



Australian Government

Department of Health

Australian Government Hearing Services Program

Hearing Rehabilitation Outcomes for Voucher-Holders

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Introduction

The aim of the Australian Government's Hearing Services Program is to:

Assist people with hearing loss to maximize their potential for independent communication and improve their quality of life.

This is achieved through contracting hearing services providers to provide a range of hearing services to eligible clients

- Hearing assessment.
- Identification of communication goals.
- Identification of client attitude and motivation towards hearing rehabilitation.
- Provision of rehabilitation services.
- Fitting of hearing devices, where appropriate.
- Education about the effects of hearing loss.
- Communication tactics and strategies.
- Referral to medical practitioners and/or support organisations.
- Follow-up services, including evaluation of outcomes and long term support.

This *Hearing Rehabilitation Outcomes for Voucher Holders* documents the outcomes to be achieved by contracted service providers in delivering services to voucher holders. Each outcome consists of three sections:

- The outcome that is required.
- The results that the contracted service provider must demonstrate.
- Examples of the types of information that the Office of Hearing Services (the Office) may consider in assessing the contracted service provider's performance against each outcome.

Note: terms marked with an * are defined in the glossary.

Outcome 1: Assessment

This outcome requires that:

Practitioners establish the nature and extent of a client's hearing and communication problems.

The focus of this outcome is **results for clients**.

Results

The contracted service provider must demonstrate that:

- An accurate and complete assessment of the client's clinical history, hearing, and communication problems has been conducted by a qualified practitioner or a provisional audiologist or audiometrist under the supervision of a qualified practitioner.
- The client's hearing goals and expectations have been discussed.

Performance Measurement

In assessing performance against this outcome the Office may consider a range of information, including

- Do relevant client records document:
 - A clinical history?
 - Otoscopy findings?
 - A complete audiogram, including interoctave frequencies (air and bone conduction and masking where necessary)?
 - An appropriate speech discrimination assessment?
 - Results of tympanometry?
 - Specific difficulties the client may experience with communication and/or use of a device?
 - The client's hearing goals and expectations?
- Does the contracted service provider have systems and processes in place to ensure that practitioners undertaking assessments are qualified practitioners or are a provisional audiologist or audiometrist under the supervision of a qualified practitioner?
- Has there been any feedback from clients about their experiences of this aspect of service provision, for example comments; compliments; or complaints?

Outcome 2: Referrals

This outcome requires that:

Clients are referred for appropriate medical and audiological evaluation where required.

The focus of this outcome is **results for clients**.

Results

The contracted service provider must demonstrate that:

- Medical clearances have been obtained from a client's treating Ear Nose and Throat specialist, or other relevant medical specialist, prior to device fitting.
- Clients are referred to a medical practitioner for evaluation where clinically appropriate.
- Audiometrists have liaised with an audiologist about the management of non-routine clients* or referred such clients to a medical practitioner for assessment.

Performance Measurement

In assessing performance against this outcome the Office may consider a range of information, including:

- Any contracted service provider policies and procedures to inform staff of circumstances in which referral is appropriate.
- Do relevant client records:
 - Document identified ear conditions or significant changes in audiometric results?
 - Document whether a client has been referred for further assessment - if not, why not and if so to whom?
 - Include the outcomes of any referral, such as a copy of the medical advice received?
 - Demonstrate that management of the client was consistent with the outcomes of the medical referral?
- Do records of non-routine clients ii:
 - Demonstrate that the client was assessed by an audiologist or, if not, that the practitioner liaised with an audiologist about the management of the client or referred the client for medical assessment?
 - Contain documentation of any medical/audiological advice received?
 - Demonstrate that management of the client was consistent with the advice received as a result of the medical referral and/or liaison with the audiologist?

Outcome 3: Hearing Rehabilitation

This outcome requires that:

The practitioner provides a program to clients to better manage their life with hearing loss.

The focus of this outcome is **results for clients**.

