



Amplification benefits

Alberta Aids to Daily Living
Program Manual Section H

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Policy H – 01

Amplification Benefits

Policy Statement

The Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) program assists Albertans with a long-term disability, chronic illness or terminal illness in maintaining independence in their community. AADL provides funding for basic medical equipment and supplies to meet clinically assessed needs. An assessment by a health care professional determines the equipment and supplies that an eligible Albertan can receive through the AADL program. Amplification benefits available to eligible clients include:

- bone anchored hearing aids
- cochlear implant processors
- earmolds
- hearing aids
- personal listening devices
- remote microphone hearing assistive technology (RM-HAT) systems
- repairs

Amplification benefits are listed in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits and are provided to eligible clients as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined on the approved products list.

Eligibility for amplification benefits is assessed by:

- authorizers who are audiologists
- specialty assessors who are audiologists and/or hearing aid practitioners

Amplification benefits are provided by approved AADL specialty suppliers.

Amplification benefit authorizations and claims are processed through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.

AADL does not fund for research or equipment evaluation.

Policy H – 02

Hearing Aids Eligibility Criteria

Policy Statement

Clients must have a permanent hearing loss, confirmed by a registered audiologist or registered hearing aid practitioner, to be eligible for amplification benefits. Hearing impairment is considered 'permanent' if it is irreversible by medication or surgery and is likely to last for a period of six months or more. This includes conductive impairment associated with structural anomalies of the ear. Permanent hearing loss must be supported by a diagnostic audiogram.

Childhood hearing loss criteria (0 – 17 years)

Diagnostic audiogram must reflect either of the following:

- pure tone average at 500, 1,000 and 2,000 Hz greater than 20 dBHL
- high frequency hearing loss: Pure tone thresholds greater than 20 dB at two or more frequencies at or above 2,000 Hz

Children under the age of 18 are covered for amplification benefits as per the approved products list and must be assessed and treated by a registered audiologist.

Adult hearing loss criteria

Diagnostic audiogram must reflect either of the following, and the client must be motivated to wear a hearing device:

- a total hearing loss of 100 decibels, or greater, when calculated over the speech frequencies of 500, 1,000, 2,000 and 3,000 Hz.
 - To calculate total hearing loss, add the threshold values at 500, 1,000, 2,000 and 3,000 Hz.
- high frequency hearing loss: pure tone thresholds greater than 25 dB at two or more frequencies at, or above, 2,000 Hz

Additional criteria

Clients between the ages of 18 and 64 must meet one or more of the following criteria to be eligible for amplification benefits:

- they are eligible for cost-share exemption, based on the current income threshold identified by the program in the AADL General Policy and Procedures Manual
- they receive assistance under the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program or the Income Support Program
- they are a full-time student, aged 18 to 24 years, still receiving benefits under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan as a dependent under their parents' plan.
 - Proof of full-time educational enrolment is required. This client is then eligible for all benefits available to those under 18 years of age indicated in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits.

Clients over the age of 65 and adult dependents of seniors must submit the Alberta Health Proof of Age form or the Alberta Seniors Financial Assistance Application form to confirm their age. Albertans are eligible for seniors' hearing aid funding the first of the month following their 65th birthday.

Specialty suppliers can verify the cost-share exemption status on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.

Exclusions

- Hearing threshold elevations due to middle ear fluid and/or infection are not covered for amplification benefits.

Policy H – 03

Cost-Share for Amplification Benefits

Policy Statement

AADL is a cost-share program which means that clients and AADL share the cost of approved benefits received through the program. Clients pay 25 per cent of the cost of their benefits up to a maximum contribution of \$500 per family per benefit year. Low-income Albertans and individuals receiving income assistance may be exempt from cost-share once approved by AADL.

Amplification benefit eligibility is based on client household income levels, as per the AADL cost-share policy outlined in the AADL General Policy and Procedures Manual. Each family is assigned one of the following cost share statuses:

- Cost-share – The family pays cost share for the benefit year.
- Cost-share max reached – The maximum \$500 cost share portion has been paid by the family and no further cost share payments are required for the benefit year.
- Cost-share exempt – The family is exempt from paying cost share for the benefit year.
- Temporary cost-share exempt – The family is exempt from paying cost-share until the end of the current benefit year.

Clients who have a permanent hearing loss, confirmed by a registered audiologist or registered hearing aid practitioner, must meet the following cost-share criteria:

Cost-share exemption criteria

Cost-share exemption criteria is outlined in the AADL General Policy and Procedures Manual. The following clients may be eligible for cost-share exemption:

- Clients who are low income, based on the current income threshold identified in the AADL General Policy and Procedures Manual.
- Clients who are receiving income supplement benefits from Alberta government programs identified in the AADL General Policy and Procedures Manual.
- If a senior's income is above the AADL cost-share exemption thresholds, they may also qualify for cost-share exemption under the Alberta Seniors Benefit Program. Clients need to apply and be eligible for the Alberta Seniors Benefit prior to applying to AADL for cost-share exemption for hearing aid benefits for seniors. Cost-share exemption criteria is listed in the AADL Program Manual Section GN – General Policy and Procedures.

Specialty suppliers can verify cost-share exemption status through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal Patient Inquiry page.

Procedure

Clients:

- Ensure they have applied for the Alberta Seniors Benefit and confirm they are eligible for amplification benefits.
- Submit the Alberta Health Proof of Age form or the Alberta Seniors Financial Assistance Application form to confirm their age.
- Submit the Application for Cost-Share Exemption for Hearing Aid Benefits for Seniors and Their Adult Dependents form. Clients may also contact a specialty assessor, specialty supplier, or the Alberta Blue Cross AADL Provider Contact Center.

Specialty Suppliers:

- Verify the cost-share status of the individual through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal Patient Inquiry page.
- Provide the client with cost-share and/or cost-share exemption information.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Verify the cost-share status of the individual. Provide the cost-share status of an individual on the Patient Inquiry page of the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.

Policy H – 04

Specialty Supplier Requirements

Policy Statement

All specialty suppliers are responsible for providing quality amplification benefits and services to eligible AADL clients. Any new specialty supplier who wishes to join the program will need to provide all required AADL policy documents to Alberta Blue Cross. Alberta Blue Cross will then work with AADL to validate the provider and, if approved, register them on the portal with the appropriate benefits.

All specialty suppliers will need to sign agreements with Alberta Blue Cross and Alberta Aids to Daily Living and be registered on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal to submit benefit authorization requests and/or claims for amplification benefits.

