

Client Services Procedure Manual

Procedure: 21.00

Subject: Hearing Loss

21.00 - Introduction

Hearing loss that arises out of and in the course of the employment will be covered by WorkplaceNL as outlined by Policy EN-12, Hearing Loss. The two most common causes of employment related hearing loss are traumatic and noise-induced.

Traumatic Hearing Loss: Traumatic hearing loss may be the result of occupational acoustic trauma from a single exposure to a sudden burst of sound, such as an explosive blast. It may also result from a head injury that impacts the hearing sensors.

Noise-induced Hearing Loss: Hearing loss that develops slowly over a long period of exposure to continuous or intermittent hazardous noise levels is referred to as noise-induced hearing loss.

This procedure is intended to address claims for noise-induced hearing loss, because the adjudication process involves gathering specific documentation on such issues as work history, hazardous noise levels, duration of workplace exposure, etc. Once the entitlement decision has been made, the level of coverage for benefits and health care services will be consistent with what is in place for all other types of hearing loss claims.

Claims for other types of hearing loss addressed in Policy EN-12 may not require the same type of documentation. Decisions for those claims are based on the individual facts of the case.

21.01 - Hearing Loss Claim Adjudication Process

When a claim is received for noise-induced hearing loss, the decision maker will consider the work history reported on the Form 6HL, Worker's Report of Hearing Loss. Further work history details may be obtained if required after hearing loss levels are confirmed to meet eligibility requirements under the policy. Noise level readings will be obtained from the employer(s), where available. All available audiograms and audiologist reports should be obtained including any required health surveillance hearing tests from an employer.

Where the hearing loss claim includes tinnitus, the decision maker should ensure that the audiological assessment has confirmed the presence of tinnitus, including the severity, laterality (unilateral versus bilateral), and persistence (intermittent versus constant).

When considering a claim for hearing loss, or for a hearing loss impairment award, an audiological assessment performed by an audiologist will be required, accompanied by Form AR, Audiologist Report and an audiogram. Where a worker has left the workforce, or is no longer exposed to hazardous workplace noise, an exit audiogram performed by the employer will also be considered acceptable within the timeframe outlined in Policy EN-12.

When a Form 6HL, Form AR and an audiogram has been received, the claim will be referred to a Medical Consultant. The Medical Consultant will determine the average hearing loss based on the compensable frequencies outlined in Policy EN-12.

If the cause of a worker's hearing loss is not clearly evident, then, a report from an ENT specialist may be required before the claim can be adjudicated. The worker will have to arrange the necessary referral through their family doctor.

Once all available information has been reviewed, at the discretion of the Medical Consultant, the file may be referred to WorkplaceNL's Audiologist Consultant for further review.

The opinion of the Medical Consultant will be referred back to the decision maker who will render a decision on entitlement.

21.02 - Employer Cost Allocation

In accordance with PRIME, occupational disease costs, which include hearing loss, are excluded from an individual employer's experience. These costs will be charged to all assessed employers under collective liability.

21.03 - Requests for Reassessments

Where a worker requests a reassessment of hearing loss, the decision maker will determine whether the worker has had continued employment exposure to hazardous noise, as reassessments for further hearing loss will only be considered where there has been continued workplace noise exposure. In such cases, a reassessment by an audiologist can take place on an annual basis.

If the reassessment is for the purpose of hearing aid adjustment or replacement, a reassessment by an audiologist can take place on an annual basis, regardless of whether there is continued workplace noise exposure.

