BRS Procedures for Provision of Hearing Aids:

Information for Audiologists

Required forms:

Audiometric Exam Form; with Workplace Assessment form (completed by the consumer and/or counselor)

Hearing Aid Quotation form

Hearing Aid Re-evaluation Form (30-day re-check)

Hearing Assistive Technology Systems Price Quotation Form

**BRS fees for assessments:**

Audiological- $75.00 /EVAL

Hearing Aid Evaluation- $55.00 /EVAL

Hearing Assistive Technology Systems (HATS) Evaluation- $55.00

**Fees for hearing aids**:

**$800.00 /PAIR** Binaural Dispensing Fee Programmable Hearing Aid

**$525.00 /ITEM** Monaural Dispensing Fee Programmable Hearing Aid

**Wholesale cost to Dealer up to $800.00\*\****/* Binaural Hearing aids

**Wholesale cost to Dealer up to $800.00 \*\****/* Monaural Hearing Aid

**Up to $94.00/PAIR** Custom molded ear molds (two aids)

**Up to $47.00/MOLD** Custom molded ear mold (one aid)

**$425.00/PAIR** Binaural Dispensing Fee

**$275.00 /AID** Monaural Dispensing Fee

**Up to $800.00 /ITEM** Hearing Assistive Technology System (HATS) product

**$25.00/15 Minute Installment up to $150.00** Hearing Assistive Technology Systems Training Fee

\*\* See third and fourth paragraphs for further explanation of BRS’s $800.00 caps

(All fees/rates are per 10/13 System 7 and are subject to change)

The BRS counselor will first meet with the consumer to review the **Workplace Assessment** F**orm**; to be sure the form is fully completed. This form is then sent to the audiologist prior to the consumer’s appointment, along **with** the 2-page **Audiometric Exam form**.

It is expected that the audiologist will complete the **Audiometric Exam form** after assessing the consumer, and will return the form, **with the required narrative**, to the counselor. The narrative must include an explanation of the recommendations for specific hearing aids. The counselor will expect the audiologist to give specific information about how the recommended digital or digital/programmable aid(s) will be *required* and *necessary in the work setting for this individual consumer.*

**BRS will also need additional explanation from the audiologist regarding any recommendations for hi-tech, “ultimate” technology hearing aids** **over $800.00**, as BRS is only responsible for providing the hearing aids that are reasonably necessary for the individual consumer in his/her specific job. If the consumer wishes to have the higher-level “ultimate” hearing aid with additional features or hearing aid accessories that are beyond what is required, the consumer may pay for any additional costs for the upgrade or accessories.

Numerous hearing aid manufacturers have greatly reduced their hearing aid prices to meet BRS’s $800.00 caps. Audiologists can contact their hearing aid manufacturer representative for their most updated hearing aid price list. The following hearing aid manufacturers and hearing aid instrument specialists have hearing aids at reduced prices for BRS purchase only: Phonak, Siemens, GN Resound, Oticon, Starkey, Sonic, Unitron, Widex, and Amplisound (Hearing Instrument Specialist).

BRS only pays up to $47.00 per ear mold or $94.00 per pair of ear molds based on the cost of the ear mold to the vendor (if an invoice states the ear mold was less than $47.00 for one ear mold or $94.00 for two ear molds; BRS will only pay the price stated on the invoice).

BRS may pay up to $800.00 for Hearing Assistive Technology Systems (HATS) product when approved by the BRS Central Office Consultant for Deaf/Hard of Hearing services. Examples of HATS products include, but not limited to T Coil Loops and Silhouettes, FM Systems, Amplified or Bluetooth Stethoscopes, Pocket Remotes, Bluetooth accessory adapters, and HATS products produced by hearing aid manufacturers that only work with one’s personal hearing aids. These devices may be approved for purchase when required for a consumer to maintain employment, comparable devices of lesser cost have been explored, and they are not reasonable accommodations through their employer.

BRS has also created a Hearing Assistive Technology Systems (HATS) Evaluation service. The rate for providing this service is set at $55.00. This service is only to be authorized when a Deaf or Hard of Hearing consumer needs to be evaluated for a HATS product with their current hearing aid. If a Deaf or Hard of Hearing consumer is referred to an audiologist to be evaluated for hearing aids, this service is included in the Audiometric and Hearing Aid Evaluation service. Audiologists who are recommending a HATS product must send a thorough written report documenting their recommendations for the HATS product and its estimated significant improvement i.e. increase in speech discrimination, speech reception, decibels, for a consumer’s communication needs in the workplace along with a **Hearing Assistive Technology Systems Price Quotation Form**.

The BRS counselor will provide guidance to the consumer on how to communicate and negotiate with their employer and ask for the recommended or comparable HATS product as a reasonable accommodation. Audiologists are encouraged to provide both the BRS counselor and consumer with a list of comparable devices that employers may elect to purchase. While employers have purchased HATS products produced by hearing aid manufacturers that only work with one’s personal hearing aid, they may be more likely to purchase a device that can be used by other employees who use different brands of hearing aids.