Specialty suppliers for amplification benefits must ensure they:

- meet AADL's general vendor criteria as outlined in AADL Program Manual Section GN – General Policy and Procedures
- follow AADL's approved products lists
- meet AADL's test environment and equipment requirements for hearing benefits
- employ a minimum of one registered audiologist or registered hearing aid practitioner with approved AADL specialty assessor status
- employ at least one specialty assessor on-site, available to clients during business hours, for at least three days per week (0.6 full-time equivalent)
 - “On-site” means working at the operating address identified in the AADL vendor agreement.
- adhere to AADL policies and procedures as stated in the most current AADL Program Manual Section GN – General Policy and Procedures, AADL Program Manual Section H - Amplification Benefits and approved products list
- register with Alberta Blue Cross to obtain access to the online health portal
- comply with monitoring and/or audits conducted by Alberta Blue Cross and/or AADL
- employ staff with the necessary expertise regarding the provision of AADL benefits and associated invoicing and business processes
- follow a “best practice” approach to clinical procedures
- resolve all errors relating to the assessment of a client's benefits, eligibility status and billing concerns; this includes correcting claims and resubmitting as require; unresolved errors may result in loss of funding to the specialty supplier
- provide clients with information and answers regarding AADL eligibility criteria
- inform Alberta Blue Cross AADL Provider Contact Center if there is a change of ownership

Specialty suppliers may provide service to AADL clients off-site; for example, at a client's home, a care facility, or a satellite office which does not have an AADL vendor agreement. The specialty supplier is responsible for ensuring services are provided by a qualified specialty assessor in accordance with AADL policy. When a specialty assessor is working off-site, their time does not count towards the on-site availability requirement.

Policy H – 05

Specialty Assessor Qualifications

Policy Statement

All services for amplification benefits funded by the AADL program shall be conducted by an audiologist registered with the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists or a hearing aid practitioner registered with the College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta, who are authorized by AADL.

Audiologists may provide amplification products and services to both adults and children. Hearing aid practitioners may provide amplification products and services to adult clients only.

Any new audiologist or hearing aid practitioner who wishes to join the program must complete specialty assessor online training modules and submit an application to Alberta Blue Cross. Alberta Blue Cross will then work with AADL to validate the clinician and, if approved, register them on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal with the appropriate benefits.

Specialty assessors who have not submitted an authorization or claim within 60 days will have their access to the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal removed. To be re-activated, users will have to contact the Alberta Blue Cross AADL Provider Contact Center.

Hearing aids for adults and children

- Must be a Registered Audiologist (R. Aud) with the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (ACSLPA).
- Must have a valid practice permit issued by ACSLPA with no conditions requiring supervision or restrictions on practice.
- Must be employed by an approved AADL vendor.

Hearing aids for adults only

- Must be a Registered Hearing Aid Practitioner (RHAP), or a Hearing Aid Practitioner with no conditions (HAP-no con) with the College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta (CHAPA).
- Must have a valid practice permit issued by CHAPA with no conditions requiring supervision or restrictions on practice.
- Must be employed by an approved AADL vendor.

Cochlear implants and bone-anchored hearing devices

- Must be a Registered Audiologist (R. Aud) with the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (ACSLPA).
- Must have a valid practice permit issued by ACSLPA with no conditions requiring supervision or restrictions on practice.
- Must be employed by Alberta Health Services working at a clinic that fits cochlear implants or bone-anchored hearing devices.

Policy H – 06

Test Environment

Policy Statement

The environment where hearing tests and hearing aid evaluations and verifications are performed will meet the following standards:

- If such tests and evaluations are performed within a commercially available sound-treated booth, the acoustic characteristics as obtained within the booth following fabrication on site will be noted and retained for conveyance to AADL as required;
- If such tests and evaluations are performed outside a commercially available sound-treated booth, the acoustic characteristics of the room(s) shall be determined with a sound level meter and noted on the audiogram. The serial number of the sound level meter must also be recorded on the audiogram for audit purposes; and
- Testing may not be performed if the ambient noise level exceeds 40dBA when headphones are used, and 48dBA if insert phones are used.

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Retain on file acoustic characteristics of commercial sound treated booths.
- Conduct sound level meter readings of ambient noise prior to any test being performed outside of a sound-treated booth.
- Record sound level meter reading on audiogram, as well as sound level meter serial number.

AADL:

- Conduct testing environment audits.

Policy H – 07

Equipment Requirements

Policy Statement

The specialty supplier must have specified equipment at each location where clients are assessed.

For children, the following testing equipment is required:

- a sound isolating, wheelchair-accessible booth meeting ANSI standards
- a clinical audiometer capable of air, bone, masking, speech audiometry and sound field testing
- a middle ear analyzer capable of tympanograms and acoustic reflexes
- otoacoustic emissions (recommended for audiologist clinics, but not mandatory)
- an otoscope
- a hearing aid analyzer/test box
- a probe tube microphone system

For adults, the following testing equipment is required:

- a sound isolating, wheelchair accessible booth meeting ANSI standards, or a test environment in which the ambient noise levels do not exceed 40dBA SPL when using headphones or 48dBA SPL when using insert phones
- a clinical audiometer capable of air, bone, masking and speech audiometry
- a middle ear analyzer capable of tympanograms and acoustic reflexes
- an otoscope
- a hearing aid analyzer/test box
- a probe tube microphone system
- sound level meter (if performing assessments outside of sound isolating booth)

All test equipment must meet current American National Standards Institute (ANSI) specifications, and undergo daily, monthly and annual calibrations.

All test equipment must undergo infection prevention and control procedures as per industry standards and manufacturer specifications.

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Perform daily and monthly biologic calibrations.
- Perform annual calibrations on all diagnostic equipment used in clinic.
- Retain a copy of all equipment calibration documentation.
- Utilize routine infection prevention and control precautions as per industry standards and manufacturer specifications.

AADL:

- If specialty supplier is unable to produce calibration documentation, AADL may take further action until documentation can be provided and verified.
- If specialty supplier is unable to produce evidence that routine infection prevention and control precautions are being taken, AADL may take further action until documentation can be provided and verified.

Policy H – 08

Hearing Assessments

Policy Statement

A complete audiologic assessment will be taken on all clients fitted with an amplification device. All hearing assessments must be performed by an approved AADL Specialty Assessor or Registered Audiologist employed by Alberta Health Services. No results from testing performed by physicians will be accepted. Audiograms more than six months old must be repeated if they are being used for a hearing aid fitting or verification.

All unaided and aided test results shall be dated and signed (name of tester and signature) by the assessor and test reliability shall be noted. The type of transducer used for testing (insert earphones vs. headphones) must also be indicated.

Individuals up to 17 years of age must be assessed by an audiologist. These audiologists must be registered with the Alberta College of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists and may be employed in either private practice or by Alberta Health Services. It is recommended that children diagnosed with hearing loss seek medical consultation with an ear, nose and throat specialist to establish the absence of medical contraindications to amplification.

For individuals 0 to 17-years-old, audiologists must follow the assessment procedures outlined in the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Protocol for Pediatric Amplification.