Results

The contracted service provider must demonstrate that:

- The hearing rehabilitation program that has been agreed with the client takes into account the client's attitude and motivation towards rehabilitation and reflects the client's communication needs and hearing goals.
- They have informed the client about appropriate communication strategies, rehabilitation programs, and technological options available to assist the client to manage their hearing loss and enhance communication.
- They have assisted clients who require a device to make an informed choice about the type and configuration of device that they are fitted with.
- They have advised the Office about clients who are considered to be complex*.
- Where a client with 3FAHLs \leq 23dB is fitted, the client meets both exemption criteria identified for the Minimum Hearing Loss Threshold (MHLT)*.

Performance Measurement

In assessing performance against this outcome the Office may consider a range of information, including:

- Does the client's record document
 - The rehabilitation options discussed with the client and how they take into account:
 - the client's expectations, goals, attitude and motivation?
 - any specific difficulties the client may experience with communication and/or use of a device?
 - The rehabilitation program agreed with the client?
 - Any advice that has been provided to a complex client about the services they can access under the voucher and Community Service Obligations components of the program?
 - That the Office has been advised if the client is complex?
- Where the rehabilitation options include a device, does the client record
 - Document the free-to-client device(s) recommended to the client?
 - Document any 'top-up' device(s) recommended to the client?
 - Document the reasons provided to the client for these recommendations or any other information provided to assist them to make an informed decision?
 - Contain a copy of the written quote provided to the client detailing the cost to the client of any recommended top-up devices, including any ongoing costs?
 - Document information provided to the client regarding a telecoil and the client's decision?
 - Document reasons for fitting a device to a client under the MHLT requirements that are consistent with both exemption criteria?

- Were service(s) provided by a qualified practitioner or a provisional audiologist or audiometrist under the supervision of a qualified practitioner?
- Relevant contracted service provider policies and procedures.
- Any feedback from clients about their experiences of this aspect of service provision, for example comments, compliments, or complaints.

Outcome 4: Fitting of Hearing Devices

This outcome requires that:

Where appropriate, clients are provided with and use hearing devices to help manage life with hearing loss.

The focus of this outcome is **results for clients**.

Results

The contracted service provider must demonstrate that:

- Client safety and comfort is protected in obtaining ear impressions (where ear impressions are required).
- The practitioner checks with clients that their device fits comfortably.
- The device(s) fitted to the client has been:
 - appropriately programmed, with the aid(s) response verified against a prescriptive target; and
 - optimised according to the client's needs and preferences.
- The client or carer has been assisted to effectively manage the device;
- The client has been informed about options for maintenance of the device, including battery provision, and ongoing services available under the voucher program.

Performance Measurement

In assessing performance against this outcome the Office may consider a range of information, including:

- Relevant contracted service provider policies and procedures.
- Does the client's record document:
 - Whether ear impressions were taken and if so, a description of the earmould(s) or custom device ordered?
 - Medical referrals for deep wax management, advice, clearance and/or ear packing where appropriate?
 - Real ear measurements recording the prescriptive target and verification of the actual output of the device response to target, and reasons for prescribed targets not being met (where applicable)?
 - Evaluation of gain and Maximum Power Output (MPO)?
 - The client's assessment of the fit and comfort of the device and of sound quality, and any actions taken to remedy concerns?
 - Final hearing aid settings?
 - The practitioner's assessment of the ability of the client (or their carer) to operate and maintain the device and features and any action taken to assist the client to overcome any difficulties?
 - A maintenance agreement entered into by the client or decision not to access maintenance?
- Were service(s) conducted by a qualified practitioner or a provisional audiologist or audiometrist under the supervision of a qualified practitioner?
- Any feedback from clients about their experiences of this aspect of service provision, for example comments, compliments, or complaints.

Outcome 5: Follow- up

This outcome requires that:

Clients receive face-to-face follow-up, to check device management, aided benefit, and the need for further adjustments or interventions.

The focus of this outcome is **results for clients**.

Results

The contracted service provider must demonstrate that:

- Timely follow-up is provided to clients.
- The practitioner has worked with the client to validate the fitting and to identify and remedy any issues or concerns.

