# C-700: Medical Services and Equipment

Revised (06/01/2022)

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## C-704: Durable Medical Equipment

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### C-704-10: Hearing Aids

Hearing aids may be authorized when they are expected to improve the customer's ability to participate in employment and/or training that is required for a specific employment outcome. The VR counselor documents the expected outcomes in the case file as part of the assessing and planning process.

The VR counselor develops the individualized plan for employment (IPE) to purchase hearing aids after receiving:

* an audiological assessment completed by a licensed audiologist or hearing-aid specialist:
  + on the [VR3105C, Hearing Evaluation Report: Audiometric Examination](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); or
  + documented on audiological records containing the same audiometric and tympanometry required on the VR3105C and dated within the last 90 days;
* the completed hearing evaluation form with hearing aid recommendations recorded on the [VR3105D, Hearing Evaluation Report: Hearing Aid Recommendations](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); and
* medical evaluation as described below on the [VR3105B, Hearing Evaluation Report: Otological Examination](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), or medical records from the otologist or otolaryngologist including the medical evaluation and dated within the last 90 days.

It is recommended a medical evaluation be obtained to rule out any medical reason for the customer’s hearing loss, such as infection, injury or deformity, ear wax in the ear canal, and in rare cases, tumors.

When the customer is 17 years of age or younger, medical evaluation must be obtained by an otologist or otolaryngologist. Refer to [VRSM E-200: Summary Table of Approvals, Consultations, and Notifications](https://twc.texas.gov/files/partners/vrsm-e-200.docx).

Medical evaluation:

* for seasoned hearing aid users (not a first time hearing aid user) with no medical issues (for example, no sudden hearing loss or extreme changes in hearing loss), it is best practice to obtain a medical evaluation. The medical evaluation is completed by a physician or physician assistant or nurse practitioner who is supervised by a licensed physician. When a medical evaluation is not completed for a seasoned hearing aid user with no medical issues, the VR Supervisor (VRS) may waive the requirement for medical evaluation;
* for a first-time hearing aid user, a medical evaluation is required from an otologist or otolaryngologist. If the staff member is experiencing substantial delays (90 days or more) in securing the evaluation by the otologist or otolaryngologist. The medical evaluation may be performed by the customer's PCP or if the customer does not have a PCP, the physician who performs the office's general medical evaluations may conduct the medical evaluation.

When the VR counselor receives a recommendation for a complete-in-canal (CIC) hearing aid, he or she ensures that the audiologist sufficiently justifies the added benefits of a CIC hearing aid when compared to an alternative style with the same capabilities.

It is advised that the VR counselor consult with a Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) [Deaf and Hard of Hearing technology specialist](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing#resource-specialist) when considering purchase of additional non-contracted technology recommended by the dispenser.

For information on purchasing hearing aids, refer to [D-209-3: Contracted Goods and Services](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d209-3) and [D-210: Exceptions to Contracted Fees and MAPS Fees](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d210).

When an audiologist or hearing-instrument specialist provides a vocational justification that warrants an aid without a manual telecoil, it is recommended that the VR counselor consult with a local deaf and hard of hearing technology specialist before purchasing the aid. The VR counselor may request a workplace or environmental assessment completed by the deaf and hard of hearing technology specialist to identify additional technology needs.

Staff Qualifications for Hearing Aid Dispensers

Individuals who provide and bill for services associated with the purchase of hearing aids and related accessories must meet the qualifications and licensing requirements of the [Texas Department of Licensing & Regulation](https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/), which is the designated regulatory authority for audiologists and hearing aid specialists (hearing aid dispensers).

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| Job Title | Job Function | Required Qualifications |
| Audiologist | * Provides audiological examinations * May dispense hearing aids * May provide basic audiometric assessments * May provide hearing aid evaluations | Must comply with all provisions of:  Texas Administrative Code Title 16, Part 4, Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, Chapter 111, Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists |
| Hearing aid specialist | * Dispenses hearing aids * May provide basic audiometric assessments (MAPS 92551–92559) * May provide hearing aid evaluations | Must comply with all provisions of:  Texas Administrative Code, Title 16, Economic Regulation, Part 4, Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, Chapter 112, Hearing Instrument Fitters and Dispensers |

Comparable Benefits

Use of comparable services and benefits is not required for rehabilitation technology, including hearing aids.

