

FUNDING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR HEARING AIDS

Audiologists are health care professionals who provide assessment and intervention for individuals with hearing and/or balance concerns. Audiologists see many clients in their practice who range in age from being a day old to over a hundred years old. Although hearing loss is more common in the older population, hearing loss can affect people of all ages. When audiologists identify hearing loss they will review important communication strategies with their clients and/or their families and caregivers, such as the importance of visual cues as well as the importance of minimizing background noise whenever possible. Hearing aids are also often discussed and recommended. Audiologists help clients to understand realistic expectations from hearing aids so that individuals can get the maximum benefit of amplification.

Hearing aids are expensive and clients often report that the high cost is a barrier. Newfoundland and Labrador is very fortunate to have a Provincial Hearing Aid Program. After an audiologist has determined that an individual can benefit from a hearing aid, that client can apply through the Provincial Hearing Aid Program if they feel they do not have the resources to pay for a hearing aid at that time.

Through the Audiology services with the four Regional Health Boards, the Provincial Hearing Aid Program provides hearing aids to all children who need them regardless of family income. Hearing aids will continue to be provided/replaced as necessary as determined by the audiologist, until the child is 18 years of age. If the individual is still attending a post-secondary institution after this age they will continue to be covered through the program. The Provincial Hearing Aid Program for adults is also administered through Audiology under the Health Boards. A financial assessment is completed by the Department of Advanced Education and Skills (AES) to determine whether or not this individual has the resources to pay for hearing aids. If it is determined that the person qualifies for this program, the audiologist will be sent confirmation of this qualification. The client is then contacted and the process of obtaining hearing aids for the client begins (ear mold impressions, discussion regarding the types of hearing aids, choosing the right hearing aid, ordering, programming and fitting the hearing aid, and then appropriate monitoring/follow-up). Many people think they have to be receiving income support from the former Department of Social Services (now AES) to qualify for this program. This is often not the case. Of course those who are currently receiving financial assistance from AES would qualify based on the nature of their financial situation at that time, but many other individuals, especially seniors also have qualified. Qualifying is determined by their income and their savings.

The Provincial Hearing Aid Program issues over a thousand hearing aids each year for individuals of all ages across the province. Hearing aids can open up the world again for many people, allowing them to once again more easily participate in conversation, taking away the social isolation often experienced by those with hearing loss. If you have hearing concerns and have not followed up with an audiologist and or obtained hearing aids because you feel you cannot afford them, remember that this program may be able to help you. There may be wait times to access this service, therefore it is important to contact Audiology as soon as you suspect any hearing concerns. Contact your local audiologist for more information. In Corner Brook, call 637-5374 and in Stephenville, call 643-8690.

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