Implant surgical procedure and AT Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Aids/Devices for Cochlear Implant or Baha device upon IPE Approval.
- E. The VR Counselor must task the Purchasing Technician to create RSA Purchase Authorization(s) for the services listed in V. D.
- F. The Purchasing Technician must submit the RSA Purchase Authorization for each service listed in V.D along with the referral information to the provider(s).
- G. Upon receipt of each provider's reporting documentation (audiology assessment report, surgical procedure report, or AT device), the VR Counselor must review the reporting documentation for completeness, approve the provider's invoice and process for payment after confirming that the reporting documentation is complete.
- H. For non-contracted services, refer to RSA Contracts Unit for guidance whether the service is to be procured via:
 - 1. AHCCCS Fee for Services,
 - 2. Other procurement methods; or

3. Direct payment to the client via Client Purchase Agreement (CPA).

VI. Documentation Requirements

The client's electronic case file must include the following:

- A. All assessments and evaluations as specified in this policy.
- B. Justification outlining items listed in IV.B.1-4 above.
- C. Referral for Services forms.
- D. Case note documentation relating to the service provision (staffing notes, provider's reports, product warranties, etc.).