Customer Participation in Cost of Services

Customers may be required to participate in the cost of services. For more information on applying basic living requirements (BLR) to contracted hearing aids and accessories, refer to [VRSM D-203-4: Customer Participation in the Cost of Services](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d203-4).

Hearing Aid Recommendations

The selected provider must complete the [VR3105D, Hearing Evaluation Report: Hearing Aid Recommendations](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), and submit a completed manufacturer’s order form indicating the:

* brand name and model number (not serial number);
* type of hearing aid, such as:
  + behind-the-ear;
  + in-the-ear;
  + in-the-canal;
  + complete-in-canal; or
  + bilateral contralateral routing of signal;
* color selection;
* receiver information;
* earmold information;
* quantity of hearing aids;
* cost of hearing aids; and
* any required justifications.

Service Charge to the Hearing Aid Dispenser

The service charge is the dispenser's usual and customary charge, not to exceed the Maximum Affordable Payment Schedule (MAPS), for:

* initial fitting, including activation of a telecoil;
* up to four follow-up visits without any time limitations for adjustments, including:
  + post-fitting evaluation; and
  + report of hearing aid performance and customer level of satisfaction;
* instructions on the care and use of the instrument;
* the warranty including the warranty end date; and
* provided the customer with the manufacturer’s User Instructional Brochure.

Service Charge for Replacement Hearing Aids

For hearing aids replaced under the three-year warranty, use MAPS code 00076 if the dispenser requires payment of a service charge. If the service charge for a replacement hearing aid or aids is paid, four additional follow-up visits are included in the cost of the service. These are in addition to unused visits from the original service charge.

MAPS Codes for Hearing Aid Service Charges

* 00075 - Unspecified service charge. Rate to be determined by PRS/CO Programs
* 00076 - Service Charge for Hearing Aid $0 - $1000 Manufacturer’s Lowest List Price
* 00077 - Service Charge for Hearing Aid $1001-$1500 Manufacturer’s Lowest List Price
* 00078 - Service Charge for Hearing Aid $1500+ Manufacturer’s Lowest List Price

The hearing aid dispenser must complete the Initial Fitting Acknowledgements section on the VR3105E and submit the report to TWC-VR immediately upon receipt of the customer’s signature indicating receipt of the hearing aids. The hearing aid dispenser must schedule an appointment with the customer to return for post-fitting no later than 14 days after the date the customer received the hearing aids. If the customer does not attend an appointment with the dispenser within 14 days of receiving the hearing aids, the dispenser must notify VR staff that the customer has not returned for the post-fitting appointment. If the customer does not keep the post-fitting appointment, VR staff contacts the customer before the 30-day trial period ends to verify that the customer has received and is satisfied with the hearing aids. When the hearing aids are returned within the 30-day trial period, the original service charge covers any services for the replacement hearing aids.

Earmolds and Canal Impressions

Earmolds and canal impressions may be:

* required for hearing aid purchases;
* purchased from the contracted hearing aid manufacturer, audiologist, or hearing aid dispenser;
* paid for separately (not to exceed MAPS); and
* purchased for diagnostic purposes.

Custom-made ear plugs, which look like earmolds and are made for sound protection, may be purchased to preserve the customer's residual hearing while performing work duties.

Binaural

Binaural aids may be purchased when:

* recommended by the audiologist or hearing aid service provider; and
* a documented vocational benefit exists.

Hearing Accessories

An audiologist or hearing aid dispenser may recommend certain accessories and devices that work with the hearing aids to enhance the customer's ability to hear and understand conversational speech and environmental sounds. One example is a device that streams sounds from the telephone, television, and music player, as well as a compatible microphone, directly to the hearing aids. These may be purchased when the VR counselor determines that any of the recommended accessories are vocationally relevant, as such accessories must be vocationally necessary and not used solely for personal purposes.

Another accessory that may be purchased is a hearing aid drying kit, which draws moisture from the hearing aids to prolong their life span. The audiologist or dispenser is not required to recommend the kit for VR staff to purchase this accessory.

