



Provider Factsheet

Client Relocations

Hearing Services Program (program) clients have the right to choose where they receive their hearing services and can choose to relocate to a new provider at any time.

Program Requirements

Section 35 of the [Hearing Services Program \(Voucher\) Instrument 2019](#) outlines the program requirements regarding clients relocating between providers.

The [Service Provider Contract](#) (contract) at clauses 11.1(h), 12.6c(ii), and 27.3(c) also includes provisions related to client relocations. Item C, Schedule A of the contract requires providers to have a policy for the management of client relocations.

Providers are also required to comply with the [Privacy Act 1988](#), which includes the [Australian Privacy Principles \(APPs\)](#), any State/Territory privacy legislation, and relevant consumer law.

Relocation Request

A client must give their informed consent to relocate to a new provider before the new provider processes their relocation and commences delivering services. If the client has a Power of Attorney (POA) or other legal guardianship arrangement in effect, then the consent must come from the POA or guardian.

The client must also provide four points of identity (their eligibility number or voucher number; first name, surname and date of birth) with their consent to allow the new provider to access the client's record in the Hearing Services Online Portal (the portal). Information held in the portal is sensitive and is covered by the *Privacy Act 1988*.

Accessing someone's health information without their consent is a serious breach of the Privacy Act and the Service Provider Contract. Breaches may need to be reported under the [Notifiable Data Breaches scheme](#).

Providers must ensure that relocating clients understand their client record will be transferred to the new provider.

Consent Format

The new provider is expected to obtain written consent from the relocating client before processing the relocation. However, in exceptional circumstances, verbal consent is acceptable for the convenience of clients (for example, for emergencies or to allow the client to make an appointment and the new provider to obtain the client record before the client visit).

If verbal consent is obtained, the date and the reason why the client could not provide signed consent should be documented on the client record. The client's signed and dated written consent to relocate must still be obtained at the first appointment and must be kept on the client record.

The department has released a [Client Relocations](#) template for use by providers. This template can be amended but the information contained on the template must be retained.

Processing a Relocation

Each client is linked to their chosen provider in the portal. The client's information is safeguarded by limiting access in the portal to their chosen provider. When a new provider initiates a relocation through the portal a link is created between the client and the new provider. This link allows their provider to view and update the client information.

When processing relocation requests, providers must ensure they are logged into the portal under the site requesting the client's record, as the record will be sent to the requesting site's address.

The previous provider will receive an automated email relocation notice to their registered contact email address. A relocation notice is an email instruction from Hearing Services. It is automatically generated when a provider uses the portal to transfer a client from another provider. In accordance with Section 35 of the Instrument, the file must be transferred as directed by this notice. The previous provider will no longer have access to the client's information in the portal. Information on how to process a relocation in the portal is available in the [HSO User Guide – Hearing Service Providers](#).

The relocation notice instructs the previous provider to send the client's complete record, including copies of all claim forms, to the new provider within seven (7) business days. The previous provider should take this opportunity to check that the client record is complete, and submit any outstanding claims for payment. Please refer to the [Management of Client Records factsheet](#) and [FAQs](#).

New providers should check with the previous provider whether there are any outstanding claims to be submitted before delivering services to the client.

Providers must not ask clients to collect their file from a previous provider.

Contacting Relocated Clients

Clients can choose not to have further contact with their previous provider, and under the Privacy Act (APP7), clients can withdraw their consent to receive direct marketing communications from their previous provider. Client choice regarding contact must be respected.

If a client does not wish to be contacted by their previous provider, the client will need to contact their previous provider to withdraw consent for the use or disclosure of their information and to request not to be contacted.

Clients must not be contacted and pressured into staying with their previous provider if they have chosen to relocate.

Submitting Outstanding Claims for a Relocated Client

All outstanding claims for payment must be submitted by the previous provider within 20 business days of the date of the relocation notice.

As the old provider no longer has access to the client's record in the portal, claims will need to be emailed to hearing@health.gov.au with the client details and the completed claim form.

If the previous provider has any outstanding claims, they must notify the new provider and copies of the claim forms must be sent with the client record or forwarded to the new provider once finalised.

Record Keeping

All client records must be managed in accordance with the program's [Management of Client Records](#) factsheet. The previous provider must keep original claim forms and copies of client receipts for seven (7) years after the date of service.

The new provider must retain the signed consent from the relocating client on the client record. If verbal consent was obtained initially, there must be documentation on the client record regarding the date the client provided verbal consent and the reason why verbal consent was required.

Please refer to the [Private Services and Devices Factsheet](#) for information about record keeping related to private services for relocating clients.

Compliance Monitoring

Program requirements are monitored in accordance with the [Compliance Monitoring and Support Framework](#). Please note that if any invalid claims are identified, including if a service was claimed when the client had not given consent to relocate, providers must reimburse the Commonwealth and may be required to reimburse clients.

Links and Resources

Visit www.hearingservices.gov.au, email hearing@health.gov.au, or call 1800 500 726.

Further information about [client consent](#), [privacy](#) and [maintenance for relocated clients](#) is also available on the program website.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can a provider refuse to forward a client file?

No. Once a provider receives a relocation notice they must forward the file to the requesting provider. If a provider has concerns they should contact the requesting provider to confirm the relocation request. It is the responsibility of the requesting provider to document client consent.

What do I do if we do not receive a client's file within 10 days?

In the first instance providers should contact the previous provider to confirm they received the relocation notice.

If the previous provider has received the notice, the new provider should

1. Ask if the file has been sent and obtain the tracking number.
2. Ask what is causing the delay.

If the previous provider has not received the notice, the new provider should

1. Confirm their email address.
2. Email the program advising us of the issue and the client details.
3. Allow an additional 7 business days to receive the file.

If the new provider still does not receive the client file within an appropriate timeframe, they should email the program.

Can a client who is eligible for or obtaining specialist hearing services relocate to my business?

Yes, however you are responsible for ensuring clients who are eligible for or receiving specialist hearing services are aware of the services available through Hearing Australia. You must explain that Hearing Australia is funded to provide a broader range of fully subsidised hearing devices, communication training, ongoing services and support.

Information on [specialist hearing services](#) is available on the program website.

When a client relocates away, how do I submit outstanding claims?

Outstanding claims must be emailed to hearing@health.gov.au within 20 business days of the relocation date. The new service provider should be advised of any outstanding claims to prevent duplicate services being provided.

PF-CR0120