

Draft - 7.5 Pursuant to VR state agency et seq –**Eligibility Guidelines for Specific Disabilities****Hearing**

1. An individual may be determined to have a hearing disability based on an audiogram obtained without hearing aids when any of the following criteria are met:
 - a. A Pure Tone Average (PTA) of 40 dB or greater (unaided) in the better ear.
 - b. A PTA of 20 dB or greater (unaided) in the better ear **and** 80 dB or greater in the other ear.
 - c. Speech discrimination of less than 75% at 50–60 dB in the better ear.
 - d. A cochlear implant in one ear **and** the other ear meets one of the above criteria.
2. Audiograms
 - a. Audiograms must be completed by a licensed audiologist or otolaryngologist and may be obtained from schools, speech and hearing centers, hospitals, clinics, and private audiologists. A Hearing Instrument Specialist may complete the audiogram when a licensed audiologist or otolaryngologist is not available within the community, with approval of the VR Assistant Director.
 - b. Whenever possible, obtain existing audiograms from the individual. Existing audiograms may be used only if they were completed within the past 12 months.
 - c. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and require an audiogram, or whose existing audiogram is more than 12 months old, must be referred to a licensed audiologist or otolaryngologist. A referral may be made to a Hearing Instrument Specialist when a licensed audiologist or otolaryngologist is not available within the community, with approval of the VR Assistant Director.
 - d. Diagnostic Transportation may be provided, when necessary, to enable the customer to participate in an audiological evaluation to obtain an audiogram.
 - e. The following guidance may be used to interpret an audiogram.
 - 1) Locate the frequencies at the top of the audiogram, often labeled Hz or kHz.
 - 2) Locate the decibel (dB) levels on the left side of the audiogram indicating hearing thresholds.
 - 3) Calculate the Pure Tone Average (PTA) by averaging the thresholds at 500, 1000, and 2000 Hz.
 - 4) The PTA may also be listed in a chart, table, or summary section within the audiogram report.
 - 5) For speech discrimination, review the Word Recognition Score (WRS),

Speech Discrimination Score (SDS), or Discrimination Score included in the audiogram report.

3. An individual may be considered deaf-blind if the following criteria are met:
 - a. Central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with corrective lenses, or a field defect such that the peripheral diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees, a progressive visual loss having a prognosis leading to one or both these conditions; and
 - b. Chronic hard of hearing so severe that most speech cannot be understood with optimum amplification, or a progressive hearing loss having a prognosis leading to this condition; and
 - c. The combination of impairments described above cause extreme difficulty in attaining independence in daily life activities, achieving psychosocial adjustment, or attaining a vocation; or
 - d. Despite the inability to be accurately measured for hearing and vision loss because of cognitive or behavioral constraints, or both, may be determined through functional performance assessment to have severe hearing and visual disabilities that cause extreme difficulty in attaining independence in daily life activities, achieving psychosocial adjustment, or attaining vocational objectives.
4. In cases involving deaf blindness, the decision for appropriate case assignment must consider factors such as communication methods, informed choice, the degree of sensory loss, the prognosis, primary service needs, etc. Examples include:
 - a. Individuals who communicate primarily through ASL, tactile sign, or other sign-based communication methods should generally be assigned to a VR Counselor for the Deaf.
 - b. Individuals who communicate primarily through spoken language, should generally be assigned to a VR Counselor for the Blind.
 - c. Consult with the supervisor if there are questions regarding case assignment.