

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Program Name: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

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CHAPTER 13: Assistive Technology Services

Section 13.5: Hearing Aids

I. Policy Statement

This policy outlines the guidelines regarding the provision of hearing aids, fitting and follow up, repair of hearing aids and ear molds for clients who have documented hearing loss and may need these services in order to achieve a successful employment outcome as listed on their most recent and approved 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. §§:
 - Scope of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities 361.48 (b)(17)
 - Comparable services and benefits 361.53 (b)(5)
 - Participation of individuals in cost of services based on financial need 361.54 (b)(1-2)
 - United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Policy Directive RSA-PD-16-04, Other Services 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 applies to circumstances when hearing aids and related services are requested and may be determined necessary in order to achieve a successful employment outcome. 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 in instances when a costlier or cosmetically desirable hearing aid is selected than what is approved by VR.
- D. Be responsible for extended warranties.
- E. Complete and sign the agency Equipment Contract form.
- F. Adhere to the Client Purchase Agreement terms when applicable.

IV. Standards

- A. The VR Counselor must determine the vocational necessity of the hearing aid(s) for employment outcome based upon the following:
 - 1. Medical documentation from a licensed audiologist and/or ENT physician,
 - 2. Feedback from an VR Audiology Consultant, and
 - 3. Information provided by the client.
- B. Economic need does not apply.
- C. Comparable benefits do not apply.
- D. Purchase of hearing aids are permissible in the following IPE statuses:
 - 1. 06- in instances when the client's needs cannot be met by other reasonable accommodations.
 - 2. 10- in instances when the VR Counselor can justify the necessity of the hearing aids in order to participate in activities as part of the vocational planning process.
 - 3. 13- as part of the IPE.
 - 4. 32- as part of a post-employment service (see Section 6.1 Post-Employment Services for further details and restrictions).
- E. Clients must be referred to a VR contracted audiologist service provider to complete a comprehensive audiological evaluation under the following circumstances:
 - 1. Have not yet utilized hearing aids,
 - 2. Have a progressive hearing loss,
 - 3. Need hearing aids and the most current audiological exam is more than 1 year old, or
 - 4. Need hearing aid repair.

- F. The VR Counselor along with the examining audiologist and VR Audiology Consultant must assist the client in determining which hearing aids and audiological services best meet their needs.
- G. All audiological evaluation results and recommendations must be reviewed by an VR Audiology Consultant prior to the purchase of any new hearing aids, supplemental devices, repair or replacement of existing hearing aids.
- H. The VR Audiology Consultant must determine whether the hearing aid recommendations are appropriate or if further evaluation is needed.
- I. Only hearing aids that have been approved by the VR Audiology Consultant that best meet the client's needs will be purchased.
- J. One initial purchase of hearing aids is allowed per client for the duration of the current VR case including subsequent post-employment services (PES).
- K. A Client Purchase Agreement to purchase hearing aids is only allowable when the manufacturer is not a contracted vendor.
- L. 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.
- M. VR must support the client's decision in instances when the client elects and prefers to use only one hearing aid for environmental sound awareness despite a licensed audiologist's recommendation for two (2) hearing aids.
- N. Hearing aids may be used for a trial period prior to purchase to determine whether or not the client can benefit from hearing aids in an employment setting.
- O. The hearing aid fitting and follow up appointments must be approved on the IPE and listed on an RSA Purchase Authorization to the service provider prior to making the appointment(s).
- P. The client must be informed regarding the benefits of obtaining an extended warranty to cover unexpected repairs once the initial manufacturer warranty expires.
- Q. Existing warranties must be utilized for hearing aid repair prior to VR approval to fund any repairs for the device.
- R. Hearing aid repairs are only allowable when it is necessary for the successful completion of an IPE goal.
- S. In instances when the client's existing hearing aid is unable to be repaired and as per audiological consultant review a new hearing aid replacement may be recommended for purchase.
- T. 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 or subsequent PES.

