



EDUCATION and WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CABINET
Department of Workforce Investment

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SERVICE FEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Staff
Client Assistance Program Administrator

FROM: Cora McNabb
Executive Director
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

THROUGH: Amanda Friend
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Branch Manager
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

DATE: Effective October 9, 2020

RE: Guidelines on Open Fit / Receiver in the Ear (RITE) / Post Auricle
Hearing Aids / Cochlear Implants (CI) and Bone Anchored Hearing Aids
(BAHS)

**Open Fit / Receiver in the Ear / Bilateral Routing of Signal / Post Auricle Hearing
Aids**

Exceptions are no longer needed for these types of hearing aids as long as they are still within Vocational Rehabilitation price guidelines. They are considered to be typical hearing aid technology.

Cost Participation

The first \$1,000 associated with the purchase of hearing aids is exempt from cost sharing. Any amount above \$1,000 will be subject to our current cost sharing policies.

This will apply to the purchase of hearing aids including binaural hearing aids (if recommended), ear molds (if applicable), and related shipping costs. Here are some examples:

- A pair of hearing aids is priced at \$2,200. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will pay \$1,000. The remaining \$1,200 is subject to consumer cost sharing policies.
- A pair of hearing aids is priced at \$999. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will pay \$999. The consumer will not be asked to share in the cost of the hearing aids.

The dispensing fee is a service under "Diagnosis and Treatment" and will be subject to cost participation (Expenditure Category 24F "Diagnosis and Treatment" from the Consumer Services budget). This cost participation policy includes split billing the costs and requiring the vendor to collect the balance from the consumer. The authorization will be sent to the vendor for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's part and the consumer will make payment arrangements with the vendor. These services are typically provided following the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and should be reflected on the IPE. On rare occasions, there may be a reason to provide these services prior to the IPE development in order to complete an assessment but that will require justification.

Hearing aids are still considered a service under Rehabilitation Technology and will come out of the Consumer Services budget. The consumer must purchase the hearing aid directly from the vendor at their cost when the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is not participating in the cost of a consumer's hearing aid.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will not purchase hearing aids from franchises where hearing aids are relabeled and locked. Hearing aids set in locked position do not allow Vocational Rehabilitation consumers the flexibility to have hearing aids serviced at their hearing aid manufacturer's alternative locations, should they need service while traveling on the job.

Hearing Aid Guidelines

Speech and / or hearing assessments or evaluations will utilize Expenditure Code 10C. A comprehensive audiometric evaluation (Current Procedural Terminology [CPT] Code 92557) and hearing aid evaluation (CPT Codes 92590 or 92591) may only be provided by a licensed / board certified audiologist. Provision by a licensed professional other than an audiologist will require an exception. Please note that only a board certified audiologist can perform and bill for comprehensive audiometric evaluation (CPT code 92557).

An outcome measurement must be performed to validate the purchase of technology (i.e. aided audiogram, real ear, aided speech or the hearing aid diary, testing in noise, etc.). An evaluation of the auditory system from a physician skilled in the diseases of the ear (otolaryngologist) should be provided when symptoms of ear pathology and / or conductive hearing loss are present.

A communication assessment must be completed by a Communication Specialist before the purchase of hearing aids. The communication assessment should cover communication difficulties in basic areas such as face-to-face communications, telephone communications, environmental sounds and situations, small group and large group situations, and electronic media / special equipment in settings such as work, school / home, etc. This information is helpful to determine the appropriate hearing aid circuitry and assistive devices needed in order to meet the consumer's communication demands on the job.

Board certified audiologists working with Office of Vocational Rehabilitation consumers who have insurance shall file a claim unless written notice can be obtained to verify the lack of coverage for the hearing aids. When insurance is available, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will process payment based on the Explanation of Benefits (EOB) and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation reimbursement Policies and Procedures.