When a HATS product is recommended, **the Hearing Assistive Technology Systems Price Quotation Form** must be completed by the vendor, with documentation of the cost to the vendor from the manufacturer, the shipping cost, and an estimate of office time needed for the audiologist to train the consumer on the HATS product. Our HATS training fee is $25.00 per 15 minute installments up to an hour and half ($150.00)per device. All of this information is needed for the BRS counselor to be able to authorize purchase of the product (invoice, or manufacturer’s wholesale price list can be used for price quote documentation; *It is understood that the initial cost on the Price Quotation form may sometimes be higher than actual cost, and will be adjusted to reflect actual cost to the vendor, at the time of billing to BRS.*).

If a consumer’s HATS product is not required for employment but recommended for the consumer’s personal gain, the consumer can purchase the HATS product at its own expense or apply for a loan through the CT Tech Act Project.

The BRS counselor will need to use all of the information in determining whether BRS can assist this consumer in the purchase of amplification. BRS is an Eligibility program – we can only provide services to consumers if we document that they *require* the service *for their employment*. The counselor needs to document not only the fact that the consumer has a hearing loss, but also that, *for this individual*, the hearing loss is a *significant functional limitation for employment*. This is the reason that BRS requires the speech discrimination scores in quiet, and in noise, at average conversational levels (45db) binaural testing. BRS counselors will need to use the specific information contained in the report about speech discrimination, binaural, *in the soundfield* (again, in both quiet and in noise, tested at average conversational loudness levels), to help them to decide whether or not the consumer has a significant functional limitation, meets the eligibility criteria of BRS, and requires amplification in the workplace.

The BRS Counselor also requires the comparison of speech discrimination Unaided, Aided with Present Aids, and Aided with Recommended Aids, in order to justify the need for *new* amplification. The consumer must be tested with their current hearing aids, and scores reported on the Audiometric form. If the consumer currently has hearing aids that are doing the job, they will not be eligible, as they do not currently *require* services. Our Federal funding and regulations do not allow us to purchase “back-up” equipment. Consumers will most likely not be eligible if their current hearing aids are still doing the job, and there is no significant change in hearing level, in hearing aid functioning, or in communication demands of the job.

BRS understands that when recommending custom hearing aids, the audiologist may not actually test the consumer with the aids, as they may need to be ordered. We require that the audiologist provide their *best estimate* of the improvement that can be expected with the recommended hearing aids ("Aided - Recommended Aids (EST)").

In addition, BRS cannot pay the additional cost for canal or CIC hearing aids, unless the counselor is able to determine that there is specific medical, audiological or vocational justification for them. We can pay the cost of the comparable ITE, and the consumer may pay for the additional cost of the canal or CIC, if they choose. The audiologist should always specify whether or not the hearing aid being recommended is digital/programmable, and/or canal or CIC.

The cost for a return visit to the audiologist for re-check of the hearing aid is included in the fee for the Audiometric Exam. The counselor should include the **Hearing Aid Re-Evaluation Form** with the initial packet of information sent to the audiologist. If the audiologist is also vending the aid, then the 30-day re-check appointment can be scheduled at time of fitting.

The Audiological exam may be authorized at the same time as the Hearing Aid evaluation. Or, if a complete, recent audiological assessment is available at the time of referral, just the Hearing Aid evaluation can be scheduled, and reported on the **Audiometric Exam form**.

If the audiologist who completes the Audiometric Exam form will also be dispensing the hearing aid(s), the **Hearing Aid Quotation Form** should also be completed and returned to the counselor.

BRS will pay the wholesale cost, plus dispensing fees, for any hearing aids we purchase. When the audiologist sends BRS back our authorization (bill) for the hearing aid(s) purchased, a copy of the invoice with the make of the hearing aid must be included.

If a consumer has medical/health insurance they are required to submit to their counselor prior to hearing aid evaluation a letterhead from their insurance stating what they will and will not cover towards hearing aids. BRS is required by our federal law to use comparable benefits when paying for services. Consumer’s medical/health insurance is a comparable benefit we must take into consideration prior to purchasing hearing aids.

BRS expects that the consumer will be responsible for regular care of the aid once it is purchased – batteries, repairs, replacement if lost, damaged or stolen, new earmolds as needed, etc. We strongly suggest that the consumer either purchase an extended warrantee, or be sure that their aid is covered by their own homeowner’s insurance policy against loss, damage or theft.

The counselor should also be arranging for medical clearance for amplification from an ENT specialist.

# The ENT/Otological Evaluation -

The BRS counselor should send a brief referral letter with a description of the consumer’s hearing problems as related to employment, along with the required **Otological Examination Form** to the ENT doctor. The counselor should include any previous audiological/hearing aid information (copies of reports). If an audiological report is not available, the counselor may also request that the ENT doctor/audiologist do a brief hearing screening (92553 audiogram, A & B conduction only) to assess the hearing impairment (additional speech testing should not be authorized to the ENT’s office, as this will be done through the audiological assessment).

**Otological Examination Form** is a one-page checklist that does not require extensive information from the ENT physician. The most important aspect is getting medical clearance for the provision of hearing aids, if recommended by the audiologist.

**Fees for ENT evaluation:**

99245 Specialist Examination – All M. D.’s $138.96

99080 Written Report or Review of Medical Data – M.D. $12.02

92553 Audiogram, air and bone conduction $18.27

(All fees/rates are per 7/15 System 7, subject to change)