2024 Hearing Instrument Coverage

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The testimony from Washington State residents during the 2023 Washington Legislative session was riveting. Many impacted community members testified, including children living with hearing loss, stood in session asserting their right to equal access. One mother inquired if it would be appropriate to send a child to school with only one lens in their glasses? *Referring to prior coverage of hearing instruments, covering one hearing instruments, despite the need for bilateral* – all challenging Washington State leaders to pass both HB1222 and SB5338. The 2023 legislative session ended in victory for many, however there is still work to be done as many Washington State residents living with hearing loss remain unable to obtain the hearing instruments that could vastly improve their everyday lives. The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will continue to work with stakeholders and community members to reiterate the importance of adequate coverage for all Washingtonians living with hearing loss.

Hearing loss, regardless of the level of the loss, can have a profound effect on the individual and their everyday lives. Unaddressed hearing loss can have a negative impact on communication, mental health, education, economic stability, cognition, and medical access. In 2021, the World Health Organization reported that it is anticipated that 1 in 4 people, worldwide, will have hearing loss. It is time to take a proactive stance on hearing loss, the impacts, and the need for equitable access to hearing instruments.

Summary of Coverage includes:

- ✓ People employed by companies who aren’t self-insured and who have more than 50 employees.
- ✓ Workers in the public school system
- ✓ Employees of the State of Washington in a position covered by the State Employees Benefits Board.

There remain gaps in coverage that includes Seniors who have Medicare but not a Medicare Advantage plan, individuals that buy insurance plans without a group (such individual policies on the Washington HealthPlan Finder), and people who

work for small businesses that do not offer insurance coverage (under 50 employees).

ODHH wants to make sure that Washington State residents who live with hearing loss are aware of some additional resources that might be available. The following is a list of resources that may be available to Washington State residents, living with hearing loss but remain uncovered under the updated Hearing Instrument coverage.