MAPS Codes for Contracted Hearing Aids, Earmolds, and Accessories

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| Beltone | BELTO |
| Oticon | OTICO |
| Phonak | PHONA |
| GN Resound | GNRES |
| Siemens/Signia | SIEME |
| Sonic Innovations | SONIC |
| Starkey | STARK |
| Unitron | UNITR |
| Widex | WIDEX |

Repair

Payment for repair of a hearing aid, including labor and shipping and handling charges, must not exceed the cost of a new hearing aid.

Frequency Modulation System

The VR counselor may purchase a frequency modulation (FM) system directly from a manufacturer or an audiologist. However, the VR counselor may not pay a service fee, including any fitting and dispensing fees, when he or she purchases an FM system through an audiologist.

When additional training is needed for an FM system not purchased from the hearing aid manufacturer at the time of purchasing the hearing aids, the VR counselor contacts the deaf and hard of hearing technology specialist to request training for the customer on the use of the device and to perform troubleshooting of any issues with the device. Services provided by the deaf and hard of hearing technology specialist are free and may be used when available. If the required training is not available from the deaf and hard of hearing technology specialist, the VR counselor may negotiate payment with the provider for training the customer on the use of the device and for solving problems that arise with the device.

Process and Procedure

When the VR counselor receives, reviews, and approves a completed [VR3105D, Hearing Evaluation Report: Hearing Aid Recommendations](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), (including the completed manufacturer’s order form) two service authorizations (SA) are issued and submitted:

* to the contracted hearing aid manufacturer for the purchase of the hearing aid(s) and any accessories, with delivery instructions indicating the name, account number, and address of the dispenser where the items are to be shipped with the completed manufacturer’s order form; and
* to the hearing aid dispenser for related service fees and any accessories.

VR staff then submits the VR SA for the hearing aid and any accessories with the completed manufacturer’s order form to the contracted hearing aid manufacturer for fulfillment. The contracted hearing aid manufacturer ships the hearing aid or aids and any accessories to the hearing aid dispenser for dispensing.

Payment for Hearing Aids to the Manufacturer

Upon receipt of an invoice, VR pays the contracted hearing aid manufacturer for the hearing aid and/or accessories when the invoice complies with requirements below:

* VR-SFP Chapter 3: Basic Standards;
* VR-SFP Chapter 6: Hearing Aids and Related Accessories;
* VRSM D-208-2: Elements of an Invoice; and
* verification by VR staff with the dispenser that the hearing aids and accessories have been received with a detailed case note entered in RHW; or
* receipt of a VR3105E, Hearing Aid Fitting and Post-Fitting Report with the Initial Fitting Acknowledgements section completed and signed by the customer.

Payment for Hearing Aids Service Charges to the Dispenser

For the hearing aid dispenser to receive payment for services provided, the hearing aid dispenser must submit the following:

* A completed [VR3105E, Hearing Aid Fitting and Post-Fitting Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), indicating the customer has received the hearing aids and is satisfied with the hearing aids and any accessories, as indicated by the customer signing and dating the form;
* Post-fitting documentation such as:
  + an audiogram of functional results for each ear (aided); or
  + measurements for each ear (aided); and
* An invoice that complies with [VRSM D-208-2: Elements of an Invoice](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d208-2).

If the customer fails to attend the scheduled post-fitting appointment, the dispenser may be paid the service charge once the:

* field staff documents at least three attempts to contact the customer about attending the post-fitting appointment; and
* the VR counselor enters a purchasing case note that justifies payment of the service charge without the customer’s attendance at the post-fitting appointment.

Returns

The hearing aid dispenser that dispensed the goods or equipment to the customer must provide written notice to the VR office that issued the SA when any goods or equipment purchased with VR funds are returned to the manufacturer for any reason. The hearing aid dispenser completes the VR3105F Hearing Aid and Hearing Aid Accessories Return and submits the completed form to the manufacturer with the returned items. The dispenser submits the completed form to the VR office immediately upon return of the items.

The VR3105F Hearing Aid and Hearing Aid Accessories Return form must include:

* the customer's name;
* the case identification number;
* SA number associated with the returned items;
* a description of the item returned;
* the reason for the return;
* the amount of credit due to VR; and
* the date and method that the item was returned including the bill of lading or shipment number from the carrier..