



# FACT SHEET FOR AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY SERVICES

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers comprehensive care services to Veterans with hearing, balance, tinnitus, speech, language, and swallowing disorders. VA is the largest employer of audiologists and speech-language pathologists in the United States. VA employs over 900 audiologists and offers audiology services in over 300 sites of care throughout the VA health care system. VA audiology had over 1.5 million encounters, performed 4 million procedures, and issued over 596,000 hearing aids in Fiscal Year 2011. One of every five hearing aids sold in the United States was provided by VA. VA employs over 370 speech-language pathologists and offers services at over 190 sites of care throughout the VA health care system. VA speech-language pathology had over 291,000 encounters in Fiscal Year 2011.

## AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

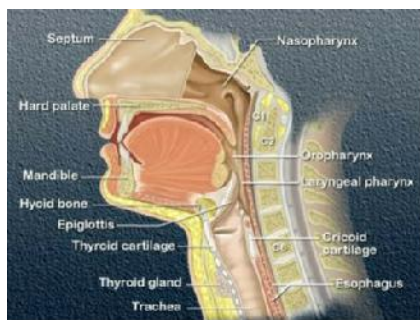
VA audiologists provide screening and prevention services; evaluation and treatment of hearing loss, balance disorders; and auditory rehabilitation services to optimize residual hearing. Audiologists are specialists in providing hearing aids and other assistive listening devices (e.g. TV and telephone amplifiers), and post-surgical rehabilitation for cochlear and other bioelectric auditory implants.

## SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY SERVICES

Speech-language pathologists are members of specialized interdisciplinary teams that provide coordinated, comprehensive care to Veterans and Servicemembers.

VA speech-language pathologists provide screening, evaluation, treatment, and prevention services

for speech, language, and voice, fluency, and swallowing problems.



Services also include evaluation and treatment of memory, concentration, and cognitive-communication problems after traumatic brain injury.

Specialized services include those for populations such as traumatic brain injury, stroke, progressive or degenerative neurological disorders, geriatric illnesses, community living, and spinal cord injury.

Speech-language pathologists are specialists in providing Assistive

Technology for communication to assist Veterans with cognitive or communication disorders including. Such technologies include speech-generating devices, cognitive communication aids such as personal digital assistants (PDAs) and global positioning systems (GPS); and rehabilitative and restorative voice services including voice prostheses.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY CARE?

All Veterans enrolled in VA's health care system are eligible for speech-language pathology evaluation and treatment services. Veterans must be under a physician's care, and a physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner must submit a consultation for speech-language pathology services.

Veterans who are under a VA physician's plan of care who have speech, language, voice, cognitive,





or swallowing disorders due to medical conditions are eligible for prosthetic devices including augmentative and alternative communication devices, voice prostheses, and cognitive devices.



(Photo courtesy of VA)

**AUDITORY SYSTEM DISABILITIES**

Auditory system disabilities (including hearing loss and tinnitus) are among the most common service-related disabilities in every period of service since WWII. Over 731,000 Veterans have service-connected hearing loss and over 800,000 have service-connected tinnitus.

These two conditions are the two most common service-connected disabilities, representing about 10 percent of all disabilities.

**WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR AUDIOLOGY CARE?**

Specific eligibility rules apply to hearing aid services. The following Veterans who are receiving VA care or services are eligible for hearing aid services:

- Veterans who are receiving compensation for service-connected disabilities, or who have non-compensable service connected disability for hearing loss
- Former POWs, Medal of Honor and Purple Heart recipients, or are receiving increased pension based on the need for regular aid and attendance or being permanently housebound

VA provides hearing aids in special circumstances such as:

- When hearing loss results from diseases or other medical conditions for which the Veteran is receiving care or services from VA, or that results from treatment of that medical condition (e.g., ear disease, traumatic brain injury, or toxicity from medications, or therapeutic agents).
- When an audiologist determines the degree of the Veteran's hearing loss restricts communication and affects their active participation in their health care services



(Photo courtesy of D. Michael Moody)

Veterans interested in obtaining VA services should contact their local VA audiology clinic for assistance.

