



Defense Health Agency

PROCEDURAL INSTRUCTION

NUMBER 6025.12
October 16, 2018

Medical Affairs/CSD

SUBJECT: Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) Retiree (and other eligible groups)-At-Cost Hearing Aid Program (RACHAP)

References: See Enclosure 1.

1. PURPOSE. This Defense Health Agency-Procedural Instruction (DHA-PI):

a. Based on the authority of References (a) and (b), and in accordance with the guidance of References (c) through (r), establishes the Defense Health Agency's (DHA) procedures to establish common and uniform guidelines, standards, and procedures for all DoD MTFs providing hearing health services to beneficiaries through RACHAP. This program has been operating at self-selected MTFs without established DoD guidance.

b. Enables MTFs with capacity and capability to provide hearing aid evaluation, selection, fitting, and follow-up appointments utilizing an at cost Federal Government contract price through RACHAP to RACHAP-eligible beneficiaries ("RACHAP-eligible beneficiaries" defined in the Glossary).

c. Incorporates, cancels, and replaces Reference (s).

2. BACKGROUND. In general, members of the uniformed services on active duty, and any dependent of a member on active duty for more than 30 days, in which the dependent has a profound hearing loss, may receive medical care in MTFs that includes hearing aid evaluation, selection and receipt of hearing aids, fittings, and follow-up appointments without cost. Retired members of the uniformed services may receive medical care in MTFs that include hearing aid evaluation, selection and receipt of hearing aids, fittings and follow-up appointments without cost subject to the availability of MTF space and resources. RACHAP began in the mid-1990s after most MTFs curtailed issuance of hearing aids to retired members due to budgetary constraints. RACHAP offers certain eligible beneficiaries the ability to purchase hearing aids at participating MTFs utilizing a Federal Government contract price through commercial hearing aid manufacturers.

a. MTF Purchased Hearing Aids. MTFs with audiology services are required by Health

Affairs policy, References (j) and (k), to procure hearing aids through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Denver Acquisition and Logistics Center for members on active duty.

(1) The VA uses the Remote Order Entry System (ROES) to order hearing aids. The VA contract evaluation process ensures that the devices available have been verified as good quality and value hearing aid devices. Devices on the VA contract allow for seamless transition of hearing health care between the DoD and VA. MTFs order hearing aids through ROES for members of the uniformed services on active duty. Therefore, the VA will have a record of previously ordered hearing devices for a Service member who has transitioned from active duty.

(2) The VA does not allow RACHAP hearing aid orders to be placed through ROES.

(3) No formal DoD contract is established with the manufacturers.

(4) The Federal Government contract price for a hearing aid device is significantly less than the price of a device purchased in the community.

(5) Accessories, such as batteries and remote controls, are also available at discounted contract prices.

b. Space-Available Program. As initially established, MTFs that participated in RACHAP enabled retired members who were unable to obtain hearing aids due to limited MTF space and resources to purchase hearing aids based on a government contract price negotiated by the VA. Certain commercial hearing aid manufacturers agreed to extend the government contract price for eligible beneficiaries. Dependents of retired members, and most dependents of members on active duty for more than 30 days otherwise eligible for MTF space-available care were historically not authorized hearing aid coverage by law, Reference (r). Therefore, the purchase of hearing aids at government contract price was only available to retired members through RACHAP. As a result of enactment of Reference (a), dependents of members on active duty for more than 30 days, and dependents of retired members otherwise eligible for MTF space-available care, may now be allowed to purchase hearing aids at the government contract price where MTFs have chosen to participate in RACHAP.

(1) MTFs determine whether they participate in RACHAP and to what degree. Some MTFs may offer RACHAP, but on a limited basis (e.g., those enrolled or empaneled to the MTF or residing within a certain radius of the MTF).

(2) Each MTF determines the extent of its RACHAP implementation and scope of RACHAP services based on capacity, capability, and access-to-care standards as the evaluation, selection, fitting, and follow-up services are resourced by the MTF.

(3) Historically, the Military Audiology Association website updated facility status for RACHAP; however, current MTF participation can be found at TRICARE.mil and is maintained by DHA Communications: <https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/HearingAids>.

c. TRICARE Private Sector Coverage. Diagnostic hearing testing is a TRICARE-covered service when included, during routine pediatric care or when furnished in connection with medical or surgical treatment of a covered illness or injury, Reference (n); however, with certain exceptions noted below, hearing aids are not covered benefits.

