

What if I have a complaint?

If you have a complaint about your provider, you may contact the Department of Health.

This includes, for example, if your provider:

- Misled you or lied about the services or instrument dispensed, rescission rights, the care you received, or the financial aspects of your evaluation and fitting.
- Treated you while they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Abused or mistreated you in any way.
- Released information without your consent.
- Was negligent in your treatment.

What happens after I file a complaint?

The Board of Hearing and Speech can discipline fitter/dispensers, audiologists, and speech-language pathologists. They are disciplined if they are found to have violated Washington State laws and rules related to hearing and speech. All complaints are reviewed. If needed, an investigation may include reviewing the client records. The department may interview all persons involved. A decision is based on the information from the investigation. If the provider is found in violation, there are several actions which the board may take. If the provider is not found in violation, no action will be taken and the complaint will be closed.



Additional Information

For additional information on the Board of Hearing and Speech, visit the Department of Health web site at www.doh.wa.gov.

The laws and rules governing hearing and speech are Chapter 18.35 RCW and Chapter 246-828 WAC.

Washington State
Department of Health
Board of Hearing and Speech
PO Box 47852
Olympia, WA 98504-7852

Phone: 360-236-4857
Fax: 360-236-2901
E-mail: janette.benham@doh.wa.gov

This publication will be made available in accessible formats upon request.

DOH 654-057 (REV 6/2009)

BOARD OF HEARING & SPEECH

Consumer Rights Brochure

Washington State
Department of Health
Board of Hearing and Speech
PO Box 47852
Olympia, WA 98504-7852

What to know about your rights as a consumer

The Board of Hearing & Speech

The board was created by the Washington State Legislature to protect the public's health and safety. The board regulates and sets standards for the health care providers under its jurisdiction. Board membership is as follows: two hearing instrument fitter/dispensers, two audiologists, two speech-language pathologists, three public members, and one medical physician. Board members are appointed by the governor. They serve three-year terms.

What are qualifications for Hearing Instrument Fitter/Dispensers?

Applicants for hearing instrument fitter/dispenser licenses in Washington State must have satisfactorily completed a minimum two-year degree program approved by the board. All qualified applicants must pass a national examination. An applicant from out-of-state must have actively practiced for at least 48 of the past 60 months. They must hold an unrevoked, unsuspended license in a jurisdiction with licensing standards substantially equivalent to that of Washington State. All applicants must be in compliance with the Uniform Disciplinary Act, Chapter 18.130 RCW.

Consumer Protection Notice

The purchase of hearing instruments by mail, phone, or internet without face-to-face contact to test or otherwise determine the needs of the consumer is unlawful and potentially harmful. For more information, see RCW 18.35.175 (Unlawful sales practices).

What are the qualifications for Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists?

Applicants for speech-language pathologist or audiologist licenses in Washington State must hold a master or doctorate degree from a board approved institution of higher education. They must have completed postgraduate professional work experience with a board approved supervisor. All qualified applicants must pass a national examination. All applicants must be in compliance with the Uniform Disciplinary Act, Chapter 18.130 RCW.

What are my rights as a client?

You have the right to:

- Fully understand what is being done and why.
- Ask your provider about your evaluation.
- Take a family member or friend to your appointment.
- Ethical and professional treatment regardless of your age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability.
- A clear written description of the services, fees, and billing information.

The receipt provided by any person engaging in the practice of fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments must include: seller's name, signature, license or permit number, address and phone number of their regular place of business. It must also include a description of the instrument furnished including make, model, circuit options, the term "used" or "reconditioned" if applicable, and serial number. Client records are confidential. With few exceptions, they may not be released by the provider without the client's consent.

How can I check the credential of my healthcare provider?

You may check the credential status of any healthcare provider online. Visit our web page at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/> to access our [Provider Credential Search](#) function. You may also contact our Customer Service Office at (360) 236-4700. They will be able to verify the status of a credential and if disciplinary action has been taken. The address for written inquiries is:

Department of Health
Customer Service Office
PO Box 47865
Olympia, WA 98504-7865.

What is the rescission period?

The rescission period is the 30-day period following the fitting of a hearing instrument. During this period, the instrument can be returned for reasonable cause. It must be in its original condition, less normal wear and tear. The client is entitled to a full refund within 10 business days. The seller must refund all deposits, including any down payment. The seller has the right to deduct 15% of the total purchase price or \$150 per instrument, whichever is less. If at any time during the 30 days the instrument is returned for modification or repair, the time will not be counted as part of the rescission period. Clients are advised to keep copies of all contracts, dates, and types of services received.