Performance Measurement

In assessing performance against this outcome the Office may consider a range of information, including:

- Does the client's record document:
 - The date and nature of follow up activities?
 - Benefits or problems perceived by the client?
 - Actions taken to remedy any problems or concerns, including:
 - Modifications made to the aid settings and/or device coupling and any verification following these changes?
 - Provision of additional information, training or advice to assist communication or use and management of the device?
 - An assessment of aided benefit including, for example, the results of an appropriate speech test, client usage diary and/or data-logging information?
- Were service(s) conducted by a qualified practitioner or a provisional audiologist or audiometrist under the supervision of a qualified practitioner?
- Any feedback from clients about their experiences of this aspect of service provision, for example comments, compliments, or complaints.

Outcome 6: Client Outcomes

This outcome requires that:

The practitioner evaluates outcomes of the client's rehabilitation program.

The focus of this outcome is **evaluation of results for clients.**

Results

The contracted service provider must demonstrate that:

- The short term outcome(s) of the client's rehabilitation program have been evaluated.
- Action has been taken to assist the client to address any issues or concerns identified through client initiated contact or through monitoring activities implemented by the contracted service provider.

Performance Measurement

In assessing performance against this outcome the Office may consider a range of information, including:

- Does the client record document:
 - Outcomes achieved, with reference to the client's specific hearing needs, goals and expectations and taking into account the client's views?
 - How outcomes were measured, including whether a particular instrument was used, such as the Abbreviated Profile of Hearing Aid Benefit (APHAB); Glasgow Hearing Aid Benefit Profile (GHABP); Client Oriented Scale of Improvement (COSI) or Hearing Handicap Inventory for the Elderly (HHIE?)
 - If the client participated in monitoring activities undertaken by the practitioner, and the nature of these activities (for example, the use of any validated measure)?
 - Information, advice or training provided to the client in response to issues or concerns identified through client initiated contact or through monitoring activities?
- Any feedback from clients about their experiences of this aspect of service provision, for example comments, compliments, or complaints.
- Relevant contracted service provider policies and procedures.
- Were service(s) conducted by a qualified practitioner or a provisional audiologist or audiometrist under the supervision of a qualified practitioner?

Outcome 7: Aftercare

This outcome requires that:

The client has access to support services that maintain the optimal rehabilitation outcome achievable for the client

The focus of this outcome is **results for clients**.

Results

The contracted service provider must demonstrate that:

- The client's rehabilitation goals are re-assessed at appropriate intervals and, if necessary, the client's rehabilitation program is revised to reflect the client's current rehabilitation goals.

Performance Measurement

In assessing performance against this outcome the Office may consider a range of information, including:

- Does the client record document:
 - The date that the client's rehabilitation goals were re-assessed?
 - The nature and outcome of any re-assessment, including the client's view of whether the rehabilitation program continues to meet their needs; any revised client goals and expectations, or changes in the client's attitude and motivation?
 - Information, advice or training provided to the client as a result of the reassessment (if any)?
 - If an adjustment was made to the clients aid(s)?
 - Real ear or coupler measurements if conducted?
 - Reasons for refitting (if refitting is considered necessary) that are consistent with the eligibility criteria for refitting?
- Any feedback from clients about their experiences of this aspect of service provision, for example comments, compliments, or complaints.
- Relevant contracted service provider policies and procedures.
- Were service(s) conducted by a qualified practitioner or a provisional audiologist or audiometrist under the supervision of a qualified practitioner?

Outcome 8: Confidentiality and Records

This outcome requires that:

Professional records are maintained and client confidentiality is safeguarded.

The focus of this outcome is **record management**.

Results

The contracted service provider must demonstrate that:

- Client information and records are kept securely.
- Client confidentiality is maintained.
- Records are contemporaneous, complete, professional and legible.
- Records are retained for a period consistent with the service provider contract.

Performance Measurement

In assessing performance against this outcome the Office may consider a range of information, including:

- Does the contracted service provider have systems and processes in place to:
 - Ensure client records, whether hard copy or electronic, are stored securely?
 - Identify and manage breaches of client confidentiality?
 - Ensure that staff are aware of requirements for the storage, retention and confidentiality of client records?
 - Facilitate access by clients to their own client record?
- Do client records reflect good record keeping practices? For example:
 - Are entries signed, dated and contemporaneous?
 - Are entries legible and is information recorded in a manner that is factual and makes its meaning clear?
- Are test/consulting rooms separate from waiting/reception areas?
- Any feedback from clients about confidentiality, access to records etc, for example comments, compliments, or complaints.
- Relevant contracted service provider policies and procedures.