(1) If MTF audiology services are not available for an eligible Service member, authorized audiology services, including receipt of a hearing aid, may be provided under the Supplemental Health Care Program, Reference (l), without a waiver.

(2) Dependents of members on active duty for more than 30 days, in which dependents have profound hearing loss, are entitled in the TRICARE private sector to coverage of hearing aids and other medically necessary services and supplies required in connection with the hearing aid benefit (References (h), (i), and (o)).

(3) Dependents of members on active duty for more than 30 days, in which dependents have a serious physical disability (including hearing disability) or multiple disabilities so as to qualify for benefits under the TRICARE Extended Care Health Option are entitled to hearing aid services and supplies (References (i) and (m)).

(4) As a result of Reference (a), RACHAP is now also available to other dependents who meet the definition of RACHAP-eligible beneficiary.

3. APPLICABILITY. This DHA-PI applies to OSD, the Military Departments (MILDEPs), the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of the Inspector General of the DoD, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within the DoD (referred to collectively in this DHA-PI as the “DoD Components”).

4. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION. It is DHA’s instruction, pursuant to References (a) through (m), that implementation is at the discretion of an MTF Commander or Director as to the MTF’s capacity and capability to support the RACHAP.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES. See Enclosure 2.

6. PROCEDURES. See Enclosure 3.

7. RELEASABILITY. **Cleared for public release.** This DHA-PI is available on the Internet from the Health.mil site at: www.health.mil/DHAPublications.

8. EFFECTIVE DATE. This DHA-PI:

- a. Is effective upon signature.
- b. Will expire 10 years from the date of signature if it has not been reissued or cancelled before this date in accordance with DHA-PI 5025.01 (Reference (c)).



R. C. BONG
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Director

Enclosures

1. References
2. Responsibilities
3. Procedures

Glossary

ENCLOSURE 1

REFERENCES

- (a) National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, Section 713, as amended
- (b) DoD Directive 5136.01, "Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD(HA))," September 30, 2013, as amended
- (c) DoD Directive 5136.13, "Defense Health Agency (DHA)," September 30, 2013
- (d) DHA-Procedural Instruction 5025.01, "Publication System," August 21, 2015, as amended
- (e) Army Regulation 40-400, "Patient Administration", October 13, 2006, as amended
- (f) Army Regulation 40-3, "Medical, Dental, and Veterinary Care," April 23, 2013, as amended
- (g) Air Force Instruction 44-102, "Medical Care Management," March 17, 2015, as amended
- (h) TRICARE Policy Manual 6010.60-M, Chapter 7, Section 8.1, "Special Otorhinolaryngologic Services," April 1, 2015, as amended
- (i) TRICARE Policy Manual 6010.60-M, Chapter 7, Section 8.2, "Hearing Aids and Hearing Aid Services," April 1, 2015, as amended
- (j) Health Affairs Policy 006-13, "Guidance on the Establishment of Department of Defense Standardization for Ordering and Procurement of Hearing Devices/Prostheses," August 15, 2013
- (k) DoD Memorandum re: "Addendum to Health Affairs" Health Affairs Policy 006-13, "Guidance on the Establishment of Department of Defense Standardization for Ordering and Procurement of Hearing Devices/Prostheses," October 20, 2014, as amended
- (l) Code of Federal Regulations, Title 32, Section 199.16
- (m) Code of Federal Regulations, Title 32, Section 199.5
- (n) Code of Federal Regulations, Title 32, Section 199.4(c)(3)(xi) (g)(47), and (g)(51)
- (o) Code of Federal Regulations, Title 32, Section 199.4(e)(24)
- (p) Washington Headquarters Services Administrative Instruction No.102, "Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Federal Register (FR) System," November 6, 2006, as amended
- (q) United States Code, Title 10, Section 1072, (2)
- (r) United States Code, Title 10, Section 1077, (a)(16)
- (s) DHA-Interim Procedures Memorandum 18-003, "Retiree-At-Cost Hearing Aid Program/Retiree Hearing Aid Purchase Program, February 23, 2018 (hereby cancelled)

ENCLOSURE 2
RESPONSIBILITIES

1. DIRECTOR, DHA. The Director, DHA, will facilitate the implementation of this DHA-PI.

2. THE SURGEONS GENERAL OF THE MILDEPs, THROUGH THE SECRETARIES OF THE MILDEPs. Under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretaries of the MILDEPs, the Surgeons General of the MILDEPs will:
 - a. Disseminate this message to all MTF Commanders/Directors.

