

POLICY ON HEARING AIDS

I. PURPOSE

To assist the VR counselor in providing quality services to eligible individuals who have a hearing impairment that is a substantial impediment to employment.

II. ELIGIBILITY

The individual must meet VR eligibility requirements and be ready to obtain or maintain employment.

The services must be reasonable and necessary in order to obtain or maintain the employment outcome including the employment outcome of homemaker.

The VR counselor will assess if the hearing impairment constitutes a substantial impediment to employment based on the following:

- Level of functioning indicated on the audiology report
- Speech reception
- Speech discrimination
- Environmental factors of the work site as it relates to individual hearing loss that would contribute to functional limitations of the hearing loss such as ambient noise, phone use, etc.

The audiology exam must be completed by a licensed audiologist and within the last year. The information from the licensed audiologist should list the type of hearing loss the individual experiences. If the audiologist is unable to do so, the individual needs to be seen by an ENT Specialist in order to rule out a more serious condition or to consider other possible solutions.

III. PRIOR TO PURCHASE

A. Determining financial participation

The counselor will review the individual's present financial situation and update the Client Participation Worksheet if there have been significant changes in income or if it has been more than a year since the worksheet was completed.

Any public or private insurance must be used as primary payment if the individual has insurance coverage.

The percentage of the individual's financial participation will be discussed with them and listed under the client responsibility section of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

B. Identifying services to be provided

Unless the hearing aid is considered a service for diagnosis and evaluation, the counselor will complete a Comprehensive Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs (CARN) using the information from the audiologist and other information acquired during the eligibility process.

IV. PURCHASE PROCEDURE

A. Determining mold and fitting fees

When the counselor receives the invoice price and hearing aid model information from the audiology office, the counselor will refer to the *NDVR Payment Schedule for Hearing Aid Purchases*. The *Payment Schedule* outlines rates for the hearing aids, dispensing fees and ear molds.

The VR authorization will be in compliance with the *Payment Schedule* and the findings of the *Client Participation Worksheet*.

The individual will not be reimbursed by VR for any hearing/auxiliary aid purchase or associated expense without counselor approval prior to completing the IPE or IPE amendment.

B. Warranty, additional costs and insurance

A warranty is typically covered in the hearing aid cost. Counselors should verify the extent of the warranty and offer guidance to the individual so it is understood what other costs may apply to the maintenance, replacement, and care of the aid. The counselor and individual will discuss and identify the following responsibilities:

Individual's responsibilities

- Damages not covered by the warranty.
- Maintenance costs associated with the hearing aid or auxiliary aid.
- The cost of any auxiliary aids such as a PONS system or remote not directly related to employment.
- The replacement of hearing aids that are lost, stolen or damaged. They will be advised to purchase hearing aid insurance which may be obtained through the provider of the aid or homeowner's/renter's policy.

Counselor's responsibilities

- The counselor will discuss and have the individual sign the *Hearing and Hearing Aids Care* handout, which covers budgeting for additional expenses including the eventual cost of hearing aid replacement.
- The counselor will discuss and include any additional expenses such as replacement or extra batteries and cases, cleaning, etc., in the client responsibility section of the IPE.
- The counselor will complete a comparable benefits search to cover VR costs or assist the individual in their financial participation in the case of a loan.

- The counselor will make a referral to IPAT where appropriate.
- Discuss with the individual if a vision exam may also be needed, as good vision augments hearing.

V. EXCEPTIONS AND ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Only essential aids will be covered by VR, and VR will generally only purchase one aid or set of aids during the life of the VR case.

The counselor must receive approval from the Regional Administrator or State Office (in the absence of the Regional Administrator) for any exceptions to this policy. Any exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis.