State Agencies

Department of State

The Department of State licenses and regulates hearing aid dispensing businesses and individuals. Questions regarding any aspect of hearing aid dispensing may be directed to the number below. The Department's website contains the current law and regulations pertinent to hearing aid dispensing, as well as frequently asked questions.

Hearing Aid Dispenser Information:
(518) 474-4429

Complaint Hotline (toll-free; voice/TTY):
(877) 545-5864

Website: www.dos.ny.gov

New York State Education Department

The New York State Education Department licenses and regulates physicians and audiologists. Questions regarding audiologists should be directed to (800) 442-8106. Questions about physicians should be directed to (518) 474-3817.

Audiologist Information: (518) 474-3817, ext. 100

Physician Information: (518) 474-3817, ext. 560

Complaints: (800) 442-8106

Website: www.op.nysed.gov

Consumer Protection

Consumers with questions about hearing aid sales, contract negotiations and warranty specifics or any consumer-related issue may contact the Consumer Action Hotline.

Consumer Action Hotline: (800) 697-1220

Website: www.dos.ny.gov

New York State Department of Health

The New York State Department of Health strives to protect and promote the health of New Yorkers through prevention, science and the assurance of quality health care delivery.

Website: www.health.ny.gov

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Governor

Rossana Rosado
Secretary of State

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Consumer Guide for Purchasing Hearing Aids

in New York State

You don't hear well and you've decided to do something about it.

You have many unanswered questions:

- Do you need a hearing aid?
- Where do you go to get your hearing evaluated?
- What kind of hearing aid should you buy?
- Will a hearing aid restore normal hearing?

Where Do You Begin?

The Food and Drug Administration recommends that you visit a licensed physican, preferably one specializing in diseases of the ear, for a medical evaluation before purchasing a hearing aid. This will ensure that medically treatable conditions that may affect your hearing are identified and treated before a hearing aid is purchased. Once you have determined that your hearing difficulties are not medically or surgically correctable, you should have your hearing tested by a registered hearing aid dispenser. New York State requires that all dispensers of hearing aids be registered with the Department of State and that they display their business and individual dispenser registrations prominently at their place of business.

Selecting a Hearing Aid Dispenser

The term dispenser applies to all persons who fit and sell hearing aids. This may include hearing aid specialists, dispensing audiologists, or otolaryngologists. The same level of service should be expected from all. Selecting a dispenser is extremely important because you are choosing a person with whom you will have a long term relationship. Because of the importance of hearing in one's everyday life, you will want the relationship to be trusting and comfortable.

What You Should Tell the Dispenser

Communication with your hearing aid dispenser should be a two-way street. Express your needs and concerns clearly so that the dispenser can address them to your satisfaction.

The Hearing Test and Evaluation

The dispenser will conduct a series of tests to determine the type and extent of your hearing loss. These tests are painless and assess your ability to hear tones, as well as to understand speech. The dispenser records your test results on an "audiogram" and should explain the results to you. New York State law requires that you receive a copy of your audiogram, whether or not you purchase a hearing aid.

Binaural Hearing (using both ears)

If you have hearing loss in both ears, you should consider a binaural fitting (two hearing aids). The advantages to wearing two aids may include improved listening in noisy environments, improved speech understanding and the ability to determine both distance and direction of sounds.

Hearing Aid Selection

Your individual hearing loss and needs will be considered in selecting the right aids and options for you. Be willing to consider all styles of hearing aids, as there may be specific reasons why certain types would be best for you. Be aware that there is no "best" hearing aid for everyone. The dispenser will discuss the various styles of aids and the hearing technologies that should work best for you, including the advantages of a telecoil.

Keep Your Expectations Realistic

Hearing aids will not correct hearing, like glasses correct vision, nor will hearing aids restore normal hearing. The secret to success is having realistic expectations. You should know that hearing aids won't allow you to hear as you once did, and that it is difficult for hearing aids to provide optimal hearing in background noise.

The Sales Contract

As a New York State consumer, you have legal rights when purchasing a hearing aid. Be sure to get a purchase agreement or sales contract containing all the terms of the transaction in writing. Read it carefully. It should include the following items: the state registration numbers of both the hearing aid dispenser and the dispensing office; office location, telephone number and hours of operation; date of purchase; manufacturer, model and serial number; and total price, payment terms, refund provisions, adjustment services, and warranty information.

Satisfaction Guarantee

New York State requires that dispensers grant a 45-day satisfaction guarantee. If you purchased a hearing aid in New York, you have the right to cancel the transaction for any reason prior to midnight of the 45th calendar day from the date of purchase and return the hearing aid in the same condition (ordinary wear and tear excluded by law). The dispenser is allowed to retain an amount up to ten percent of the total price of the canceled hearing aid, including all fitting fees, batteries and accessories.