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Department of Public Welfare Assisted Living Residences Regulation NO. 14-514 September 11, 2008

Public Comment:

Assisted Living Residences are often the place where people go when they cannot live alone or in their own residence and before they are so disabled that they need nursing home care. It can also be the location people go to nursing homes before returning to their home and community. Since many people who have a hearing loss do not seek treatment or use hearing aids, cochlear implants, or assistive listening devices and alerting devices or dogs so they can remain in their own residence, it is critical that the assistive living residences evaluate applicants and members for needs and teach them and staff how to meet those needs.

In general, hard of hearing people are not aware of their hearing loss or the existence of hearing assistive devices and their effective use to improve awareness and accessibility to acoustic signals. Similarly, staff of assisted living residences are not aware of such or have training so they can effectively communicate with and provide for the inclusion of residents with hearing loss in activities.

2800.66 Staffing

There will be a staff training plan that includes retraining on at least a yearly basis of all staff regarding hearing loss, including the identification, use, and maintenance of hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive listening systems, captioned telephone, alerting systems and hearing dogs, and other technology for people with hearing loss.

2800.90 Communication Systems

If a public announcement system is utilized which most people with hearing loss cannot understand, then an alternate communication system will be provided for people with hearing loss. An analog line for captioned telephone, telecommunication device for the deaf, or computer will be made available for people who want to use telephone relay, captioning or video relay system. Alerting systems such as flashing doorknockers will be made available. Televisions will have captioning.

2800.109 Pets

Animals are critical to the well being of people. For people with hearing loss and or other disabilities, service dogs and hearing dogs are allowed under the Americans With Disabilities Act. This should be specified in order to reduce misunderstandings.

2800.130 Fire Safety

It is good to see the regulations specify that alternate modes of fire safety will be provided if the resident cannot hear a fire alarm. Since most residents will have a hearing loss, strobe flashing lights are important in all areas. Make note that recent research has indicated that people with hearing loss are not awakened from sleep by flashing strobe lights and may need vibrating devices.

2800 140 Medical evaluation and 2800.224 Pre admission screening

A third of the people over the age of 60 have a hearing loss yet they likely ignore it and their physicians are unlikely to have done a screening. It is critical that the preadmission screening detail a screening for hearing loss and also the needs of the candidate regarding participation in activities, communication modes, response to alerting devices, and method of telecommunication communication. Devices are available for free to low income people and such attention to accommodations may ensure the individual stays alert, healthy, and satisfied. In most cases, it is likely no one has ever addressed the individual's communication needs. A Policy statement from the Hearing Loss Association of America (www.hearingloss.org) regarding Hearing Assistance Technologies is attached.

Thank you.

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ds are the most effective and potent therapeutic tool available for the vast majority of hard of ople. It is agreed that they are a crucial and necessary component in any effort designed to consequences of a hearing loss. But some problems caused by a hearing loss either cannot be hearing aid or the aid by itself may be inadequate as the two following examples will illustrate

of heanno people have difficulty understanding a lecture or a sermon or following the dialogue r performance or movie house. In these types of locations, any large area assistive listening further improve comprehension beyond that possible with hearing aids

is are not designed to serve as an alarm clock, and unless the hard of hearing sleeper wears the all night (not a good idea) an audible alarm may not wake this person up. Hearing aids in other le necessary for hard of hearing people cannot serve purposes for which they were not

ears a entirely new class of Hearing Assistance Technologies (HAT) have been developed ide the three major types of large area assistive listening systems (Induction Loop. Infra Red M Radio) personal FM systems telephone amplifiers and TTY's TV listening devices and anous types of conference and hand held microphones and a large number of signaling and vices (e.g. visual or vibratory alarm clocks and smoke alarms, telephone and doorbell lights ectors etc.) Some HAT are separate units from hearing aids (e.g. signaling and warning devices FM and tR receivers) and can stand alone while others are designed to work with or through a hearing aid (e.g. telecoil or direct audio input capability). Direct audio input (DAI) for example, is a way of avoiding electromagnetic interference while accessing assistive listening devices (e.g. the audio output from a computer) There are many types of HAT one only has to consult one of the catalogs available (check the HLAA Hearing Loss Magizine) to appreciate their full range

Chances are that many hard of hearing people have need for such a device at least at some times and for some purposes. However, hard of hearing people are not generally aware of the existence of these devices nor understand how their effective use can improve awareness and accessibility to acoustic signals, either through substitution (i.e. converting the sound into light introduced vibration or text) or sound enhancement (e.g. a personal FM or TV listening system) HLAA suggests that all hard of hearing people receive a careful "needs assessment" during the hearing aid selection process. This should include a check list of various kinds of communication situations to ensure that no important ones are overlooked. It is necessary to determine a person's communication needs at home on the job during recreational social and religious activities while traveling for fun or business or any other kinds of situations unique to the individual. Such check lists have already been developed and are being used by leading audiologists. Whether a detailed Interview technique or a check list is used the goal is to ensure that the possible usefulness of HAT be thoroughly explored with each potential hearing aid candidate

Furthermore HLAA suggests that dispensers make specific HAT recommendations in much the same way they do with hearing aids, and assist their patients to learn how to use them, again in the same way they do with hearing aids. The introduction to and assistance with HAT can. HLAA suggests be included into the hearing aid selection process most logically during the hearing aid trial period (see 1 below) and within the subsequent hearing aid orientation period (see 2 below). Because of the potential benefits of HAT for hard of hearing people HLAA recommends that all hearing aid dispensers incorporate the evaluation and dispensing of HAT as an integral component of their practice

- 1) In a previous position paper. HLAA has recommended that dispensers provide their clients with a minimum of a 60 day trial period
- 2) In a previous position paper HLAA has recommended that all hearing aid dispensers offer their clients the opportunity to participate in a group

Return to Referring Page

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