

## **Implementing the Lions Affordable Hearing Aid Project (Lions AHAP) Guidelines for Lions clubs**

Note: Please check for existing Lions hearing aid programs covering your area. The Lions hearing aid programs for districts/multiple districts and/or states collaborate with local Lions clubs to serve limited-income hearing impaired people.

### Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Lions Affordable Hearing Aid Project (Lions AHAP), a program of Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF). Lions AHAP provides low-cost, high-quality hearing aids to Lions clubs and their partners, the hearing care professionals, so they may serve limited-income hearing impaired individuals in the United States. Like all LCIF services, Lions AHAP's purpose is to enhance the Lions services. Our corporate partner in this important initiative is Rexton, Inc., a hearing aid company.

### General Information

Lions need to be aware that the purchase of a hearing aid is only one facet of an overall hearing care regime that needs to be put into place. For a club to be successful in helping a hearing impaired person, it needs to keep in mind the other costs and responsibilities involved, such as the cost of ear molds, audiologist/hearing aid dispenser fees, batteries, and transportation.

### Eligibility Criteria

The following provides information on the eligibility criteria Lions AHAP requires Lions to use when considering an individual for assistance. People of limited-income must be:

- Unable to access the commercial market due to limited incomes;
- Have incomes below or at 200% of the poverty level;
- Unable to access other personal and family resources to purchase commercial hearing aids, and
- Have been denied state and federal assistance.

## How to get started

Lions clubs starting hearing programs:

- Identify available resources. There may be Lions hearing programs already covering your area.
- Consider forming a committee to select hearing impaired individuals.
- Recruit one hearing care professional or more for the partnership. This person(s) is responsible for the testing, ear molds and programming the hearing aid.
- Decide on the cost sharing. The costs of the hearing aid, the products and services of the hearing care professional need to be identified. There may be third party sources, including the hearing impaired person, to help pay for the product or services.
- Identify hearing impaired individuals who may qualify for hearing aids. Use the sample application form and the sample income qualification form for documentation of the need.
- Send copies of the completed sample application form and the sample income qualification form to Lions AHAP when ordering the hearing aids.
- Maintain records for five (5) years.

The beneficiary information collected is limited to use by Lions Clubs International Foundation and Rexton, Inc., for program tracking purposes only. Lions AHAP respects the beneficiary's privacy and is committed to protecting the personal information disclosed on this application. The information will not be disclosed or sold to third parties without express permission. Please note that LCIF may release such information if required to do so by government regulations, search warrant, subpoena or other required legal action.

## Application for the Candidate

To ensure that the aids are distributed to those most in need, please use an application to document the candidate's information. A sample application form follows. Due to differences in local, county and state regulations, this form needs to be modified to be within the appropriate regulations.

## Income Eligibility for the Candidate

Income is the basis for selecting hearing impaired persons who qualify for hearing aids. It is important to demonstrate the candidate's eligibility. Several Lions hearing programs use the federal poverty level as a base. Each Lions club decides who is considered low-income. Issues to resolve are:

- Using the candidate's sources of revenue, or their revenue and assets.

- Deciding what income level is acceptable as low-income. The federal government's poverty level (<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/07poverty.shtml>) may be a starting point. Some Lions clubs use 175% above poverty level. Others use 150% or 180%. \*  
*Generally any level at or above 200% requires review and approval by LCIF.*
- Validating the person's information or having a signature affirming the validity. Items used for verification are the Statement of Benefits from Social Security, Social Security Disability, paycheck stubs, food stamp allowance, pension amount, child support, AFDC, and veteran's benefits.

A sample income qualification form follows. Due to differences in local, county and state regulations, this form also needs to be modified to be within the appropriate regulations.

### Collaborating with the Hearing Care Professional

This collaboration is the cornerstone to successful hearing programs. Locating a hearing care professional is usually an informal process that varies by club. Some Lions clubs have hearing care professionals as members. Other clubs have members who know hearing care professionals. Lions may also be able to partner with the hearing care professionals who already use Rexton's aids. For additional information contact the Lions AHAP office at [LionsAHAP@lionsclubs.org](mailto:LionsAHAP@lionsclubs.org) or 630-468-6771.

The hearing care professional is responsible for all activities associated with dispensing aids and requires compensation for services and products. The costs vary depending on the local economy. A range to keep in mind is US\$300 to US\$500. Lions clubs are not required to cover the entire cost, but may if they so decide. The decision on sharing the costs needs to be determined and stated clearly for the hearing care professional and the candidate.

Some Lions clubs pay reduced fees by using hospitals and universities training audiologists. Other clubs have agreements with state social services departments to decide eligibility, and some also pay for the testing and fitting.

### Other Considerations

Lions clubs may want to research the availability of aids through public providers before making their decision to help a hearing impaired person. Our research suggests there are a myriad of state and federal programs that provide aids to eligible individuals. The following list offers information on programs that provide aids to children, veterans and adults. This list is by no means comprehensive; we encourage you to conduct your own research.

## Children

- Have the parents been using early intervention program services (age 0 to 3)? If the need for hearing aids is written in the Individual Family Education Plan (IFEP), they may receive aids. Early interventions services are a segment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for individuals 0 to 21 years old.
- If the child does not have health insurance coverage with the parents, the child may qualify under the state's children's health insurance plan. Note: Not all states have children's health insurance.
- Have the parents added assistive technology (such as hearing aids) to the child's (age 3 to 21) Individualized Education Plan (IEP)? The child has the right to a "free and appropriate public education (FAPE)."
- If the child has coverage under Medicaid, it may include hearing aids.

## People of All Ages

- Does the person's health insurance include covering the purchase of hearing aids? If not, does it cover the cost of the hearing exam? The hearing care professional can break out this cost and reduce the overall charge.
- Does Medicaid cover the person? If so, the individual may qualify for hearing aids.
- Hearing impaired people may receive hearing aids through their state's vocational rehabilitation department if they are:
  - Prospective and current college students
  - Individuals whose jobs are at-risk due to hearing loss
  - People who are unable to find employment due to their hearing loss
- If the person is a veteran, the individual may qualify for hearing aids if enrolled in the insurance plan and able to prove the loss is related to military service.
- Has the individual approached local and state agencies serving deaf and/or hard of hearing people? They may know about hearing aid banks and other resources, such as clinics that provide services on a sliding scale basis.
- Has anyone looked into the state's assistive technology program? The programs have several components including loaning out assistive technology (hearing aids or personal FM system) for short periods, low-interest loans to purchase assistive technology and demonstration centers.