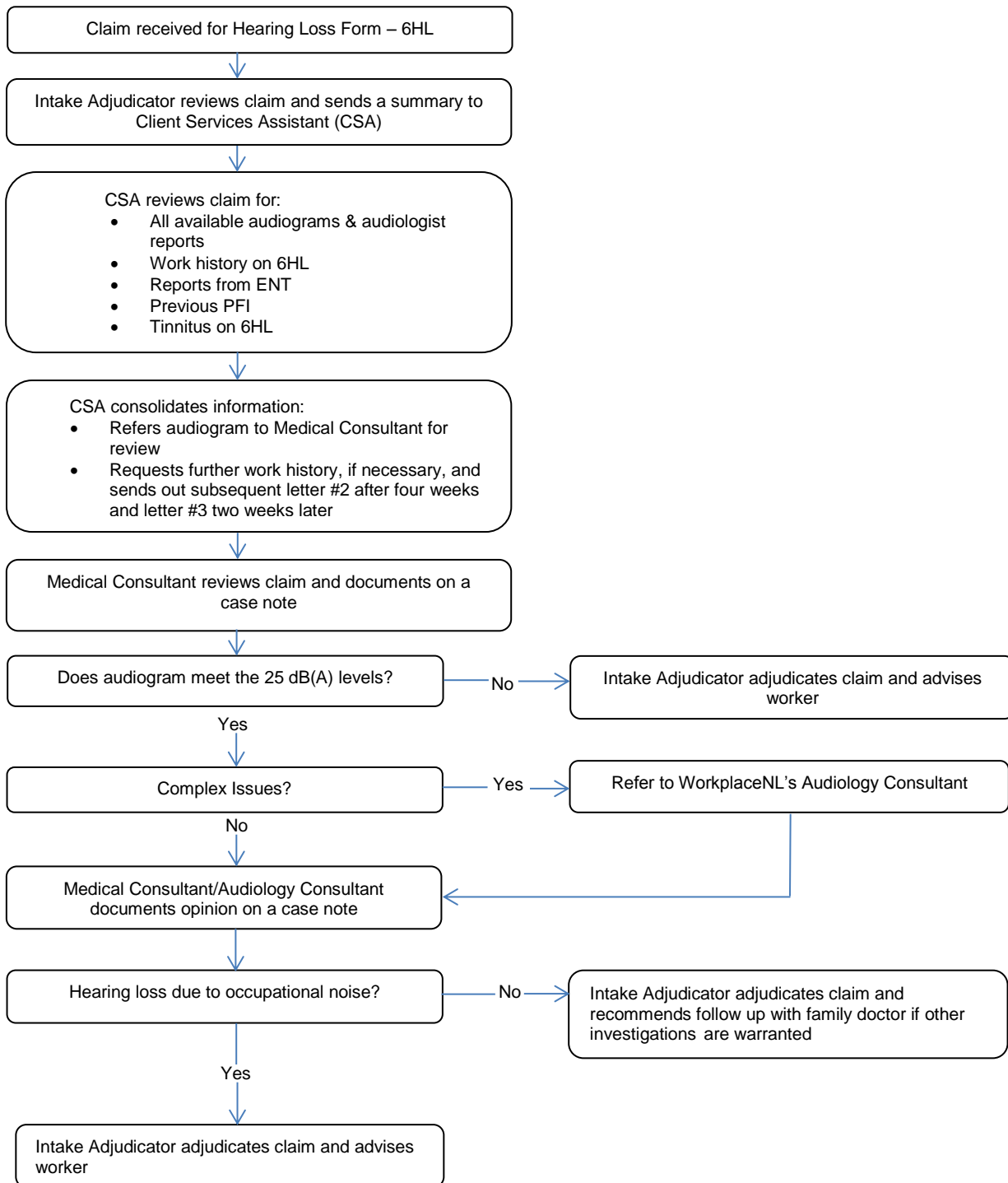
If the request does not meet either of the above criteria, coverage for reassessment will not be approved and the worker will be notified in writing of this decision.

21.04 - Merits and Justice

In cases where the individual circumstances of a case are such that the provisions of this procedure cannot be applied or to do so would result in an unfair or unintended result, WorkplaceNL will decide the case based on its individual merits and justice as outlined by Policy EN-22, Merits and Justice. Such a decision will be considered for that specific case only and will not be precedent setting.

21.05 - Hearing Loss Flowchart

The attached flowchart illustrates the decision making process for hearing loss claims:



All accepted and denied claims are investigated and consideration will be given to all relevant evidence and entitlement is based on the weight of medical evidence.

Reference: Policies: EN-12, Hearing Loss
PR-01, PRIME Overview
EN-22, Merits and Justice

Amendment History

Original Effective Date	1987 08 20
Revision #2	1999 08 11
Revision #3	2004 03 16
Revision #4	2019 04 23