



Refusal of Service

Service providers should be aware of their responsibilities under the *Hearing Services Rules of Conduct 2012* (the Rules) should they refuse services to a client of the Australian Government Hearing Services Program (the program).

Subrule 13(1) of the Rules states that a service provider may refuse services to a client if it is reasonable to do so, for example due to aggressive, inappropriate, threatening behaviour, or another compelling reason. Please note that **Subrule 13(3)** prohibits a service provider from refusing or failing to provide services to a voucher-holder on the grounds that they will not purchase a top-up hearing device.

If a service provider has decided to refuse services to a client under the program, they should:

- Inform the client in writing of the reason for refusal, within a reasonable timeframe
- Direct the client to the program's website to find another service provider, and/or to contact the program's call centre on 1800 500 726
- Email a copy of the correspondence sent to the client to hearing@health.gov.au
- Forward the client's original file (and copies of the client's claim forms) to the client's next service provider when a notification is received through the portal that the client has relocated

The client's right of reply

Under **Subrule 13(2)** of the Rules, if a service provider has refused service to a client they must give them the opportunity to respond and rectify the reason for refusal. This provides the client with the right of reply in relation to any incident which has occurred.

Service providers should advise the client of the timeframe in which they have the opportunity to respond, and how they can respond (e.g. by telephone, or directed to a particular postal or email address). The people managing the client's response do not need to be those who have interacted with the client in regard to any incidents.

The client's response may or may not change the decision made by the service provider to refuse services – it is a decision for the service provider whether the reason for terminating services can reasonably be rectified or resolved.

Documentation

As described in **Subrule 7(1)**, service providers should maintain a comprehensive and accurate record for each client to whom they have provided services through the program. If refusing services to a client, service providers should ensure this is documented in the client's record.