

HEARING AID PURCHASES

I. Prior to Purchase

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

The counselor will complete a comparable benefits search to cover VR costs. Insurance must be used as primary payment if the individual has insurance coverage for hearing aids.

Identify services to be provided

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

II. Authorizing for Purchase

The VR authorization must comply with the *Client Financial Participation Worksheet* and adhere to this payment schedule.

VR will not pay for any hearing/auxiliary aid purchase or associated expense without counselor prior approval.

Level 1 Hearing Aid - Invoice price \$0 to \$500

Pay invoice price for the hearing aid and \$688.00 per aid for the dispensing fee.

Level 2 Hearing Aid - Invoice price greater than \$500

Pay invoice price for the hearing aid and \$1173.00 per aid for the dispensing fee. Dispensing fee rates will be considered for increases annually.

The service category listed on the IPE is Treatment/Restoration. On the authorization, the service category is Treatment/Restoration, Subcategory: Hearing Aids.

If the billed amount is less than the allowable amount, pay the billed amount.

VR will pay shipping costs for hearing aids. This shipping cost must be shown on the original invoice.

Pay the Medicaid rate for ear molds (code V5264/V5265). The Medicaid rate effective July 1, 2021, is \$71.44 per mold. The only exception for paying more than the Medicaid rate for ear molds is in cases when a power ear mold is dispensed which costs the vendor more than the Medicaid rate. In those cases, a vendor must provide a copy of the original invoice for the ear molds (from Starkey, Widex, ReSound, etc.) that documents their actual cost. In those cases, VR will reimburse the vendor for the invoice cost of the ear mold.

If there is client participation in the cost, VR pays 100% of the ear mold charges (the Medicaid rate). This eliminates any confusion as to whether or not the ear molds might be considered an assessment. On the invoice balance (aids, dispensing and add-ons), VR pays their percent of the VR rate, and the client pays their percent of the VR rate.

A catch-all code, V5267, may appear on a bill. This catch-all code indicates a "Hearing aid or assistive listening device (not otherwise specified)". The invoice is required to determine what the item is. There is not a separate V code for Com Dex, Remote/RC-Dex, Phone Dex, TV Dex, T Dex, FM Dex, Call Dex, Uni Dex, and Mic as this technology is constantly changing as more devices are developed and added. If the invoice does not indicate what the item is, the provider must be contacted.

VR pays the invoice cost for a remote if it is required to adjust the hearing aids. When a Phone clip or a Com Pilot is dispensed rather than a simple remote, there must be a purpose directly related to employment to justify the additional expense.

A mic, com pilot, phone clip, etc., can be paid at the billed rate because they perform additional functions besides adjusting the hearing aids. For these items, there must be a purpose directly related to employment to justify the additional expense. These are all Bluetooth devices that are considered "add-ons" because they are a separate piece of technology not required for the hearing aid to work, but rather enhances the purpose of or boosts the efficiency of the hearing aid. The add-on communicates directly with the hearing aid and/or other Bluetooth devices to improve the quality and use of the hearing aid.

Notes:

- The authorization and invoice must be submitted to the state designated VR staff for review and approval prior to payment.

- The term 'dispensing fee' is synonymous with 'fitting fee'.

III. Other Considerations

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 phone clip 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.

Authority: 34 CFR 361.54(b) / NDAC 75-08-01-28