

Questions and Answers for Hearing Aid Providers
Regarding the 2015 – 2017 Request for Application (RFA)

Q: This document is a little different than ones I've seen before. Why?

A: As a state agency and under counsel from the Attorney General's Office, DSDHH has to follow established guidelines set for contract purposes. A large portion of the document comprises the standard inclusions of every state contract. Two new attachments for this RFA are Attachments E and F. Recent laws regarding conflict of interests for state contractors requires these two forms to be included as part of the complete document.

This particular document is called a Request for Application (RFA). If you are affiliated with state government as an agency or institution or have a special Memorandum of Agreement with the state, a difference will be noted within the Terms of Agreement sections.

Q: In order to participate as a provider, this format requires completing an application and submitting it. Where can I get the application?

A: Previously contracted providers have been mailed the paperwork needed for submittal. If you are a new provider or did not receive the paperwork, the application can be downloaded from the DSDHH web site: <http://ncdohhs.gov/dsdhh>

With your mouse cursor, scroll over the "Doing Business with Us" tab on the Home Page. Click on the "Careers and Contracts" link. On the next page, follow the link for Hearing Aid Providers which will take you to links for two different contract applications—one for private hearing aid providers and the second for those affiliated with the state or an institution such as a hospital or university. Select the appropriate contract and print for completion. If you have any difficulty in accessing the document, contact Jeff Mobley at (919) 874-2239 and request the paperwork be mailed.

Q: Is there a deadline for submission?

A: YES! All completed paperwork for the RFA is open for submission beginning May13, 2015 and **must be received by DSDHH no later than 5:00 PM on Thursday, June 25th.** We will NOT accept ANY applications beyond the deadline date. Please plan accordingly and submit your completed application and accompanying documents early. Applications received after this deadline date will be returned and cannot be accepted until the next open application period. Because the contract term was expanded to a two-year contract, there are several application acceptance periods established. Please make note of them on Page 1 of the RFA. No applications will be accepted except during these open application periods.

Q: Are there any special instructions for making application?

A: Yes. Applicants should pay particular attention to the deadline date mentioned above. Also, special instructions to Providers are found in Section 7, beginning on page 8. Attention should be given to the application process found in sections 7.8, 7.9, 7.10 and Section 8. Be sure copies of the licenses for all staff who certify and / or dispense are included and attached to a completed Attachment G. Finally, a business W-9 Tax Identification form with current business address as listed with the IRS must likewise be submitted. The application is incomplete without all of the required documents and will be returned. Time involved may hinder timely receipt of your application by the deadline. For your convenience, a step-by-step instruction sheet has been included in the application packet. Follow closely and your application submission should be deemed complete.

Q: Are there any changes from last year's contract that I should be made aware?

A: Yes...there are a few key changes noted below:

- 1) The contract term is a two year term—July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017.
- 2) The parameters of hearing loss have slightly changed. Minimum hearing loss must be 40 db HL for the pure tone average (PTA) at 500, 1000 and 2000 Hz. Applicants with a PTA of 90 db HL or above in these same frequencies will not be eligible therefore, their application will not be accepted. (See Section 4.5)
 - a. Also—the speech thresholds have been removed as one of the parameters
- 3) Molds for use remain both occluded (custom ear molds) and non-occluded styles (dome, RICs, tips). The style must be specified on the Certification of Equipment Use Form of the consumer's application. (See Section 4.13)
- 4) Allowable reimbursement rate for shipping charges has been further identified. DSDHH will only pay Standard rate shipping charges up to a maximum charge of \$20.00. DSDHH will NOT pay for Overnight, Express or 1-day, 2-day delivery.
- 5) Each office location of the Contractor must have on file a copy of the contract (pp 1-15) for staff review and reference. **Attachment G, "Audiologist's or Hearing Instrument Specialist's Verification," must be completed by EACH staff personnel who will certify the application and/or fit the hearing aid.** These forms are a required part of the RFA and are to be submitted along with the other documents that constitute a complete application. Proof of current status (licensure) to dispense hearing aids in the State of North Carolina by the appropriate licensing entity for that staff is to be attached to the Attachment G form for that individual. Failure to include this form and proof of licensure for anyone listed on Attachment B of the RFA will constitute an incomplete application and will be returned. Those who have multiple offices and larger staffs are encouraged to begin working on this quickly.
- 6) Any changes or needed equipment exchange determined from what was initially submitted on the certification page of the client's application must now be determined during the trial period and/or prior to invoicing and payment. Any change still mandates approval from the Division. Because of Legislative requirements within the funding laws from which we operate, only under extremely rare instances will authorization for any equipment exchange be given once invoicing and payment is complete. When exchange situations arise, it is always best to contact DSDHH for clarity and guidance.