Outcome 9: Service Management Systems

This outcome requires that:

The service provider adopts management systems to safeguard compliance with these Hearing Rehabilitation Outcomes and maximise outcomes for clients.

The focus of this outcome is **continuous quality improvement**.

Results

The contracted service provider must demonstrate that:

- Service delivery is continuously monitored and improved.
- Service improvement objectives are established and performance is measured against these.
- Staff is aware of, and have access to, current versions of policies, procedures, instructions, documents or forms relevant to the requirements of these Hearing Rehabilitation Outcomes.
- Compliance with these Hearing Rehabilitation Outcomes is periodically reviewed and action is taken to remedy identified non-compliance.
- Policies and procedures are in place to manage complaints or disputes.

Performance Measurement

In assessing performance against this outcome the Office may consider a range of information, including:

- Does the contracted service provider have systems and processes in place to monitor performance against service improvement objectives?
- Are staff aware of policy and procedural documentation provided by the service provider and how to access these?
- Are staff aware of policies and procedures for managing complaints or disputes?
- Do clients know how to lodge a complaint?
- Does the service provider document complaints and action taken in response to the complaint?
- Are quality improvement activities documented?
- Has the contracted service provider implemented changes in response to the outcomes of performance measurement, including measures to address/prevent non-compliance?
- Any feedback from clients, for example comments, compliments, or complaints.
- Relevant contracted service provider policies and procedures.

Glossary

APHAB: Abbreviated Profile of Hearing Aid Benefit; (Cox & Alexander, 1991).

Complex Client: as defined in the *Declared Hearing Services Determination 1997*, a complex client is an eligible person who has:

- a) profound hearing loss (a hearing loss where the average hearing threshold level for 0.5, 1 and 2 kilohertz ((kHz) in the person's better ear is greater than, or equal to, 80 decibels.); or
- b) hearing loss and severe communication impairment. Severe communication impairment means communication difficulty that prevents the person from communicating effectively in his or her daily environment; or is caused or aggravated by significant physical, intellectual, mental, emotional or social disability.

COSI: Client Oriented Scale of Improvement; (Dillon, James & Ginis, 1997).

GHABP: Glasgow Hearing Aid Benefit Profile (Gatehouse, 1994 & 1999).

Hearing device(s): Includes hearing aid(s), alternative device(s), and non-standard device(s).

HHIE: Hearing Handicap Inventory for the Elderly (Verity & Weinstein, 1982).

MPO: Maximum power output.

MHLT: Minimum Hearing Loss Threshold.

Where a client has 3FAHLs \leq 23dB the client can only be fitted under the legislative exemptions to the MHLT.

- Exemptions to the minimum hearing loss threshold

A participant meets the exception from the minimum hearing loss threshold if:

- (a) the participant receives a score of 5 or greater on the Wishes and Needs Tool with a score of 2 or greater for each response; and
- (b) the participant has:
 - (i) high frequency hearing loss averaging 40 decibels or greater when tested at 2, 3 and 4 kilohertz in the ear in which the hearing device is for fitting; or
 - (ii) tinnitus, the symptoms of which can be reduced through the use of the device; or
 - (iii) previously used a voucher to obtain a hearing device and can demonstrate to the satisfaction of a contracted service provider use of that device; or
 - (iv) a visual impairment that reduces the ability to see mouth movements and is not able to be corrected by medical or optometrical treatment.

Non-routine clients: a client found to have one or more of the following audiometric presentations.

1. An air bone gap of 20dB or greater at 500Hz, 1kHz or 2kHz.
2. Speech discrimination poorer than expected given HTLs.
3. Evidence of fluctuation in audiometric thresholds.

Speech discrimination assessment: a formal standardized test to determine a client's ability to repeat words at a particular input level.

WANT: Wishes and Needs Tool (developed by Harvey Dillon, National Acoustic Laboratory).