Hearing assessments for all clients must consist of, but may not be limited to, the following:

- **Case history:** The case history should include identifying information, purpose of referral, communication history and pertinent medical history. For potential hearing aid candidates, the history should consider the person's candidacy by recognizing lifestyle considerations, physical and cognitive capabilities and expectations of hearing aid use. Use of communication inventories (formal or informal) are strongly recommended to assist the assessor in prescribing amplification.
- **Otoscopic examination:** Visual and otoscopic examinations are to be completed with all results recorded on the audiogram as part of the assessment process.
- **Standard pure tone audiometry:** Pure tone air and bone conduction thresholds will be obtained for both ears, with masking where appropriate, as per current standards and guidelines. Results will be clearly recorded upon an audiogram and will minimally include air conduction thresholds over the frequency range of 250 to 8,000 Hz at octave steps. For program purposes, air conduction thresholds shall also be obtained at the mid-octave frequency of 3,000 and 6,000 Hz in both ears. Bone conduction thresholds will be obtained at octave steps between 500 and 4,000 Hz in both ears unless the hearing loss is bilaterally symmetrical, in which case thresholds may be established for only one ear.
- **Speech audiometry:** Assessment must include speech recognition threshold or speech recognition scores completed on both ears, with masking where appropriate. It is recommended that the test be completed according to recognized guidelines, which specify familiarization, to ensure reliable and valid test results. Additional speech tests deemed relevant to the hearing aid prescription process, such as word recognition scores and speech-in-noise, may be completed at the discretion of the assessor.
- **Acoustic impedance testing:** Acoustic impedance testing will be completed for both ears and will include static compliance, middle ear pressure and canal volumes. Acoustic reflex measurements in the ipsilateral condition are mandatory, and contralateral when applicable. All results are to be entered on the audiogram form.

If test results, or lack thereof, indicate the need for further diagnostic evaluation (i.e., auditory brainstem response) to clarify the nature and degree of the hearing loss and the assessor is unable to perform such evaluation, the client must be referred to a clinic capable of such evaluation.

When test results indicate the need for medical examination or intervention, the client must be referred to a physician prior to proceeding with the fitting of amplification and signed off by that physician if no medical intervention is warranted.

Procedure

Specialty Assessors:

- Ensure the client:
 - has a valid Alberta Personal Health Number
 - signs the Client Consent form
 - meets the current AADL amplification benefit eligibility criteria
- Complete all aforementioned hearing assessment requirements.
- Document results of each hearing test and hearing aid evaluation on the audiogram.
 - Symbols used must also be noted in a key on the audiogram form and shall conform to current audiometric standards.
 - Complete a summary of all findings, including assessor's recommendations and retain on the client file.
- Explain thoroughly all test results and recommendations to client and/or caregivers.
- Date and have client sign Hearing test line of the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate.

Clients:

- Agree to undergo a full audiologic evaluation, attend and follow assessor's instructions.
- Obtain the appropriate documentation before proceeding with a hearing aid fitting if a referral is recommended to meet assessment requirement.
- Review test results and recommendations with the assessor.
- Sign the Health test line of the AADL Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Perform regular audit of documentation and adherence to hearing assessment policy and procedures.
- Refer questions and/or concerns to AADL, if required.

Policy H – 09

Aural Rehabilitation

Policy Statement

Besides providing amplification to clients, the specialty supplier must provide aural rehabilitative counseling in the following areas:

- understanding hearing loss
- understanding amplification devices and their use
- understanding assistive devices and their use
- communication strategies and goals for the client with hearing loss and their communication partners

The client and their family need to be involved in every decision-making process as they are responsible for, and should be comfortable with, all decisions made related to their aural rehabilitation.

Policy H – 10

Hearing Aid Selection

Policy Statement

The specialty supplier must offer a hearing aid within the identified program maximum prices to all clients. If the price of the hearing aid preferred by the client exceeds the limits set by the AADL Program, the specialty assessor may bill the client the difference. The hearing aid provided to the client must have a one-year warranty, at minimum.

For individuals 0 to 17-years-old, audiologists must follow the selection of amplification procedures outlined in the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Protocol for Pediatric Amplification.

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Confirm client eligibility for amplification benefit and cost-share status through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal Patient Inquiry page.
- Inform the client as to their eligibility status.
- Discuss a range of amplification options with the client, starting with those available within the program maximum funding and restricted to AADL approved manufacturers.
- Discuss cost sharing with client.
- Confirm with client, which hearing aid(s) are to be ordered.
- Enter the authorization request through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal prior to fitting date.

Clients:

- Confirm cost-share eligibility and complete a cost-share exemption form, if applicable.
- Consider amplification options presented by the specialty supplier.
- Confirm with specialty suppliers which hearing aid(s) are to be ordered and whether the aids fall within the program maximum funding.

AADL:

- Provides a full list of approved manufacturers.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding amplification selection.
- Adjudicate authorizations submitted through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding authorization submissions.
- Retain all relevant documentation submitted through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.

Policy H – 11

Fitting and Verification of Hearing Aids

Policy Statement

Verification is the process used to determine whether a hearing aid meets a set of measurable specifications or expectations. This process includes two parts:

- measuring the response of the hearing aid in a test chamber (the coupler response)
- probe-tube (real-ear) measurements

Prior to the initial hearing aid fitting, the specialty assessor must complete the following:

- electroacoustic analysis to ascertain that the hearing aid is meeting electroacoustic specifications prior to being fitted on the client
- a subjective listening test of the hearing aid

At the initial hearing aid fitting, the specialty assessor must complete the following:

- real ear measurements for verifying and optimizing the electro-acoustic characteristics of the hearing aid fitting for gain and maximum output, or
- simulated real ear measurements of the real-ear aided response may be used for infants or clients unable to actively participate in real ear measurement verification

The goal of real ear measurement is to ensure the hearing aid is accessing as much of the speech spectrum as possible and the output of the hearing aid is not exceeding the client's discomfort level.

When fitting children 0 – 17-years-old with amplification, all hearing aid verification procedures must be conducted by either an AADL specialty assessor who is a registered audiologist in private practice or a registered audiologist employed by Alberta Health Services.

When fitting children 0 – 17-years-old with amplification, audiologists must follow the fitting and verification of amplification procedures outlined in the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Pediatric Amplification Protocol.

The fitting date is the date of service for the purpose of AADL claims. Specialty suppliers are required to submit a claim to Alberta Blue Cross on the fitting date.

The specialty supplier must provide clients a trial period after the date of service. During the trial period, the client is entitled to return the hearing aid if they are not satisfied. See Policy H – 12 Trial Period for more information.

