

INFORMATION PAPER  
17 December 2001

**SUBJECT: Audiology Services for Retired Service Members**

1. **PURPOSE:** To provide information regarding Audiology services available to retired service members, and the Retiree At-Cost Hearing Aid Program (RACHAP).

2. **BACKGROUND:** Under provision of Title 10, retired service members are eligible for health care at military medical treatment facilities (MTFs) on a resource-available basis. If a retired service member is enrolled in TRICARE Prime, they receive the same priority of health care as active duty service members. With regard to Audiology services, this includes annual hearing evaluation and other auditory diagnostic testing as stipulated I.A.W. AR 40-3 (Medical, Dental and Veterinary Care), Chapter 4 (Auditory Evaluation and Hearing Aids). Hearing aid services are provided by the MTF to active duty service members with hearing loss. Dependent family members, of active duty personnel, that require hearing aids are provided hearing aids from civilian providers under CHAMPUS. Retired service members have three options for procuring hearing aids: (a) wait for their MTF to provide hearing aids as resources permit, (b) establish service-connected eligibility and procure hearing aids through the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA), or (c) purchase hearing aids through the Retiree At-Cost Hearing Aid Program (RACHAP). The RACHAP was established to meet the increased demands for services from retired service members, in spite of concurrent reductions in staffing and funding for Audiology services. The RACHAP is a cost-sharing initiative that splits the costs between the patient (who pays for the hearing aids) and the government (which provides the clinical services). Under the RACHAP, patients purchase their hearing aids at the government contracted cost (typically 25-40% of the commercial price). This program offers a substantial benefit to retired service members only, from manufacturers that have agreed to participate in this program. Dependents of retired service members are not entitled to hearing aid services. Since 1992, the RACHAP has been successfully implemented at nearly every MTF that dispenses hearing aids.

3. **Discussion:**

- a. Demand for hearing aid services is high. The increasing retiree population is placing greater pressure on an already tight budget. Improved performance of today's hearing aid has created a supply/demand situation which cannot be accommodated by current funding levels. Neither MEDICARE nor CHAMPUS programs pay for hearing aids for retired service members. The VA offers hearing aid support, but only to individuals whom have applied for, and received, service-connected hearing loss disability.
- b. RACHAP offers retirees significant cost savings and the service of hearing aid fitting. Without RACHAP, retirees would be limited to only VA provided hearing aids.

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