Q: May I dispense a hearing aid with automatic telephone response?

A: No. The hearing aid distribution funding is specifically for new hearing aids with a telecoil installed, therefore the physical presence of a telecoil is mandatory. Automatic Telecoil Response is permissible. Any hearing aids dispensed without a telecoil or without the telecoil activated will be the responsibility of the Provider to correct. (Sections 4.11, 4.12)

Q: Does an applicant with unilateral hearing loss qualify?

A: No. Telephone communication is the primary reason for this hearing aid distribution service. An applicant with hearing loss in one ear and normal hearing in the other would not qualify even if the hearing loss is in the applicant's preferred "telephone ear." The parameters for eligibility provide the guidelines for dispensing. (Section 4.5, a-d)

Q: Can I fit an ITE hearing aid?

A: Though we prefer only BTE models be used, yes, under special provision and with prior approval, an ITE hearing aid may be fit. If significant physical limitations of an applicant warrant use of an in-the-ear hearing aid, a dispenser must provide a detailed letter on company letterhead explaining the reason(s) of need for the ITE. This document should be included with the submitted application by the applicant. Only a full-shell ITE hearing aid is to be dispensed.

Cosmetic reasons or customer's personal preference cannot be considered when selecting an ITE. This special provision does not apply to nursing home / skilled care facility residents. (Section 4.7) No canal aids will be approved for any reason.

Q: My customer has bilateral hearing loss and needs two hearing aids. Why can't DSDHH provide two aids to folks who need them?

A: DSDHH recognizes the multiple benefits of fitting binaural hearing aids and would like to be able to provide such. However, because each recipient must be "judged" in accordance to telephone use above all else, the nature of the funding stream, as monitored by the North Carolina Utilities Commission, does not allow for approval of two hearing aids. DSDHH has sought different ways to provide the two hearing aids but has not been successful to date.

Q: Are open-fit hearing aids or open molds approved for use with dispensing BTE hearing aids?

A: We have expanded the styles of ear molds that can be used in fitting the hearing aid. Based on the person's hearing loss, the provider may now utilize what he/she deems to be the most appropriate "ear piece" that maximizes the benefit for telephone use. DSDHH still utilizes the list of the specific styles of occluded ear molds but will now also accept non-occluded styles. (i.e. RIC, RITE, domes etc.) (Section 4.13) Reimbursement rates still apply for any style mold with the maximum total allowance for all services is not to exceed \$1200.00.

Q: I'd like to distribute the application to my customers. Where can I get one?

A: Beginning January 1, 2010 DSDHH began a new application procedure for its customers, now requiring a face-to-face meeting with a DSDHH staff member prior to application completion. At that time, all contracted dispensers were notified of the new procedure and asked to cease any distribution. Applications have been revised to reflect the new procedure and are not available for open distribution. Use of any older application should have stopped by now, however, some applicants are still finding external sources providing improper applications. This only complicates matters and slows the process of hearing aid delivery. Any application used other than the current application (June 2013) will be returned to the applicant for correction. Only DSDHH staff will distribute the application to interested individuals upon request.

If you have an individual that is in need of our hearing aid assistance, please provide them only the contact information to the DSDHH Regional Center serving the applicant's county of residence. No other information should be provided other than DSDHH can possibly help them obtain one hearing aid if determined eligible.