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Complete a hearing aid inquiry and create an authorization prior to the hearing aid fitting.
- Perform an electroacoustic assessment of the hearing aid(s) via a hearing aid analyzer test box and a listening check prior to the hearing aid(s) being fit on the client.
- Perform hearing aid verification using real ear measurement or simulated real ear measurement at the time of the initial fitting of a client's amplification. Simulated real ear measurement should only be used for clients unable to actively participate in real ear measurement verification.
- Document the real ear measurement verification, keep copies on the clients file, and record the following information:
 - client's name
 - date
 - body side (L or R)
 - serial number of hearing aids(s)
 - manufacturer and model of hearing aid(s)

- hearing aid settings
- real ear measurement verification results
- Verify functionality of any special features ordered with the hearing aid (e.g., directional microphone, digital noise reduction).
- Instruct client to date and sign Fitting line of AADL Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate.
- Enter claim(s) through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal on the hearing aid fitting date. The claim entry process consists of providing claim details, viewing predetermination results and submitting the claim(s).
- Collect client's cost-share portion, if applicable.
- Provide client with Alberta Blue Cross claim statement and amplification device funding letter.

Clients:

- Undergo verification procedures at time of initial fitting.
- Sign the Fitting line of the AADL Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate.
- Pay cost-share portion, if applicable, and any upgrade costs.
- Keep copy of Alberta Blue Cross claim statement and amplification device funding letter.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding verification requirements.
- Retain all relevant documentation submitted through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- Adjudicate claims submitted through the online health portal.
- Pay eligible claims submitted through the online health portal.
- Refer questions and/or concerns to AADL, if required.

Policy H – 12

Trial Period

Policy Statement

The specialty supplier must provide AADL clients with a trial period after the fitting of a hearing aid, remote microphone hearing assistance technologies system and/or a personal listening device, referred to in this policy as an “amplification device.” The client is entitled to return the amplification device to the specialty supplier for a full refund if they are not satisfied for any reason during the trial period.

The specialty supplier is required to maintain contact with the client during the trial and have a validation appointment with the client at least 28 days after fitting to confirm they accept the device.

Trial period

The trial period starts on the fitting date, and ends when one of the following occurs (whichever comes first):

- the client trials the device for at least 28 days, attends a validation appointment and signs the final section of the validation certificate
- the client returns the device to the specialty supplier because they are not satisfied
- the client trials the device for 60 days without returning the device or attending a validation appointment

A 60-day trial period is recommended for new users and pediatric clients 0 – 5-years-old.

Trial periods may exceed 60 days by mutual agreement between the client and the specialty supplier. In this case the start and end dates of the trial must be documented in writing as it affects the client’s right to return the amplification device.

If the device requires an earmold, the specialty supplier must provide a personally fitted custom (non-stock) earmold on the fitting date.

Followup and validation appointment

The specialty assessor must have contact with the client at least once between the initial fitting date and the required validation appointment at the end of the trial period to address any concerns that may arise. It is the specialty assessor’s responsibility to document all contact with the client during the trial period. This includes appointments, phone calls, emails and letters.

In-person appointments are recommended, especially if the client is a new user or pediatric. If appointments are not attended in-person, the assessor must document the reason why.

If adjustments to the amplification device are required during the trial period, the assessor should consider extending the trial period.

The assessor must schedule a validation appointment at the end of the trial period. The assessor must have the client sign the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate confirming the client has had the opportunity to complete a minimum 28-day trial period and is satisfied with the equipment. If the client is unable to sign the validation certificate, the assessor must document the reasons why.

See Policy H – 13 Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate for details about the validation certificate and the process if the client refuses to sign it.

Hearing aid return

During the trial period, the client is entitled to return the device to the specialty assessor if they are not satisfied for any reason. The vendor must reverse the AADL claim for the device. The online portal allows specialty suppliers to easily reverse claims up to 60 days after the date of service.

For claims older than 60 days, contact Alberta Blue Cross provider support to request a reversal. If the specialty supplier needs to re-bill after a claim is reversed, it can only do so during the effective period of the authorization, up to six months from the date of service. The client may then choose to start a new trial with a different device or return the device for a full refund.

Exchange for a new device

If the client chooses to begin a new trial with a different device, the specialty supplier must submit a new AADL claim on the fitting date and start a new trial.

The validation certificate must be updated with fitting dates and client signatures for the new trial.

Hearing aid return fee

If the client returns the device during the trial period and chooses not to trial a different device, the specialty supplier may submit a claim through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal for a return fee.

Hearing aid return after trial period

If the client wishes to return the amplification device after the trial period has ended, and they did not attend a validation appointment or notify the specialty supplier of their intent before the trial ended, the specialty supplier may choose to accept the return at their discretion. If the return is accepted, the AADL policies for hearing aid returns, exchanges and return fees apply.

Client deceases during trial period

If a client deceases during the trial period, the specialty supplier must make a reasonable effort to recover the amplification device from the client's estate, refund any amount paid to the estate, and reverse the AADL claim. The specialty supplier may then submit a claim through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal for a return fee. The specialty supplier has 60 days from the date of service (not date of submission) to reverse the claim on the online portal. After 60 days from the date of service, Alberta Blue Cross can complete the reversal upon request.

If unable to obtain the amplification device(s) and return them to the manufacturer, the specialty supplier may submit a claim for the manufacturer's invoice cost of the amplification device(s) through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal, up to the AADL maximum allowed, as well as a return fee. If the manufacturer invoice cost is less than the AADL maximum allowed, the lesser amount must be billed.

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Fit and verify client satisfaction with amplification device(s).
- Have client sign validation certificate at the time of assessment and on the fitting date.
- Submit claim through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal on date of service.
- Provide client a minimum 28-day trial period with amplification device.
- Contact client at least once between the initial fitting date and the required validation appointment at the end of the trial period to address client concerns.
- Schedule a validation appointment at the end of the trial period.
- If the client is satisfied with the device, have client sign validation certificate to indicate they have completed the 28-day trial period and are satisfied with the device(s) provided.
- If the client is not satisfied with the device, follow the policy as described above.
- Keep all documentation regarding fittings, appointments and contact with the client on the client's file.

Clients:

- Attend all scheduled appointments required to receive funding for their amplification device(s).
- Address any concerns regarding the trialed amplification device with the specialty supplier prior to signing the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate.

- Sign the validation certificate on fitting date and at completion of 28-day trial period, if satisfied with amplification device.
 - If amplification devices are exchanged for a different model, update signature on the validation certificate.
- If waiving the trial period, provide, in writing, their acknowledgment of relieving their rights of return.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Retain all documentation uploaded to the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding trial period requirements.
- Refer questions to AADL, if required.

Policy H – 13

Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate

Policy Statement

During the trial period for any amplification device, the specialty assessor shall validate the assessment, treatment and effectiveness of the amplification device fitting with the client. This validation is captured on the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate, which is divided into three sections:

- receipt of services and equipment
- confirmation of understanding
- completion of trial period

Specialty assessors must fully explain and have the client read the validation certificate and confirm they understand what they are signing for. Pre-dating or pre-signing the validation certificate is not permitted. In-person appointments are recommended, especially if the client is a new user or pediatric. If appointments are not attended in-person, the assessor must document the reason why.