 - b. Develop procedures, and encourage their respective MTFs to participate in RACHAP, if capacity and capability exist.

 - c. Implement the developed procedures as soon as practicable.

3. MTF COMMANDERS/DIRECTORS. The MTF Commanders/Directors will:
 - a. Understand RACHAP as outlined in this DHA-PI and provisions set forth in Reference (a).

 - b. Determine whether their MTF has the capacity and capability to support RACHAP for RACHAP-eligible beneficiaries.

 - c. Establish processes that enable RACHAP to be offered to RACHAP-eligible beneficiaries to the greatest extent possible.

 - d. Communicate the eligibility and availability of purchasing hearing aids through RACHAP to beneficiaries (e.g., flyers, posting on local MTF website) if their respective MTF has the capacity and capability to support the program.

4. SERVICE AUDIOLOGY CONSULTANTS AND/OR PRODUCT LINE LEAD, (NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION (NCR)). The Service Audiology Consultants and/or Product Line Lead, NCR, will provide DHA Communications Division with a quarterly email update detailing the status of participation of each MTF and any access limitations or restrictions to: dha.ncr.comm.mbx.tricare-web-team@mail.mil.

5. DHA COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION. The DHA Communications Division will:
 - a. Educate beneficiaries about the subject matter of this DHA-PI.

- b. Communicate with beneficiaries on the availability and limitations of RACHAP.
- c. Develop and maintain publicly accessible website information listing participating MTFs and their status to include a direct link to the MTF website, which will be updated quarterly via MTF reporting.

ENCLOSURE 3

PROCEDURES

1. OVERVIEW. Hearing aid candidacy for RACHAP-eligible beneficiaries is determined by a comprehensive hearing evaluation by a qualified audiologist. Certain conditions and findings may require specialty care follow-up.

a. If the comprehensive hearing evaluation supports hearing aid candidacy, hearing aid options are discussed with the patient, and appropriate devices are selected and ordered during the initial appointment.

(1) Patients under the age of 18 require medical clearance through a physician, preferably an otolaryngologist, prior to being fit for a hearing aid.

(2) Typical hearing aid orders consist of a paper order form (provided by the manufacturers), indicating selected device and noting RACHAP status, silicone impressions of the ears, and cashier's check or credit card payment to the manufacturer.

(3) The MTF mails hearing aid orders directly to the manufacturer.

(4) In accordance with the VA contract, manufacturers are obligated to provide training to Federal Government audiologists. Manufacturer representatives make contact (either in person or by phone), and ship required materials (order forms, ordering boxes, software, etc.), to the MTF.

b. A follow-up appointment for the hearing aid evaluation and fitting is made either at the time of the initial appointment or when the device(s) arrive from the manufacturer.

(1) The hearing aid device fitting appointment allows for verification of the hearing aid device prescriptive gain output, digital programming of customized frequency response, and instruction on proper usage of the device(s), including care and maintenance.

(2) The appointment allows the audiologist and beneficiary to discuss realistic expectations associated with hearing aid use, and strategies to improve communication.

(3) Purchased accessories are paired to the hearing aids and are demonstrated at the hearing aid fitting appointment.

(4) If applicable, the hearing aids are paired to the patient's personal telephone through Bluetooth and its function is demonstrated.

c. Warranty and return policies are discussed at follow-up. The provider is responsible for being aware of the most current warranty and return policies on hearing aid devices.

d. At the time of the fitting and orientation, a trial period of no less than 30 days begins. A follow-up appointment is made for approximately 30 days from the initial fitting to address any needed adjustments, determine adequacy of fit, ensure patient satisfaction, and determine the need for additional follow-up and/or aural rehabilitation services. Once initial fitting, follow-up, and trial period have been completed, patients are then encouraged to have their hearing monitored and hearing aid(s) checked every 12 months. If patients are not satisfied with the product at the end of the trial period, the product can be returned to the vendor for a full refund.

2. CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY. MTFs will determine whether they have the capacity and capability to fully support RACHAP.

a. Capacity and capability will be determined using the following:

- (1) Readiness mission requirements;
- (2) Necessary equipment;
- (3) Space requirements;
- (4) Projected demand;
- (5) Maximizing provider productivity standards/targets;
- (6) Clinical expertise (i.e., pediatric hearing aid fitting experience); and
- (7) Otolaryngology clinical support.

b. MTFs that determine capacity and capability exist may participate in RACHAP under the following provisions:

- (1) Participation in RACHAP will only include RACHAP-eligible beneficiaries.
- (2) MTFs may determine their level of participation (i.e., limiting to regular and non-regular retired members only; available to beneficiaries only within a certain mile radius).
- (3) RACHAP is only available through direct care at an MTF. MTFs are not authorized to reimburse costs for hearing aids and associated costs or products obtained through purchased care. MTFs are not authorized to use a network provider/private sector vendor's prescription or audiogram to order hearing aids or products.
- (4) A hearing aid is an individual medical device that must be fit and programmed by an audiologist trained in that particular device. Manufacturers and products available through RACHAP (at cost to the Federal Government) may be different than those utilized by a network

provider. Hearing aids provided through an MTF will not be mailed to a network provider or directly to a beneficiary.

(5) The typical course of care for an RACHAP-eligible beneficiary requiring a hearing aid should include: an initial appointment for evaluation and hearing aid order, a second appointment for fitting of the hearing aid, and follow-up appointments as needed.

(6) Hearing aids purchased under RACHAP will be paid for by the beneficiary. The beneficiary is responsible for sending payment to the manufacturer at the time the device is ordered.

3. OUTCOME MEASUREMENT. The provisions set forth in this DHA-PI will be measured for effectiveness in the following ways:

a. The number of MTFs participating in RACHAP and/or number of MTFs capable of participating in RACHAP as a result of this DHA-PI.

b. The number of beneficiaries utilizing RACHAP across the Military Health System (MHS) as determined by data from the MHS Mart (M2).

GLOSSARY

PART I. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DHA	Defense Health Agency
DHA-PI	Defense Health Agency-Procedural Instruction
MHS	Military Health System
MILDEP	Military Department
MTF	medical treatment facility
NCR	National Capital Region
RACHAP	Retiree-At-Cost Hearing Aid Program
ROES	Remote Order Entry System
TRR	TRICARE Retired Reserve
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

PART II. DEFINITIONS

MTF. For purposes of this DHA-PI and implementation of the expanded RACHAP throughout the MHS, the term “medical treatment facility” includes those facilities of the uniformed services that are the functional equivalent of an MTF for purposes of RACHAP-eligible beneficiary services (e.g., facilities within the NCR and the Lovell Federal Health Care Center in Great Lakes).

RACHAP. A voluntary MTF hearing aid program that allows RACHAP-eligible beneficiaries to purchase hearing aids at cost at an MTF and receive fittings and related medically necessary and appropriate services. The MTF determines the extent of RACHAP implementation and scope of RACHAP services based on MTF capacity and capability, and access to care standards. RACHAP-eligible beneficiaries may purchase hearing aids, utilizing the government contract price through manufacturers (i.e., at cost) for fitting and related medically necessary and appropriate services within the direct care system. **Note:** The program is not a TRICARE private sector care benefit.

RACHAP-eligible beneficiary. For purposes of this DHA-PI and implementation of the expanded RACHAP throughout the MHS, this term includes: Dependents of active duty members on active duty for more than 30 days (including Transitional Assistance Management Program beneficiaries); dependents of regular retired members, dependents of non-regular (Reserve) retired members age 60 and over, dependents of Medal of Honor Recipients (who are all entitled by statute to MTF space-available care), qualified TRICARE Young Adult participants, and those dependents of non-regular retired members who are under age 60 and

covered under TRICARE Retired Reserve (TRR) based on their sponsor's purchase of TRR member plus family coverage (and thereby eligible for MTF space-available care). Service members on active duty, regular retired members, TRICARE Reserve Select participating members, and TRR participating members are separately eligible for MTF direct care and legacy RACHAP.

The term excludes: Those dependents of members on active duty for more than 30 days when the dependent is eligible for hearing aids based on meeting the criteria laid out in Reference (r) (i.e., when they have "profound hearing loss as determined by standards set by DoD") separate from RACHAP; dependents enrolled in the Uniformed Services Family Health Plan; dependents of Selected Reservists who are not covered under TRICARE Reserve Select member plus family coverage; and/or dependents of Retired Reservists (under age 60), who are not covered under TRR member plus family coverage.