# BRS Hearing Aid ProtocolFrequently Asked Questions

1. What happens when a client offers to “pay the difference” between the cost of a hearing aid through the manufacturer and one that is not on the contract. For example: The hearing aid that is on the contract is $1398. The hearing aid when purchased from the audiologist is $5,600 dollars. Would we pay the audiologist $1,398 dollars and the client pays the balance?

Answer: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) will only purchase hearing aids under the contract. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) could ask for a second opinion, the client can go ahead and pay for the hearing aid themselves, or we ask the audiologist to find one that is on the contract.

1. We have a client who has hearing aids that are two years old. He does not need to replace the aid(s) at this time. However, he needs two new ear molds. The price quote came in at $140.00. Would we pay the $50 per ear mold under the current hearing aid contract OR would we pay the going rate for the ear molds?

Answer: We are not paying the fitting fee for hearing aids – we should work with the audiologist to help the person get fitted for ear molds and then pay for them directly to the audiologist at the $140.00 amount – That being said – replacing ear molds is a very common occurrence and in the future this person should really budget for this

1. Who do we contact if we have a question about Hearing Aid Procurement?

Answer: All questions regarding the Hearing Aid Procurement process should go through Terry Morrell at Terry.L.Morrell@maine.gov, 207-470-7668 or Nancy Melanson at Nancy.A.Melanson@maine.gov, 207-623-7958. Clients should never contact the hearing aid manufacturers directly.

1. Do we cover impressions for in-the-ear hearing aids?

Answer: Impressions for in-the-ear hearing aids are included in the fitting fee. However, we will pay for up to $50.00 per mold for behind-the-ear molds.

1. Is there a warranty on hearing aids and how long is the warranty?

Answer: Equipment warranty. The Contract Vendor must provide a minimum 24-month warranty on equipment covered by the Contract that includes parts and labor. Parts excluded from the warranty are the ear piece, the cord, tubing, and batteries. Each hearing aid sold under the Contract must have a one-year loss and damage warranty. The recipient, and/or the audiologist or hearing instrument dispenser, may only file 1 loss claim during the one-year loss and damage warranty term. The Contract Vendor shall not charge for packaging, shipping, invoicing, postage, insurance or handling while the hearing aid is under warranty and as long as the Contract Vendor is participating under the terms of the Contract.

1. How long does a client have before he or she can decide if the hearing aid is a good match for them?

Answer: New equipment trial period. For the purposes of the Contract, the trial period for a new hearing aid(s) is 90 days. New hearing aids that are not satisfactory to the recipient must be returned to the Contract Vendor, dispenser or audiologist, within 90 days of the dispensing date, but no sooner than 30 days, unless there is apparent damage. There will be no cost to the recipient or the authorized audiologist or hearing instrument dispenser if new equipment is returned within the 90-day trial period. The Contract Vendor may not charge any restocking fees for hearing aids returned during the 90-day trial period.

1. When an audiologist recommends an “in the ear” model for a type of hearing aid for someone, they need to send the impressions of the person’s ears along with the order for the hearing aids. Where should these impressions be sent?

Answer: At this time the audiologist/Hearing Aid Dealer should forward the impressions to the VR Counselor so that those impressions can be sent along with the authorization for payment and the hearing aid order to the manufacturer. For clarification – impressions should not be confused with the ear molds for behind the ear hearing aids – the ear mold impressions should remain with the audiologist/hearing aid dealer to be dispensed with the hearing aid.

1. What do we say to an audiologist if they inform us that the hearing aid they recommend is not on the list of manufacturers?

Answer: At this time, per our new Protocol, the State of Maine is only purchasing hearing aids for clients that are available on these lists. This gives the audiologist/hearing aid dealer more than 475 hearing aids from which to choose. Please keep in mind that our need is for the hearing aids to help a person in their current or future work environment, so there should be a hearing aid from one of these 12 manufacturers that will work well for our clients. In addition, counselors should be certain to fill out and use the Hearing Loss Assessment form which specifically addresses a person’s need for hearing aids on the job. This form should be sent to the audiologist/hearing aid dealer to help them understand the type of amplification the person requires on the job.

1. When determining eligibility, a BRS client was sent to an audiologist/hearing aid dealer back in July 2010 for an audiological evaluation to help determine the person’s eligibility for BRS, their hearing loss and any barriers to employment. The audiologist sent recommendations for specific hearing aids at that time (which are not on our current list from the manufacturer) and is now stating that because this was sent before this new protocol went into place, BRS should honor that recommendation and purchase those hearing aids at the audiologist’s price.

Answer: At the time that the protocol was starting, Central Office received a couple of phone calls about situations where hearing aid orders were already in process, and authorizations sent to pay for them. In those cases, we approved continuing with the previous process for purchasing hearing aids, since we had already approved and were in the process of paying for them. For all other situations, unless BRS had already sent an authorization or approved payment for specific hearing aids, we are using this new hearing aid protocol. If there are questions about a specific situation, please call Nancy Melanson or Terry Morrell to clarify.

1. What if someone requires an FM loop system in addition to new hearing aids to be used at their work? Are those systems available to purchase directly from the manufacturers?

Answer: If someone requires an FM loop system (this is a system that is tied to hearing aids, but separate from them) – then BRS would need to purchase it separately from the hearing aid from the audiologist/hearing aid dealer. The case would need to be made that the person requires it for their job (should be mentioned on the Hearing Loss Assessment form).

**Additional frequently asked questions:**

1. When we asked clients if they can make a contribution, is it okay to recommend an amount that they should contribute?

***Answer: No, the best way to discuss making a contribution would be to let client know how much it would cost to get a hearing aid and then let the client determine how much they feel or ask if they are able to contribute towards the cost. Never say how much we think would be a good amount for client to contribute.***

1. If an audiologist recommends other equipment such as FM system, do we pay the $550.00 fitting fee?

***Answer: No we do not. The fitting fee is only for hearing aids that are purchased under the contract.***

1. How many batteries are covered in the fitting fee?

***Answer: At least ten batteries would be included in this.***

1. Can we accept an audiogram from a hearing aid specialist?

***Answer: No, the audiogram must come from an audiologist.***

1. Do we work with Hearing aid specialists?

***Answer: Only if they are willing to work with us through our contracts and understand that we will not be purchasing hearing aids from the hearing aid specialists. In general, it is better to work with licensed audiologists because they have much more training to assist our clients in figuring out which hearing aids will work best for them.***

Thanks again everyone for your patience and perseverance as we continue to work out the kinks in this new process. If you have any other questions that have not been addressed here, please let me know. We will update this and put it on the website.

Betsy Hopkins

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Terry Morrell

Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (DDHHLD) Director