The specialty assessor must keep the signed validation certificate on the client's file and provide a copy to AADL upon request.

Receipt of services and equipment:

The client must sign and date this section of the validation certificate at the following appointments:

- hearing assessment
- amplification device fitting, and
- completion of a minimum 28-day trial period

Confirmation of understanding:

The client must sign the validation certificate to confirm that they understand:

- cost-sharing and that they are responsible for upgrade costs
- the specialty assessor must provide a minimum 28-day trial period with amplification devices
- the client is responsible for the care of the device, including obtaining insurance to replace the aid/device in the event that it is lost, stolen or damaged following termination of the manufacturer's original warranty
- the client is not permitted to modify, adjust or repair their device and must consult with the specialty supplier when these services are required
- the client is not eligible for further government funding for a replacement device for a period of five years from the date of amplification device fitting. Repairs will be eligible for funding during this time
- the provider may bill AADL for the amplification device if the client refuses to return for followup appointments

Completion of trial period:

If the client is satisfied with the fit of the amplification device(s), the specialty assessor shall obtain the client's signature on the AADL Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate or, where the client is under 18 years of age, the signature of their parent or guardian.

If the client is not satisfied with the amplification device(s) and returns the device(s) for a refund, the client is not required to sign this section of the validation certificate.

If the client keeps the amplification device(s) and refuses to sign the validation certificate at the completion of the trial period, the assessor must keep a record of all attempts made to contact the client. The Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate must be kept in the client's clinical file with an explanation of why the client did not sign the certificate.

In case of a dispute or compliance review, claims for amplification devices will be subject to reversal if the specialty supplier cannot produce a signed validation certificate, or documentation that reasonable efforts were made to contact the client and obtain their signature.

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Read over and discuss the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate with the client, including the recommendation for insurance coverage related to loss, theft or damage.
- Have the client sign their name, in full, for each service or item they received, if they agree, at the end of each of the three stages listed below:
 - hearing assessment
 - fitting
 - completion of the trial period
- If the client exchanges the amplification device during the trial period, have the client re-sign the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate with a new date on the Fitting line below where the initial fitting date and signature exists.
- Document all contact attempts with the client if the client refuses to, or cannot sign, the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate.
- Keep all documentation regarding the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate in the client's file.
- Give a copy of the signed Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate to the client once their signature has been obtained.

Clients:

- Read and discuss the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate with the specialty supplier.
- Trial the device and decide whether to accept it.
 - if accepting the device, sign and date the AADL Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate
 - if not accepting, discuss alternatives with the specialty supplier
- Acknowledge that by signing the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate, they accept responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of the aid. AADL recommends clients obtain appropriate insurance coverage.
- Acknowledge that by signing the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate, they are not eligible for further government funding for a replacement aid as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined on the approved product list.
- Keep a copy of the signed Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Retain documentation submitted through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- Respond to questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding the AADL Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate.

Policy H – 14

Followup Schedule

Policy Statement

Followup to the initial hearing instrument fitting should be completed on a regular schedule, with accommodation for individual needs. Following the completion of the trial period, it is the specialty assessor's responsibility to have contact, in the form of a letter, email or appointment, with the client following the signing of the Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate at the following times:

- 90 days following the signing of the certificate
- between six months following the signing of the certificate and the one-year anniversary date of the initial fitting

Annual followup visits after the one-year anniversary date of the initial fitting is also recommended

At each followup visit, the use, care and maintenance of the hearing instruments should be discussed as questions arise, or as re-instruction is required. Assessment of hearing levels shall be done if a change in hearing is noted. Subsequent adjustments should be made to the hearing instruments as needed. Real ear measurement verification is required when changes in hearing are noted, new earmolds are fit and hearing aid adjustments are required.

Additional Recommendations for Pediatric Clients (0 – 6 years)

It is recommended that the audiologist see the child and family for a minimum number of two followup visits within the trial period which is recommended to be a minimum of 60 days for pediatric clients 0 – 6-years-old.

Followup visits are recommended at the following times:

- about every three months for one year after the fitting of amplification
- about every six months for a second year, and
- annually thereafter until grade one entry

This followup schedule may vary from child to child. Some may require less frequent visits, but for children with a progressive or fluctuating hearing loss or auditory neuropathy spectrum disorder, regular followup is recommended. The schedule should be re-assessed on an ongoing, individual basis, with appropriate documentation.

Policy H – 15

Earmolds

Policy Statement

AADL will fund earmolds for users eligible for amplification devices. Earmolds are eligible for replacement as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits. The replacement of earmolds is not automatic. Earmolds may only be replaced when one of the following conditions apply:

- significant, age-typical development of the external ear
- loose fitting resulting in feedback
- inadequate high-frequency response due to feedback

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Confirm client eligibility for replacement earmold and cost-share status through Alberta Blue Cross online health portal Patient Inquiry page.
- Inform the client as to their eligibility status.
- Discuss earmold options with the client.
- Discuss cost-sharing with client.
- Confirm with client, which earmold(s) are to be ordered.
- Document why earmold(s) require replacement, if applicable, in the client's file.
- Enter the authorization request through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal, prior to client's fitting date.
- Perform hearing aid verification using real ear measurement (or simulated real ear measurement when applicable) at earmold fitting. This applies to new and remake earmolds.
- Document the real ear measurement verification, keep copies on the clients file, and record the following information:
 - client's name
 - date
 - body side (L or R)
 - serial number of hearing aids(s) and earmold(s)
 - manufacturer and model of hearing aid(s) and earmold(s)
 - hearing aid settings
 - real ear measurement verification results
- Enter claim(s) on the fitting date. The claim entry process consists of providing claim details, viewing predetermination results and submitting the claim(s).
- Collect client's cost-share portion, if applicable.
- Provide client with Alberta Blue Cross claim statement.

Clients:

- Provide the specialty supplier with appropriate information to obtain eligibility information.
- Undergo real ear measurement verification measures with new/remade earmold(s).
- Pay the cost-share portion, if applicable.
- Keep copy of Alberta Blue Cross claim statement and amplification device funding letter.

AADL:

- Provide a full list of approved manufacturers.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding earmold replacement guidelines.
- Retain all relevant documentation submitted through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- Adjudicate authorizations and claims.
- Pay eligible claims.
- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding claims submissions.
- Refer questions and/or concerns to AADL, if required.

Policy H – 16

Personal Listening Devices

Policy Statement

A personal listening device is a portable personal communications device that improves the listening experience for a hard of hearing person who does not wear a hearing aid.

The AADL program will provide eligible clients one personal listening device, in lieu of a hearing aid, as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits.