- U. Ear molds may be covered under the following circumstances:
 - 1. When it is part of a new hearing aid purchase and fitting, or
 - 2. To replace old or broken earmolds with existing hearing aids as recommended as a result of hearing aid testing or evaluation.
- V. Policy exceptions must be pursued when a Client Purchase Agreement will be utilized for hearing aid testing, earmolds for hearing aid repairs.

V. Procedure

- A. The VR Counselor must plan an audiology assessment using RSA Service Code C01D in the amount of \$280.00 and include the following documentation with the referral for the assessment:
 - 1. Exhibit 1 – Audiology Evaluation Report,
 - 2. Exhibit 2 – Hearing Aid Order Form.
- B. Upon receipt of the audiology report from the audiologist, the VR Counselor must review the audiologist's reporting documentation for completeness and ensure that the audiologist has submitted the following prior to approving for payment:
 - 1. Audiology Report,
 - 2. Complete Hearing Aid Order Form,
 - 3. Billing Invoice.
- C. In instances when the audiologist recommends an ENT exam, the VR Counselor must refer the client to an ENT.
- D. The Purchasing Technician must authorize the ENT exam by utilizing RSA Service Code for medical evaluations 001A and CPT codes from Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) when tasked by the VR Counselor.
- E. The VR Counselor must submit the following documentation to the VR contracted Audiology Consultant for review and report:
 - 1. Hearing Aid Order form,
 - 2. Audiology Report, and
 - 3. Counselor Consultant Request form.
- F. Upon receipt of the VR Audiology Consultant report approving the hearing aid recommendation, the VR Counselor must sign PART II of the Hearing Aid Order Form and add the items to the IPE.
- G. The VR Counselor must task the Purchasing Technician to create two types of RSA Purchase Authorization for:

1. The hearing aid(s) and supplemental items for purchase as outlined on the Hearing Aid Order Form, and
 2. The audiologist service provider utilizing RSA Service Code C02F–Hearing Aid Fitting and Follow Up for either \$890.00 for a single hearing aid, or \$1335.00 for a pair of hearing aids.
- H. The Purchasing Technician must input the VR office address for the “bill-to” address, the contracted audiologist’s office address for the “ship-to” address on the bottom of the Hearing Aid Order Form, and the hearing aid manufacturer contact information at the bottom of the form.
- I. The Purchasing Technician must locate the hearing aid contracted price for the recommended and approved hearing aid(s) and enter for the total price of the hearing aid(s), using service code C16H on the RSA Purchase Authorization.
- J. The Purchasing Technician must send the RSA Purchase Authorization and Exhibit 2 of the Hearing Aid Order form directly to the hearing aid manufacturer contact person and include the account number. Refer to the manufacturer contact list for account numbers.
- K. The Purchasing Technician must send a copy of the RSA Purchase Authorization to the audiologist with the authorization number for the hearing aid manufacturer written on the Exhibit 2 – Hearing Aid Order Form.
- L. The VR Counselor must review the audiologist invoice for Hearing Aid Fitting and Follow Up report upon receipt and approve it for payment only when both the client and audiologist’s signatures are on the form and the two (2) follow-up appointment dates are listed, and the amounts must match with the contract amounts.
- M. The Purchasing Technician must utilize specific RSA Service Codes when tasked to create a CPA payment by the VR Counselor for:
1. Hearing aid testing: use the RSA Service Code 001F and the cost equivalent of the CPT code 92591, per current AHCCCS Fee Schedule pricing.
 2. Ear molds: use the RSA Service Code 016N per cost equivalent.
 3. Hearing aid repairs: use the RSA Service Code 016A per the cost equivalent.

VI. Documentation Requirements

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

- A. Audiology assessment and recommendation report,
- B. Audiology Consultation report,

- C. Hearing Aid Order form,
- D. Manufacturer's warranty, and
- E. Equipment Contract form.