

Communication Assistance for Iowans with Hearing Problems

If you are an Iowan with hearing problems, there are several ways to get help. One option is to get help paying for communication devices such as hearing aids and special phone equipment. Other options include use of the Relay Iowa program and medical assistance.

Special Phone Equipment.

If you are an Iowan and have a hearing problem, you can get help with special phone or other equipment to make it easier to talk by phone.

This program is called "Telecommunication Access Iowa". It pays 95% of the cost of amplified phones, special ringers, Text Telephones (TTYs) and other special telephone devices. To get help under this program, you must:

- Be an Iowan;
- Have telephone service;
- Be over five (5) years old;
- Need the equipment;
- Have less than the following annual household income:
1 person - \$46,000
2 persons - \$54,000 (add \$8,000 for each additional person)

If you think you qualify, you should contact Telecommunication Access Iowa:

By Voice at: (515) 282-5099 or toll free at (800) 606-5099 By TTY at: (515) 282-5130 By FAX at: (515) 237-3917 By email at: teleiowa@aol.com

Telecommunication Access Iowa will send you an application to fill out and return. If you qualify, they will send you a special voucher that will pay 95% of the cost of the equipment you need. Once you receive your voucher, you can contact a number of different Iowa or mail order dealers to order your equipment. Dealers can also help you choose the best phone or other equipment to meet your needs. You can also visit their website at www.relayiowa.com/tai/

Hearing Aids.

Hearing aids can be expensive. Before being fitted for a hearing aid, Iowans should check into costs and payment options. Payment options include:

- Medicaid. If you are eligible for one of Iowa's Medicaid (Title 19) programs, the State of Iowa may pay for a hearing aid. Restrictions apply and referral by a physician and prior authorization may be required. Contact your local Iowa Department of Human Services (IDHS) office to find out if you qualify. If you are an Iowan over 60, you may also contact Iowa Legal Aid's Hotline for Older Iowans at 1-800-992-8161.
- HEAR NOW Program. The Starkey Hearing Foundation can help some people who cannot afford a hearing aid and are not eligible for Medicaid or other programs. Household net income must be less than \$18,403 for individuals or \$24,675 for couples. Call HEAR NOW toll free at 1-800-328-8602 to find out if you are eligible.
- Other Organizations. Other organizations may be able to help with costs or provide recycled products. These include the Iowa Lions Hearing Aid Bank, Iowa Compass, local Lions, Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs and others. For a full list and more help, contact the Deaf Services Commission of Iowa at 515-281-3164, toll-free at 1-888-221-3724, by email at dhr.dsci@iowa.gov or visit their website at www.state.ia.us/dhr/ds/index.html.

Relay Iowa. Relay Iowa provides phone access service to Iowans with hearing problems. Trained staff handle calls and stay on the line to relay conversations over a Text Telephone or verbally to hearing parties. To find out more, contact Relay Iowa Customer Service at (888) 516-4692 or visit their website at www.relayiowa.com.

Cochlear Implants. If your hearing loss is severe, you may want to talk to your physician about a cochlear implant. Part or all of the cost of a cochlear implant may be covered by private health insurance, Medicare or Medicaid.

This information is from the Legal Hotline for Older Iowans 1-800-992-8161. The Hotline is a project of Iowa Legal Aid that is partially funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging. The Hotline is a free, confidential service for all Iowans 60 or older with questions on non-criminal legal matters. (Also see www.iowalegalaid.org for information and answers to general questions on Iowa law.)