



Ohio Board of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

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Important Notice to Ohio Consumers With Hearing Loss, Including Those Who Are Receiving Or Intending To Receive Hearing Aids

The Ohio Board of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (OBSLPA) would like to stress the importance of seeing an audiologist if Ohio consumers have concerns about hearing loss. An audiologist will take a case history, visually inspect, examine, and diagnose for hearing impairments, conduct hearing tests, recommend a hearing aid, or determine if consumers should be seen by a medical specialist.

OBSLPA has noted the increasing availability of options for purchasing hearing aids. These include using online hearing tests and purchasing hearing aids online. While consumers may be tempted to buy a hearing aid using the internet or take an online hearing test using a computer, it is not in their best health interest. In Ohio, only qualified health professionals, such as a licensed audiologist, can test hearing and recommend and fit a hearing instrument.

Hearing aids are medical devices regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and must be recommended, sold and fit by qualified health professionals. This is because not all persons are assumed to be good candidates for a hearing aid. Before hearing aids can be sold to consumers, OBSLPA and FDA laws require health practitioners to:

- Complete a case history of the consumer's hearing.
- Conducts specific hearing tests with specialized equipment.
- Visually inspect the consumer's ears and ear canal.
- Advise a prospective hearing aid user to consult promptly with a licensed physician (preferably an ear specialist) before dispensing a hearing aid if medical intervention is indicated.

These hearing test and evaluations are used by health professionals to determine if the consumer needs to be referred to a medical doctor specializing in ear diseases. Licensed audiologists in Ohio are authorized to test human hearing and recommend and fit hearing aids. Since January 1, 2006, licensed audiologists in Ohio are required to complete a doctor of audiology (Au.D.) program from an accredited university. Those who were licensed prior to this have completed at least a master's degree in audiology; while many went on to earn their Au.D. degree. A licensed

audiologist plans, directs, supervises, and conducts habilitative or rehabilitative counseling programs of individuals who have or are suspected of having disorders of hearing; and evaluate, recommend, fit and/or dispense hearing aids.

Ohio laws and regulations also provide consumers of hearing instruments other protections, including:

- A hearing aid receipt showing the licensee's signature and the number of his/her certificate;
- The complete address of his/her place of business, including the telephone number of the business;
- A complete description of the make and model of the hearing aid furnished, including the serial number of the hearing aid;
- The full terms of sale, including the terms of guarantee, if any;
- If the hearing aid sold is not new, the receipt shall also be clearly marked "used" or "reconditioned," whichever is applicable; and
- A right to return the hearing aid for any reason within thirty days after it was originally delivered and receive a refund; and
- Advertisements and claims made about the hearing aid must be truthful and substantiated.

For more information about consumer rights when buying hearing aids, visit the FDA's website at:

<http://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/ResourcesforYou/Consumers/BuyingMedicalDevicesandDiagnosticTestsOnline/default.htm>