

SERVICES FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS

I. LEGAL AUTHORITY

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, in Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998; 34 CRF 361.5(b)(3)(iii); 34 CFR 361.48(j); 34 CFR 361.49(a)(2-3), 29USC 723(a)(10).

II. POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE

The Agency will maintain state-wide specialized caseloads to meet the complex rehabilitation needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals. Vocational considerations need to include not only communication but also cultural, educational and social dynamics. Rehabilitation Counselor fluency in ASL and knowledge about communication strategies/technologies will be encouraged.

For the provision of ORS services, the Agency will arrange and pay for qualified interpreters except when a service provider is mandated by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, by ADA, or by state law to make interpreters available. Care will be taken to ensure specialized interpreter skills (medical, legal, CDI) are utilized in vocationally relevant situations.

III. GUIDELINES

A. Assessing the Vocational Implications of Hearing Loss

In determining if a hearing loss constitutes a substantial impediment to employment, the Rehabilitation Counselor must examine the individual's functioning as well as the audiological evidence, speech reception and speech discrimination.

1. Specific diagnostics for deafness and hearing loss will include an otological exam and an audiological examination. These exams have to be completed by an otolaryngologist and a licensed audiologist, not a hearing aid center. If these exams have been done within a year, then counselors should request copies of these examinations for review and determination of eligibility.
2. An applicant should be made eligible for services if difficulty understanding spoken language represents a substantial impediment to employment. This should be documented in a narrative entry for eligibility and also on the Order of Selection Checklist (ORS-154).

B. Hearing Aid Considerations

1. If a hearing aid is recommended and vocationally relevant, the counselor will arrange for the individual to be seen by an Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) and licensed audiologist (not a hearing aid center), if this has not been done within 6 months of a hearing aid being considered.
2. The purpose of the Otological examination by the ENT is to determine if there are any medical conditions which may interfere with the individuals hearing, if further testing is recommended, or if there are physical barriers to obtaining a hearing aid. If additional testing is recommended, the file needs to be reviewed by the medical consultant who will then recommend and approve a vendor for the test (i.e. CT scan). The Otological Examination Form (ORS-8) must be completed.
3. The purpose of the Audiological examination is to identify the severity of the hearing loss and the need for hearing aids. The exam will verify whether new aids are necessary. The Audiological Evaluation (ORS-9) must be completed.
4. Prior to an aid being purchased, the counselor may determine if the individual has a comparable benefit such as a private or public health insurance policy. If the individual has health insurance, the person may utilize their insurance prior to any ORS funds being applied toward the aid.
5. A Cost Validation Form (ORS-10A) must be obtained after the audiology visit and prior to any aids being approved or purchased by the counselor.
6. All aids must be approved by the Supervisor prior to any purchase or agreement being made to fund the aids and shall be included in the Individualized Plan for Employment (ORS-17).

C. Hearing Aid Services Provision

The Rehabilitation Counselor must assess that all hearing aid services provided meet the employment goal of the IPE and the vocational rehabilitation needs of the individual. It is expected that the IPE will include a plan for regular care, maintenance and replacement of the hearing aid.

A hearing aid can be provided if the following conditions are met:

1. The aids are vocationally relevant and are a necessary part of an individuals' potential employment or current employment situation.

2. The aids are included in the IPE for the individual to obtain, retain, or maintain employment or as part of an extended evaluation IPE for eligibility determination.
 3. The written plan must include an objective and goal for the client to budget for repair, maintenance and replacement of aids.
 4. The rehabilitation counselor reviews and signs the Hearing Aid Policy Form (ORS-10B) with the customer. This shall clarify owner responsibility for aid repair, maintenance and replacement. Client will receive a copy of this agreement, and a signed copy will be placed in their file.
 5. The Hearing Aid Cost Validation Form (ORS-10A) has been provided to ORS, and it is determined to be in adherence with the approved fee schedule, the relevant comparable benefits have been deducted (i.e. health insurance), and a written authorization to the medical provider has been provided.
 - a) ORS will not be responsible for the purchase of a hearing aid or other assistive listening devices if these have been prescribed and provided before the determination of eligibility and development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) or in a manner inconsistent with ORS policy. No aids will be retroactively paid for if the provider gives the hearing aid to the client without an authorization from ORS.
 6. Meets economic need per ORS Policy 115.8.
 7. Clients who are already hearing aid users must be tested with their current hearing aids, and the results of these test reviewed to determine if a new set of aids is necessary. This can be documented on the Audiological Evaluation Form (ORS-9).
- D. Hearing Aid Cost/Payment Considerations
1. Once the Hearing Aid Cost Validation Form (ORS-10A) is received, the medical insurance is applied to the total cost of the aid. If a determination has been made that the individual has an economic and vocational need for the aid, the file will be reviewed with the supervisor, and an authorization will be completed to assist in purchasing the agreed upon aid for the individual. The updated ORS Fee Schedule has the amounts for the mark up and additional fees such as ear molds if needed. It can not be assumed that all aids are in need of ear molds.