Two documents are to be given to the applicant with a referral. The contract specifies that the "Certification and Documentation of Equipment Use" form is to be completed and given to the applicant. This form can be downloaded from the DSDHH web site noted elsewhere in this document. Look for it also in the packet of information received with acceptance of application letter. Secondly, **the contract specifies that an audiogram be given immediately upon the conclusion of the evaluation if it is determined the applicant falls within the parameters described in Section 4.5.** This does not mean later or once the applicant shows proof of having contacted DSDHH. And remember—no charge to the applicant for a copy of his/her audiogram can be allowed.

Q: How will I know when one of my patients has been approved by DSDHH?

A: You will receive a letter in the mail informing you that your patient has been approved for hearing aid fitting or denied for the hearing aid. With a letter of approval, 2 additional forms will be included—1) the authorization form signed by the Equipment Distribution Coordinator, and 2) the Hearing Aid Delivery and Follow-Up form. Both forms must be returned completed and signed appropriately with the invoicing materials as outlined in Section 6.1, a-e. These two forms along with the required invoicing must be presented to DSDHH before payment can be approved. If at any time, any forms are missing with the approval letter, contact DSDHH immediately to request said form. (Section 5.4, 5.5)

Q: I have staff changes or there is a change within the structure of my business. What do I need to do?

- A. **It is very important to remember that the contract specifically states that DSDHH receives notification in writing not more than 30 days of the change, regardless of the nature of the change.** The most appropriate action to take when changes occur to the business is fully determined by the change itself. If there are ever any uncertainties it is always best to contact the contract administrator to find answers. DSDHH has developed a “Notification of Change” Form (sent with the Acceptance Notification or on the DSDHH web site) to use when change notification is required.

For Example: If personnel changes occur among those who will sign the certification form and/or dispense hearing aids in your office or any office listed on Attachment B of this contract, you need to submit a “Notification of Change” form along with a copy of the person’s appropriate license to dispense hearing aids in North Carolina—the NC Dealer’s and Fitter’s License Board or the NC Board of Examiners for Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists. DSDHH must be notified and confirm the change prior to the new staff signing any part of the application.

- B. If the business changes operating names, then we will need to have pertinent banking information and a copy of the W-9 Tax Identification Form with the correct (new) name and address of the business.
- C. If the business is sold to another company, that information must also be reported along with explanation on how the customers for whom hearing aids have been fit will receive the contracted follow-up services, who will provide to recipients any maintenance or warranted work within the first year, the effective date of sale and when banking information will be transferred to the new owners.

It will be always best to discuss any change with the contract administrator within the first 30 days of the change in order to be certain the contract obligations are fulfilled sufficiently.

Q: What happens if I decide to drop out of participation?

A: Though we hope this doesn’t happen, it is possible to end the contract period early by submitting a 30-day notice in writing. The notice should be sent to the name and address of the contract administrator as found on the front page of the document. Should a Contractor opt to end the contract agreement early, that same Contractor will not be eligible for further participation until the next contract period, (in this case the 2017-2019 term and not the next open application acceptance period immediately following the termination request). There will be some clarifying information that must be provided to DSDHH that will be discussed between the Contract Administrator and the Provider at the time of notification.

Q. When I have questions, whom should I contact?

A. Contacting DSDHH with your questions is easy. DSDHH has two key staff designated to answer your questions.

For questions regarding the specifics of the contract, changes in your business status or personnel changes, you will need to contact Jeff Mobley, Contract Administrator, at (919) 874-2239 or Jeff.Mobley@dhhs.nc.gov.

If you have questions about invoices, billing, payments not received or similar issues, you will need to contact Tom Kuszaj (pronounced "coo shy") at (919) 741-4271 (VP) or Thomas.Kuszaj@dhhs.nc.gov. Tom uses Video Phone for his chosen communication access method. Dialing his number will automatically route you through a Video Relay Service who will interpret your phone call for him. Talk as you would to anyone else on the telephone, the interpreter will sign to him what you say and will voice his response back to you. You may encounter a slight delay in the flow of the conversation.