Replacement after this time period may be requested only if the previous device can no longer be used, or is too costly to repair.

Fitting, Verification and Validation Guidelines

Testing and environment, as well as aural rehabilitation requirements, are the same as for hearing aid benefits.

The specialty assessor shall provide the eligible client with a trial period of at least 28 days after the fitting of the personal listening device.

The trial period, Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate and repair policies discussed in this manual are all applicable to personal listening device systems.

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Confirm client eligibility for amplification and cost share status through Alberta Blue Cross online health portal, Patient Inquiry page.
- Inform the client as to their eligibility status.
- Discuss personal listening device options with the client, starting with those available within the program maximum funding and restricted to AADL-approved manufacturers.
- Discuss cost-sharing with client.
- Confirm with client, which personal listening device is to be ordered.
- Document why a personal listening device is being substituted for hearing aids in the client's file.
- Enter the authorization request on the online health portal, prior to client's fitting date.
- Verify functionality of the personal listening device, and that it is meeting the clients' needs.
- Instruct client to date and sign Fitting line of AADL Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate.
- Enter claim(s) on fitting date. The claim entry process consists of providing claim details, viewing predetermination results and submitting the claim(s).
- Collect client's cost-share portion, if applicable.
- Provide client with Alberta Blue Cross claim statement and amplification device funding letter.

Clients:

- Confirm eligibility for cost-share exemption and complete a cost-share exemption form, if applicable.
- Consider amplification options presented by the specialty supplier.
- Confirm with specialty suppliers which device is to be ordered and whether the device falls within the program maximum funding.
- Undergo verification procedures at time of initial fitting.
- Sign the Fitting line of the AADL Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate.

- Pay cost-share portion, if applicable, and any upgrade costs.
- Keep a copy of Alberta Blue Cross claim statement and amplification device funding letter.

AADL:

- Provide a full list of approved manufacturers.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding personal listening device replacement guidelines.
- Retain all relevant documentation submitted through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- Adjudicate authorizations and claims submitted through the online health portal.
- Pay eligible claims submitted through the online health portal.
- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding claims submissions.
- Refer questions and/or concerns to AADL, if required.

Policy H – 17

Remote Microphone Hearing Assistive Technology (RM-HAT) Systems

Policy Statement

The AADL program will provide eligible clients funding for a remote microphone hearing assistive technology system (i.e., frequency modulation/digital modulation system) and repairs as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits. All new and repaired devices must come with a minimum one-year warranty.

Personal remote microphone hearing assistance technologies systems must be fitted and verified by an audiologist. The audiologist is the only professional who is qualified to select, evaluate, fit and dispense remote microphone hearing assistance technologies systems through AADL.

When fitting children 0 – 17-years-old with remote microphone hearing assistance technologies, audiologists must follow the fitting and verification of remote microphone hearing assistance technology procedures outlined in the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists.

Eligibility Criteria

Clients must meet the general AADL eligibility criteria and the following criteria for remote microphone hearing assistance technologies systems:

- Individuals must be under 18 years of age, or a full-time student, still receiving benefits under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan as a dependent under their parent's plan and between the ages of 18 to 24 years. Proof of full-time educational enrolment is required for those aged 18 to 24.
- The remote microphone hearing assistance technologies system must be used in conjunction with an amplification benefit, or by individuals who present with a permanent, unaidable, unilateral hearing loss.
- It must be established that the equipment shall be used in a variety of listening environments, not solely for school use.
- The individual's caregivers must be trained in the use of the device and motivated to use it in a variety of listening environments.

Fitting, Verification and Validation Guidelines

- Testing and environment, as well as aural rehabilitation requirements are the same as for hearing aid benefits.
- The audiologist will discuss all audiologic, developmental, listening environment, and technology issues prior to recommending a remote microphone hearing assistance technologies system.
- At the time of fitting and at routine followup, the audiologist should verify that the electro-acoustic fitting goals have been attained or maintained.
- The audiologist shall provide the eligible client with a trial period of at least 28 days after the remote microphone hearing assistance technologies system fitting.
- The trial period, Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate, and repair policies discussed in this manual are all applicable to remote microphone hearing assistance technologies systems.

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Confirm client eligibility for remote microphone hearing assistance technologies system and cost-share status through Alberta Blue Cross online health portal Patient Inquiry page.
- Inform the client as to their eligibility status.
- Discuss remote microphone hearing assistance technologies options with the client, starting with those available within the program maximum funding and restricted to AADL-approved manufacturers.

- Discuss cost-sharing with client.
- Confirm with client which remote microphone hearing assistance technologies system is to be ordered.
- Document why the remote microphone hearing assistance technology requires replacement (if applicable) in the client's file.
- Enter the authorization request, prior to client's fitting date.
- Collect proof of full-time educational enrollment from eligible clients aged 18 to 24 and submit to Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- Order the remote microphone hearing assistance technologies device from the approved manufacturers list.
- Fit the remote microphone hearing assistance technologies system and use verification methods to ascertain adequate benefit.
- Provide training in the use of the device to family members, and others who may use the remote microphone hearing assistance technologies system.
- Instruct client to date and sign AADL Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate on date of fitting and at completion of 28-day trial period.
- Enter claim(s) through the online health portal on fitting date. The claim entry process consists of providing claim details, viewing predetermination results and submitting the claim(s).
- Collect client's cost-share portion, if applicable.
- Provide client with Alberta Blue Cross claim statement and amplification device funding letter.

Clients/Families:

- Confirm cost-share eligibility and complete a cost-share exemption form, if applicable.
- Provide proof of full-time educational enrollment from eligible clients aged 18 to 24, if applicable.
- Consider amplification options presented by the specialty supplier.
- Confirm with specialty suppliers which remote microphone hearing assistance technologies device is to be ordered and whether it falls within the program maximum funding.
- Undergo verification procedures at time of initial fitting.
- Train in the use of the remote microphone hearing assistance technologies system.
- Sign AADL Amplification Benefits Validation Certificate on fitting date and at completion of 28-day trial period.
- Pay cost-share portion, if applicable, and any upgrade costs.
- Keep a copy of Alberta Blue Cross claim statement and amplification device funding letter.

AADL:

- Provide a full list of approved manufacturers.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding RM-HAT replacement guidelines.
- Retain all relevant documentation submitted through the Alberta Blue Cross Online Health Portal.
- Adjudicate authorizations and claims.
- Pay eligible claims.
- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding claims submissions.
- Refer questions and/or concerns to AADL, if required.

Policy H – 18

Cochlear Implants

Policy Statement

AADL will provide funding for cochlear implant replacement processors for eligible AADL clients as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits. All devices must come with a one-year warranty, at minimum.

AADL will provide funding for cochlear implant repairs for eligible AADL clients as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits. All repairs must come with a minimum six-month warranty.

