

Hearing Aid Devices

Quick Reference Guide – All Regions

Key Points:

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) requires initial testing results for hearing aids to be submitted ***within 2 business days*** of the evaluation.
- All hearing aids are ordered through the VA's national hearing aid contracts; therefore, no hearing aids shall be purchased under the VA Community Care Programs.
- When a hearing aid is issued, medical documentation for follow-up appointments, such as fittings and adjustments, must be returned ***within 30 calendar days from date of service***.
- Submit all medical documentation to the authorizing VA Medical Center (VAMC).

1. Once a determination that the Veteran would benefit from hearing aids has been made, the community-based audiologist should work with the Veteran to choose from devices available through VA-approved manufacturers, and then make appropriate impressions (ear molds).
2. The community-based audiologist should then:
 - a. Mail the impressions to the Veteran's VAMC; and
 - b. Upload or fax the completed manufacturer-specific hearing device order form and test results to the authorizing VAMC.
 - c. If the authorizing VAMC has established alternate ordering/documentation processes, please follow those. Process may vary by location.
3. An audiologist at the VAMC will update the Veteran's medical record and place the order for the hearing aids using the form and test results.
4. The VAMC will request the new devices be mailed to the community audiologist's office.
5. Once the community-based audiologist receives the devices, an appointment should be scheduled with the Veteran for a fitting. Providers must notify TriWest of the appointment.
6. The fitting must be performed by a licensed audiologist.

All hearing aid devices will be ordered and procured by the VA through the following VA contracted vendors: [Oticon](#), [Sonova](#) (Phonak/Unitron), [ReSound](#), [Sivantos](#), and [Starkey](#). Go to the [VA Audiology Toolkit](#) for more specific information on the entire process.

Audiologists must verify hearing aid performance using probe tube (real-ear) techniques. Gain or sound pressure verification (e.g., real-ear aided response or real-ear insertion gain) is essential to ensure audibility and alignment with target gain values.

Audiologists must provide to Veterans the requisite fitting, orientation, instruction and training in the use of hearing aids. Under no circumstances will an audiologist mail a hearing aid to any Veteran without having performed the requisite fitting, programming, verification and orientation. Using default or manufacturer's settings is not acceptable. Audiologists must administer a scientifically validated measurement instrument (e.g., IOI-HA, APHAB, or HHIE) to demonstrate the efficacy of treatment.

A hearing referral requires the following services be performed, when clinically appropriate:

- Full hearing history including, but not limited to: history of noise exposure, tinnitus, otalgia, ear surgery, aural fullness, previous hearing aid use and vertigo
- Prior to audiometry, routine otoscopy and cerumen removal, if necessary
- Comprehensive audiometry (includes pure tone testing for test frequencies from 0.25 kHz through 8 kHz for air conduction testing, 0.25 kHz through 4 kHz for bone conduction testing, speech reception threshold, speech recognition testing)
- Tympanometry (immittance) and ipsilateral and contralateral reflexes
- Reflex decay if indicated
- Selection of VA provided hearing aids, ear impressions if needed and, as appropriate, selection of wireless hearing aid accessories from VA-approved manufacturers listed below
- Hearing aid orientation, fitting, adjustment and initial programming
- Conformity evaluation (real ear measurement)
- Hearing aid programming adjustments, fitting issues, hearing aid orientation review

Hearing aid eligibility (audiologic) criteria for Veterans:

- A single threshold of 40 dB HL or greater at 500, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000
- Hearing thresholds of 26 dB HL or greater at three of the above frequencies
- Speech recognition score less than 94% (following appropriate test conditions)
- If the hearing loss meets the above criteria, it is considered disabling, such that it affects the Veteran's access to, active participation in, and/or provision of health care services (e.g., communication), and is considered to be clinical justification for hearing aids.

Resources

For questions related to the audiology process in your region, please contact the authorizing VAMC or TriWest Provider Services at 1-866-284-3743. Additionally, these websites* may be helpful for billing:

- CMS Physician Fee Schedule:
<https://www.cms.gov/apps/physician-fee-schedule/overview.aspx>
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association:
<http://www.asha.org/practice/reimbursement>

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