

c. **Specialty Examination – Audiology:** The Contractor shall:

Provide audiogram results, without hearing aids, within 14 days of the exam, that includes the medical facts (objective findings), as well as an opinion of client's ability to effectively wear a hearing aid.

- (1) **Otoscopic Exam:** Otoscopic exam must be performed immediately before audiometric testing takes place. This should include description of the appearance of the external ears (pinnae and external ear canals), evaluation of tympanic membranes, and assessment of any middle ear abnormalities. The otoscopic exam must show there are no conditions that would prevent valid audiometric testing. Comment on anything else that might influence test results (e.g. claimant's level of cooperativeness).
- (2) **Audiometry:** In instances where audiometry testing is requested by the DDDS, quantitative findings should be determined by an audiometer which meets the standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for air and bone conducted stimuli. Standardization must be noted in the report. Testing should be conducted in a sound-treated booth or room. Each ear must be tested separately.
  - (a) Pure Tone Hearing: Evaluate with and without sound amplification. Audiometry may be carried out with sound amplification being provided through the use of earphones or inserts. Information regarding which method used must accompany results.
    - i. Pure tone bone audiometry.
    - ii. Pure tone air audiometry.
    - iii. Speech reception threshold
    - iv. Word Recognition
  - (b) Provide testing results at 500, 1000 and 2000 HZ for adults and 500, 1000, 2000 and 4000 HZ for children. Audiogram results must accompany the report. If no amplification was used, provide reason for not using amplification.
  - (c) Speech Reception Threshold: If not within 10 db of average pure tone air conduction hearing threshold, the reason for discrepancy must be explained.
  - (d) Word Recognition: Word Recognition testing should be done with a phonetically balanced word list in a quiet setting. If a person is not fluent in English, a word list should be used for the language in which the person is most fluent. The person conducting the test should also be fluent in the language used for the test. Test should be performed at a sound level 35-40 decibels above a previously determined speech reception threshold (SRT is necessary to determine speech discrimination in the absence of any visual clues (i.e. no lip reading). Testing methodology may vary with use of earphone amplification or

sound field (booth) amplification. Speech detection using visual cues is not appropriate for DDDS exams. If person cannot be tested at 35 to 40 dB above their SRT, report their word recognition testing score at highest level of amplification. The level at which the testing was done must be provided.

- (e) Cochlear Implant: Word Recognition testing can be done with any version of the Hearing in Noise Test (HINT). Testing must be conducted in a quiet sound field. The person must have their cochlear implant functioning properly and adjusted to their normal settings. The sentences should be presented at 60 db HL (Hearing Level) and in the **absence of any visual cues**.
  - (f) Level of amplification: It is important to evaluate whether the level of amplification used to perform the test is comfortable to the claimant and is medically appropriate. Although it may be possible to provide sound amplification at the level which allows the claimant to hear more than 40% of speech, it must be determined whether the claimant can tolerate such a noise level.
  - (g) Ability to communicate: Clinical information describing a claimant's ability to communicate with the evaluator is an excellent resource and should be used to assess the validity of audiometric testing.
  - (h) Development of speech: All claims with an allegation of hearing impairment should contain adequate information regarding an individual's development of speech. Areas of information regarding audibility, sustainability, articulation, and ability of the examiner to understand the claimant's conversational speech should be addressed, as well as the use of sign language and/or interpreter.
  - (i) Specify reason if test cannot be done.
  - (j) Ability to use hearing aids must be noted.
  - (k) Children under age eighteen (18) do not need bone conduction testing.
  - (l) Speech discrimination testing does not need to be done for children under five (5) years-of-age.
- (3) **Laboratory and Diagnostic Studies.** Do not perform studies unless they have been specifically authorized in advance.
  - (4) **Diagnosis/Conclusion/Impression.** This should be determined on the basis of observations during the examination and objective clinical evidence, not on allegations or presumptions. Note any non-physiological responses to testing.
  - (5) **Medical Source Statement.** Based on objective findings, comment on limitations the client may have in a workplace environment.