

WORK SAFE. FOR LIFE.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD OF NOVA SCOTIA

The Details...

As an audiologist and/or clinician, here is what you need to know about how WCB will work with you on a claim for Occupational Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL):

1) **Audiograms:** Diagnostic tests performed for new claims must be conducted by a certified audiologist. WCB determines entitlement to benefits- including hearing aids- by assessing decibel loss at 500Hz, 1000Hz, 2000Hz, and 3000Hz (air conduction and masked bone conduction). Any audiograms submitted for new or existing claims must include readings for all of those frequencies. Additionally, to be eligible the pattern of the hearing must correspond with that of a Noise Induced Hearing Loss, as characteristically defined by the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM).

2) **Fees and approved devices:** WCB will pay up to \$1450 per hearing aid (including the fitting fee). We periodically poll the other WCB's across the country, as well as Veteran's Affairs, and review product pricing from manufacturers. We have been able to validate that this amount offers a reasonable and appropriate hearing solution to our clients. This limit should serve this purpose given reasonable, not excessive, mark-ups at the retail level.

- Additional funding may be provided only if the hearing aid is medically necessary.
- WCB typically supports mid-range digital technology, adjustable (manual) volume control, adjustable (manual) venting, wax guards, and telephone compatibility (one hearing aid only).
- Due to the repair frequency/cost, lack of manual volume adjustment and the predominantly cosmetic factor, we do not promote CIC devices as good solutions and will only reimburse this choice of aid to our maximum of \$1450, with the client covering the remainder.

3) **Replacements:** WCB offers replacements at the five-year point if the aid(s) is clearly no longer serviceable, is being repaired too often, etc. However, please note that this replacement period is NOT automatic and should not be initiated by service providers unless supported by high frequency repair patterns, long-term wear and tear and diminished serviceability.

- The WCB will not cover the replacement cost or warranty deductible cost of a lost or damaged hearing aid.
- While we cannot discuss claims using email, we can allow clinics or practitioners to send approval request for routine replacement via email. These may include a claim number **only** to identify the client. Email addresses for the WCB hearing loss team are included below.

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4) Preventative Maintenance: Maintenance and repair of hearing aid devices is only to be done when legitimately needed. Aside from a single annual visit for preventative maintenance (i.e. ensuring aids are in good working order), WCB clients should not be solicited by the service provider or supplier for regular service at the expense of the WCB. Devices in need of repair will be covered by the WCB only after the manufacturer's warranty has expired.

5) Repairs: We have adopted a simple process that pays you for the cost of repairs at the manufacturer cost, plus 60%. In-clinic repairs can be billed at a flat \$40 per repair. Our goal is to leave the technical and service business to you, while balancing our interest in quality and cost. No pre-approval is required. Your repair invoice to the Board must include a copy of the manufacturer's invoice to which you had added your 60% mark-up.

6) Release of information: You should be aware that the Workers' Compensation Act authorizes the Board to request - and you, as a medical professional to provide - all medical documentation necessary to adjudicate a claim for benefits. Disclosing such information to WCB upon request does not constitute a breach of privacy, and does not require a written release from client. When submitting audiogram information on a client's behalf, including all relevant clinical findings, diagnosis and a detailed case history can expedite our handling of the claim.

6) Who to contact:

WCB Toll Free: 1-800-870-3331

WCB Hearing Loss Team:

Anne Davis – 491-8271, Anne.davis@wcb.gov.ns.ca

Jan Misener – 491-8254, Jan.misener@wcb.gov.ns.ca

Shelley Oickle – 491-8270, Shelley.oickle@wcb.gov.ns.ca