Hearing aids should be purchased out of the Consumer Services regular budget using Expenditure Category Code 92G. The Expenditure Category Code for hearing aid accessories is 92H (dry n' store, batteries, etc.). The following Expenditure Category Codes remain under Rehabilitation Technology and are also to be purchased out of the Consumer Services regular budget. Please use these codes when purchasing Rehabilitation Technology for deaf or hard of hearing consumers.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will only purchase Behind-The-Ear (BTE) or Full Shell In-The-Ear (ITE) hearing aids that are Frequency-Modulated / Assistive Listening Devices (FM / ALD) ready or compatible (i.e. wireless connectivity or manual [not auto] telecoil). The maximum allowable fee for a hearing aid (conventional, programmable, digital) is \$800, which shall include the cost of the hearing aid, any additional circuitry needed, and Frequency-Modulated (FM) compatible option (wireless connectivity or telecoil). The appropriate dispensing fee, ear mold (Behind-The-Ear only), and shipping may be added to the cost of the hearing aid.

Use code 00080 for exceptions. An exception form is required if the amount exceeds \$800 in Office of Vocational Rehabilitation guidelines.

Exceptions require Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Branch Manager approval prior to purchasing a hearing aid, cochlear implant, or bone anchored hearing system. To request

an exception, send the exception form, hearing test, hearing aid recommendation, eligibility form, insurance verification, cost sharing form, and communication assessment to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Branch Manager in Central Office for approval. Once approval is obtained, you must then indicate on the description line on the pay authorization the specific exception (i.e. In-The-Canal [ITC], Completely-In-The-Canal [CIC], or Behind-The-Ear [BTE) / In-The-Ear [ITE] hearing aid if provided by a vendor outside the vendor list).

Expenditure Codes

| Device | Expenditure Code |
|--|------------------|
| <p>Telecommunication Devices (for deaf or hard of hearing individuals) <u>Examples:</u> Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), amplified, phones, phone amplifiers.</p> | 92 D |
| <p>Assistive Listening Devices (There is a separate Service Fee Memorandum for Assistive Listening Devices.)</p> | 92 E |
| <p>Alerting Devices (for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing) <u>Examples:</u> Flashing / vibrating alarm clocks, flashing / vibrating phone or door signalers.</p> | 92 F |

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has price agreements with **Oticon, Phonak, ReSound, Signia, Starkey, Unitron and Widex** (includes hearing aid accessories and FM / ALD’s). Please note that extended warranties are included in agreements.

A hearing aid recommendation from any other manufacturer requires an exception to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Branch Manager. Vendors will attach a Vocational Rehabilitation authorization to hearing aid orders to verify the Vocational Rehabilitation discount to the manufacturer. Hearing aids alone do not meet the expanded definition of physical restoration.

Cochlear Implants and Bone Anchored Hearing Aids

The Office considers Cochlear Implants (CI) and Bone Anchored Hearing Systems (BAHS) as medical procedures subject to Consumer Cost Sharing policies and procedures. Consumers must apply for all comparable benefits. It is best practice to refer cases requiring the purchase of these devices to a Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf or

the district Communication Specialist, depending on consumer's communication preference. In certain cases, this may not be possible or in the best interest of the consumer. In these instances, please discuss with the Branch Manager to determine the best course of action.

Physicians performing Cochlear Implant surgery must be a board certified otolaryngologist, licensed by the state they work in, with specialized training in cochlear implants. The board certified Audiologist involved in the provision of cochlear implants must be licensed by the state they work in with specialized training in cochlear implants.

Request for Cochlear Implants and Bone Anchored Hearing Systems require prior approval. Counselor should send requests to their Branch Manager and discuss the impact on the Consumer Services budget. If appropriate, the Branch Manager will forward the request and supporting documentation to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Branch Manager for review. The Assistant Director of Program Services will make the final decision.

Sound Processor Replacement

Sound Processor replacement is considered a medical procedure subject to Consumer Cost Sharing. Consumers seeking sound processor replacement must utilize all comparable benefits included, but not limited to: insurance, warranties, or loaners. As a backup, some vendors provide two processors per ear at the time a Cochlear Implant or Bone Anchored Hearing System is dispensed.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation does not purchase a replacement processor if the consumer has a backup. Sound processor replacement requires the same approval process as Cochlear Implant or Bone Anchored Hearing System. The board certified audiologist involved in the provision of a sound processor must be licensed by the state they work in with specialized training in Cochlear Implants.

In addition to any exceptions described above, unless prohibited by federal, state, or local statute or regulation, the Director of Program Services or designee may approve an exception to policy. For exception guidelines, please refer to "General Information" on the Services section of the Policy and Procedures Manual.

For any additional information regarding hearing aid guidelines, please refer to the Hearing Aids section of the Policy and Procedures Manual located under Services.