Eligibility

Clients must meet the general eligibility criteria requirements found in the AADL General Policies and Procedures Manual and the hearing loss eligibility criteria discussed in this manual. Replacement devices and repairs must be recommended by an authorized Alberta Health Services audiologist. Applicants cannot have the same or similar devices in good working order. Applicants must trade in their old processor in order to obtain a new one.

Procedure

Authorizers:

- Confirm client eligibility for replacement amplification and cost share status through Alberta Blue Cross online health portal Patient Inquiry page.
- Inform the client as to their eligibility status.
- Discuss a range of amplification options with the client, starting with those available within the program maximum funding and restricted to AADL-approved manufacturers.
- Discuss cost-sharing with client.
- Confirm with client, which cochlear implant device(s) are to be ordered.
- Document why cochlear implant device(s) require replacement in the client's file.
- Enter the authorization request through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal, prior to client's fitting date.
- Verify functionality of the cochlear implant and that it meets clients' needs.

Distributors:

- Enter claim(s) through the online health portal on fitting date. The claim entry process consists of providing claim details, viewing predetermination results and submitting the claim(s).
- Collect client's cost-share portion, if applicable, and mail device to intended recipient.
- Provide client with Alberta Blue Cross claim statement and amplification device funding letter.

Clients:

- Confirm cost-share eligibility and complete a cost-share exemption form, if applicable.
- Consider amplification options presented by the authorizer.
- Confirm with authorizer which cochlear implant (s) are to be ordered and whether the aids fall within the program maximum funding.
- Undergo verification procedures at time of initial fitting.
- Pay cost-share portion, if applicable, and any upgrade costs.
- Keep copy of Alberta Blue Cross claim statement and amplification device funding letter.

AADL:

- Provide a full list of approved manufacturers.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding cochlear implant replacement guidelines.
- Retain all relevant documentation submitted through the online health portal.
- Adjudicate authorizations and claims.
- Pay claims.
- Refer questions or concerns to AADL, if required.

Policy H – 19

Bone-Anchored Hearing Device (BAHD)

Policy Statement

AADL will provide funding for bone-anchored hearing devices, including those with softband, for eligible AADL clients as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits. All devices must come with a one-year warranty, at minimum.

AADL will provide funding for bone-anchored hearing devices repairs for eligible AADL clients as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits. All repairs must come with a minimum six-month warranty.

Eligibility

Bone-anchored hearing devices:

Clients must meet the general eligibility criteria requirements found in AADL Program Manual Section GN – General Policies and Procedures, and the hearing loss eligibility criteria discussed in this manual. Replacement devices and repairs must be recommended by an authorized Alberta Health Services audiologist. Applicants cannot have the same or similar devices in good working order. Applicants must trade in their old processor in order to obtain a new one.

Bone-anchored hearing devices with softband:

Alberta Health Services authorized audiologist may recommended the use of a bone-anchored hearing devices with softband as a temporary solution until the child is old enough for a bone-anchored hearing device implant (generally younger than five-years-old).

Clients five-years-old and older may choose a bone-anchored hearing device softband as an alternative to traditional bone conduction hearing aids or bone-anchored hearing device implant surgery.

Procedure

Authorizers:

- Confirm client eligibility for replacement amplification and cost share status through Alberta Blue Cross online health portal, Patient Inquiry page.
- Inform the client as to their eligibility status.
- Discuss a range of amplification options with the client, starting with those available within the program maximum funding and restricted to AADL approved manufacturers.
- Discuss cost-sharing with client.
- Confirm with client which bone-anchored hearing device(s) are to be ordered.
- Document why bone-anchored hearing device(s) require replacement in the client's file.
- Enter the authorization request through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal, prior to client's fitting date.
- Verify functionality of the bone-anchored hearing device and that it meets clients' needs.

Distributors:

- Enter claim(s) through the online health portal on fitting date. The claim entry process consists of providing claim details, viewing predetermination results and submitting the claim(s).
- Collect client's cost-share portion, if applicable, and mail device to intended recipient.
- Provide client with Alberta Blue Cross claim statement and amplification device funding letter.

Clients:

- Confirm cost-share eligibility and complete a cost-share exemption form, if applicable.

- Consider amplification options presented by the authorizer.
- Confirm with authorizer which bone-anchored hearing device(s) are to be ordered and whether the aids fall within the program maximum funding.
- Undergo verification procedures at time of initial fitting.
- Pay cost-share portion, if applicable, and any upgrade costs.
- Keep copy of Alberta Blue Cross claim statement and amplification device funding letter.

AADL:

- Provide a full list of approved manufacturers.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding bone-anchored hearing device replacement guidelines.
- Retain all relevant documentation submitted through the bone-anchored hearing device.
- Adjudicate authorizations and claims.
- Pay claims.
- Refer questions and/or concerns to AADL, if required.

Policy H – 20

Amplification Device Repairs

Policy Statement

The AADL program will pay the manufacturer's invoice cost for repair of a client's current amplification devices only, up to the AADL set maximum. Devices are eligible for repair as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits after the manufacturer's warranty has expired. A one-year repair warranty on major repairs is required. A six-month warranty on major repairs is acceptable if there is less than 12 months prior to the next replacement eligibility period.

AADL pays for repairs of hearing aids that were funded by, and registered with, AADL. A hearing aid not purchased by AADL can be adopted and registered with the program in lieu of an AADL-funded aid; however, a client cannot adopt a second hearing aid if they are only eligible for one hearing aid from AADL. An example of an adopted aid would be if an eligible client moves to Alberta, wearing a pre-existing hearing instrument, or an instrument paid for privately. These adopted hearing aids would also be eligible for repairs.

Cost-share clients are eligible for repair funding for one hearing aid. Cost-share exempt clients are eligible for funding up to a maximum of one hearing aid per ear.

A major repair is done when the instrument is sent to the manufacturer's factory, or to an authorized repair facility.

A client may be eligible for an in-house receiver in the canal repair as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits after the manufacturer's warranty has expired. An in-house receiver in the canal repair is done when the specialty supplier replaces the receiver in-house.

The following services are not covered by AADL:

- minor repairs and adjustments, other than receiver in the canal receiver replacements
- fees for extended warranties, other than a 12-month repair warranty, or rush services
- verification procedures following a repair

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Confirm client eligibility for amplification benefit and cost share status through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal Patient Inquiry page. An authorization for repairs is not required.
- Inform the client as to their eligibility status.
- Register the serial number of the amplification device to be repaired if it is not already on the system.
- Retain all related documentation within the client's file regarding the amplification device repair:
 - client's name
 - date
 - body side (L or R)
 - manufacturer's invoice
 - serial number of amplification device(s)
 - manufacturer and model of amplification device(s)
- Ensure repaired amplification device meets client's needs.
- Enter claim(s) through the online health portal on fitting date.
- Collect client's cost-share portion, if applicable.
- Provide client with Alberta Blue Cross patient claim statement.

