

Dare to Compare Hearing Healthcare Providers

BY: SHARON HIRSTEIN, BOARD CERTIFIED AUDIOLOGIST

Okay, you have *finally* decided you need to do something about your hearing. Where do you start? Who do you trust? The answer is your local audiologist!

Why an audiologist? Hearing loss can creep in slowly or happen suddenly. Balance concerns or tinnitus may accompany changes in your hearing. A diagnostic hearing evaluation will reveal if further medical treatment is needed before using a hearing instrument. It will also allow for discussion about your potential benefit from hearing devices and the creation of a treatment plan not just a description of the latest technology being advertised.

Audiologists are uniquely qualified to evaluate and treat your hearing. Where do you find one? You can consult a physician, search the web, or use the phone book. Look for an audiologist, not just hearing aids.

All audiologists can be licensed to fit hearing aids but not everyone that fits a hearing aid is an audiologist.

Many ads will refer to hearing instrument specialists (HIS), hearing professionals, hearing care associates, or certified staff, but these terms do not guarantee you will be evaluated or treated by an audiologist. Audigy Certified is a trademarked term used by a business group; it also does not guarantee you will be treated by an audiologist and is not the same as Board Certification in Audiology as evaluated by the American Academy of Audiology. Only the training of an audiologist will insure a diagnostic case history is taken, thereby addressing any other contributing factors like tinnitus, diabetes, kidney disease or cardiac concerns. Your hearing is a part of your overall health and should be evaluated and treated by a university trained audiologist.

The boxes below provide information on the credentials and scope of practice for those licensed in the State of Indiana to sell hearing aids. As you can see, by their knowledge, extensive training and pledge to professional ethics, audiologists can provide the clinical and technical skills to optimize your hearing abilities. So please contact your local audiologist to discuss your hearing concerns.

Audiologist

State of Indiana Code 25-35.6

Qualifications:

- Official transcript from the audiology school verifying a Master's Degree or equivalent.
- 400 hours of direct supervised clinical experience.
- Completion of a clinical fellowship of at least 9 consecutive months resulting in a certificate of clinical competence.
- In 2005 the code was updated to require a doctoral (AuD or PhD) degree.
- Passing score on a written jurisprudence examination.
- Criminal background check.

Scope of Practice:

The application of non-medical and non-surgical principles, methods and procedures of prevention, evaluation, habilitation, rehabilitation, instruction and research of hearing, auditory function and vestibular function.

License renewal:

36 hours of continuing education coursework over a two year renewal cycle.

Hearing Aid Dealer

Indiana Code 25-20-1

Qualifications:

- 18 years or older
- High school graduate, GED or equivalency certificate
- Passed the examination by the hearing aid examiners board
- Held a student hearing aid dealer certificate of registration.
- Valid hearing aid dealer Certificate of Registration.

Scope of Practice:

Fit or dispense a hearing aid for sale, lease or rental.

License Renewal:

20 hours every two years