2. The bill for hearing aids will be paid after 30 days of the individual wearing the aids and ORS is in receipt of the Hearing Aid Assessment Form (ORS-10) completed by the audiologist upon the follow-up visit with the customer.
 3. In the development of the IPE, the rehabilitation counselor must list the barriers to employment that the hearing aid will address in addition to the clients' savings plan in the event of repairs and future hearing aid purchases. The plans should include customers' discussions with their audiologist about estimated repair costs and yearly costs so that they can plan for these services.
 4. Alternative technology will only be considered if a hearing aid can not provide the appropriate hearing for the specific job goal as determined by the audiologist and the rehabilitation counselor.
- E. Service Limitations
- ORS is committed to providing services that increase the independence and self-sufficiency of our clients towards an employment goal. While each situation will be examined on a case-by-case basis, ORS has developed a policy and procedure to address hearing aids or auxiliary items that can be purchased. Upon ORS purchasing or assisting with the purchase of the first set of aids, one of the IPE goals will be for the client to assume responsibility of future hearing aid purchases or services through self-sufficiency planning.
- F. Funding Guidelines for Hearing Aid Services
1. Hearing aid purchases can be considered within the aforementioned policy for those with an employment goal.
 2. Hearing aids can not be reimbursed if purchased by the customer or if an audiologist provides the aids prior to eligibility, the development of an IPE, and/or an authorization.
 3. Hearing tests are not provided on an annual basis after hearing aids have been purchased by ORS.
 4. Extended warranty plans for hearing aids after the initial 1 year warranty need to be purchased by the customer/client.
 5. Replacement and repairs for aids not covered by the initial warranty or extended warranty plan will be funded by the customer. ORS will consider

exceptions based on a case-by-case basis along with an updated Economic Need Form (ORS-60) and an updated IPE (ORS-17). There will need to be convincing evidence of a threat of job loss or inability to obtain employment due to the problematic aid.

6. ORS will not pay for a replacement aid which has previously been purchased by this agency if it has been damaged, lost or stolen. It is up to the client to be responsible for the care of their hearing aids once ORS purchases them. If a decision has been made to replace a stolen hearing aid, a police report will be required from the customer.
 7. Any repair or replacement hearing aid will need to be authorized by rehabilitation counselor and co-signed by the supervisor. If a hearing aid is replaced or a repair is completed without an authorization, ORS will not be responsible for the reimbursement of that service.
 8. It is the responsibility of the customer/client to pay for hearing aid batteries, accessories, or auxiliary items for the hearing aids unless needed for a vocational situation (i.e. Bluetooth technology for someone who does not need a cell phone to work).
 9. The purchase of Dry & Store systems will be the responsibility of the customer unless the individual works in a job that has been identified on the IPE where moisture is a concern.
 10. ORS will not provide duplicate aids or hearing devices as a back up for other equipment being utilized.
 11. Medical documentation that the individual will benefit from a hearing aid is required in order for ORS to support purchasing aids.
 12. ORS will not purchase hearing aids based on technology changes because customer prefers newer technology.
 13. If assistive devices are required, the rehabilitation counselor should refer back to the Rehabilitation Technology Policy # 115.16.
- G. Forms (Located in Appendix #1)
1. Otological Examination (ORS-8)
 2. Audiological Evaluation (ORS-9)

3. Hearing Aid Assessment(ORS-10)
4. Hearing Aid Cost/Repair Validation Form (ORS-10A)
5. Hearing Aid Policy Form (ORS-10B)
6. Economic Need Form (ORS-60)
7. Comparable Benefits Form (ORS-156)
8. Order of Selection Checklist (ORS-154)