Clients:

- Provide the specialty supplier with appropriate information to obtain eligibility information.
- Pay the cost-share portion, if applicable.
- Keep copy of Alberta Blue Cross patient claim statement.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Adjudicate authorizations and claims submitted through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- Pay eligible claims submitted through the online health portal.
- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding claims submissions.
- Retain all relevant documentation submitted through the online health portal.
- Refer questions or concerns to AADL, if required.

Policy H – 21

Amplification Device Replacement

Policy Statement

Amplification devices may be replaced as per the quantity and frequency limits outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits. They may also be replaced after the replacement eligibility period has expired if one or more of the following conditions apply:

- Electroacoustic analysis and/or real ear measurements demonstrate that the client's amplification device is no longer appropriate, due to changes in hearing.
- The amplification device requires a major repair and has met, or exceeded, the quantity and frequency limits outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits.
- Improvements in design and technology will result in an overall improvement in the client's ability to hear.
- The physical ability of the client to manually operate the controls of the amplification device has become impaired since the original fitting, to the extent that the device cannot be used.
- The amplification device has been lost, stolen or damaged and alternate means of replacement (e.g., insurance) have been exhausted; and, the frequency replacement limit has been met, or exceeded, as outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits.

Early replacement of amplification devices may be requested through the quantity and frequency review process outlined in this manual.

AADL-funded amplification devices have a minimum one-year purchase and/or repair warranty. Clients must seek repair and replacement through the warranty, if applicable, in that time period.

If the client is not eligible for replacement, yet meets early replacement criteria, a Quantity and Frequency Review Request form must be completed. Please refer to Policy H – 22 Quantity and Frequency Review Process in this manual.

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Confirm client eligibility for replacement amplification and cost share status through Alberta Blue Cross online health portal Patient Inquiry page.
- Inform the client as to their eligibility status.
- Discuss a range of amplification options with the client, starting with those available within the program maximum funding and restricted to AADL-approved manufacturers.
- Discuss cost-sharing with client.
- Confirm with client which amplification device(s) are to be ordered.
- Document why amplification device(s) require replacement in the client's file.
- Enter the authorization request through the online health portal, prior to client's fitting date.

Clients:

- Confirm cost-share eligibility and complete a cost-share exemption form, if applicable.
- Consider amplification options presented by the specialty supplier.
- Confirm with specialty suppliers which amplification device(s) are to be ordered and whether the aids fall within the program maximum funding.

AADL:

- Provide a full list of approved manufacturers.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Retain all relevant documentation submitted through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- Adjudicate authorizations and claims submitted through the online health portal.
- Pay eligible claims submitted through the online health portal.
- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding claims submissions.
- Refer questions and/or concerns to AADL, if required.

Policy H – 22

Quantity and Frequency Review Request Process

Policy Statement

Devices that require early replacement must go through the quantity and frequency review request process which is explained in the AADL General Policy and Procedures manual. Quantity and frequency review requests must be approved prior to submitting an authorization for the benefit. Quantity and frequency limits are outlined in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List H – Amplification Benefits.

Consideration will be given only if the client:

- has undergone a significant change in hearing since the original authorization and the hearing loss is no longer within the fitting range of the current amplification device(s)
- has undergone a significant change in physical condition (e.g., pediatric growth, oxygen, acute loss of mobility) resulting in the amplification device no longer being appropriate
- is within six months of the replacement eligibility period and a major repair of the amplification device is required
- has equipment that is obsolete and cannot be repaired

AADL-funded amplification devices have a minimum one-year purchase and/or repair warranty. Clients must seek repair and replacement through the warranty, if applicable, in that time period. Amplification devices must be out of warranty before a quantity and review request may be submitted.

Quantity and frequency review requests are submitted through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal. The following document must be uploaded with the request:

- Quantify and Frequency Review Request form (mandatory)
- current audiogram (mandatory)
- audiogram from previous fitting (mandatory if reason for request is due to a significant change in hearing since original authorization)
- manufacturer and model of current amplification device (mandatory if reason for request is due to a significant change in hearing since original authorization)
- student enrolment letter (optional)
- Client Consent form (mandatory)

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Confirm client eligibility for replacement amplification and cost-share status through Alberta Blue Cross online health portal, Patient Inquiry page.
- Inform the client as to their eligibility status.
- If the client is not eligible for the regular quantity and frequency limits, but the client meets early replacement criteria as outlined in this policy, submit a Quantity and Frequency Review Request form and provide all supporting clinical documentation for consideration.
- Obtain client signature on the Quantity and Frequency Review Request form.
- Submit the quantity and frequency review request through the online health portal.

Clients:

- Confirm cost-share eligibility and complete a cost-share exemption form, if applicable.
- Sign the Quantity and Frequency Review Request form, if appropriate.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Receive and log quantity and frequency review requests.
- Forward quantity and frequency review requests to AADL.
- Forward AADL decisions regarding the quantity and frequency review request to the specialty supplier and client.
- Respond to all questions and/or concerns from assessors and/or clients regarding amplification device replacement guidelines.
- Retain all relevant documentation submitted through the online health portal.

AADL:

- The AADL Hearing and Augmentative Communications Program Manager will adjudicate the quantity and frequency review request and provide a response to Alberta Blue Cross to update the quantity and frequency review status on the online health portal.
- Retain all relevant documentation submitted through the online health portal.

Policy H – 23

Patient Claim Statement

Policy Statement

Amplification benefit suppliers must provide every client with a patient claim statement for each hearing service invoiced to the AADL program.

The statement can be printed from the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal, and must include general information such as statement details, Alberta Blue Cross contact information and client data.

The patient claim statement is comprised of three sections: statement information, claim summary and claim details.

The claim summary displays the overall breakdown of how much each client is responsible for against the total claimed amounts for all claims submitted:

- Total amount claimed – The sum of claimed amounts for all claims submitted.
- AADL will pay – The total amount that AADL will cover for all claims submitted.
- Client will pay – The total amount the client is responsible for paying for all claims submitted. This amount is the sum of any cost-share amount the client owes and upgrade charges that are not covered by AADL.

Clients must be provided with a copy of their patient claim statement as well as a copy of the AADL amplification device funding letter.

Procedure

Specialty Suppliers:

- Provide clients with a patient claim statement for AADL benefits. The patient claim statement must be printed from the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- For cost-share clients, identify the AADL contribution and the client's cost-share contribution for each benefit.
- For cost-share exempt clients, identify AADL's contribution for each benefit.
- Retain a copy of the patient claim statement on the client's file.
- Provide the client with amplification device funding letter when an amplification benefit is invoiced to the AADL program.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Provide vendors with a patient claim statement through the online health portal as required.
- Provide the specialty supplier with an amplification device funding letter.