
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1500

State of Washington 53rd Legislature 1993 Regular Session

By House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives R. Johnson, Dyer, L. Johnson and Mastin)

Read first time 03/03/93.

1 AN ACT Relating to hearing aids; amending RCW 18.35.010, 18.35.050,
2 18.35.060, 18.35.110, 18.35.140, 18.35.150, 18.35.161, 18.35.170,
3 18.35.185, 18.35.220, and 18.35.240; and adding a new section to
4 chapter 18.35 RCW.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 **Sec. 1.** RCW 18.35.010 and 1991 c 3 s 80 are each amended to read
7 as follows:

8 As used in this chapter, unless the context requires otherwise:

9 (1) "Department" means the department of health.

10 (2) "~~((Council))~~ Board" means the ~~((council))~~ board on fitting and
11 dispensing of hearing aids.

12 (3) "Hearing aid" means any wearable prosthetic instrument or
13 device designed for or represented as aiding, improving, compensating
14 for, or correcting defective human hearing and any parts, attachments,
15 or accessories of such an instrument or device, excluding batteries and
16 cords and ear molds.

17 (4) "Fitting and dispensing of hearing aids" means the sale, lease,
18 or rental or attempted sale, lease, or rental of hearing aids together
19 with the selection and adaptation of hearing aids and the use of those

1 tests and procedures essential to the performance of these functions.
2 It includes the taking of impressions for ear molds for these purposes.

3 (5) "Secretary" means the secretary of health.

4 (6) "Establishment" means any facility engaged in the fitting and
5 dispensing of hearing aids.

6 **Sec. 2.** RCW 18.35.050 and 1989 c 198 s 3 are each amended to read
7 as follows:

8 Except as otherwise provided in this chapter an applicant for
9 license shall appear at a time and place and before such persons as the
10 department may designate to be examined by written and practical tests.
11 The department shall give an examination in May and November of each
12 year. The examination shall be reviewed annually by the ~~((council))~~
13 board and the department, and revised as necessary. No examination of
14 any established association may be used as the exclusive replacement
15 for the examination unless approved ~~((and—developed))~~ by the
16 ~~((council))~~ board.

17 **Sec. 3.** RCW 18.35.060 and 1991 c 3 s 82 are each amended to read
18 as follows:

19 (1) The department shall issue a trainee license to any applicant
20 who has shown to the satisfaction of the department that:

21 (a) The applicant is at least eighteen years of age;

22 (b) If issued a trainee license, would be employed and directly
23 supervised in the fitting and dispensing of hearing aids by a person
24 licensed in good standing as a fitter-dispenser for at least one year
25 unless otherwise approved by the ~~((council))~~ board; and

26 (c) Has paid an application fee determined by the secretary as
27 provided in RCW 43.70.250, to the department.

28 The provisions of RCW 18.35.030, 18.35.110, and 18.35.120 shall
29 apply to any person issued a trainee license. Pursuant to the
30 provisions of this section, a person issued a trainee license may
31 engage in the fitting and dispensing of hearing aids without having
32 first passed the examination provided under this chapter.

33 (2) The trainee license shall contain the name of the person
34 licensed under this chapter who is employing and supervising the
35 trainee and that person shall execute an acknowledgment of
36 responsibility for all acts of the trainee in connection with the
37 fitting and dispensing of hearing aids.

1 (3) A trainee may fit and dispense hearing aids, but only if the
2 trainee is under the direct supervision of a person licensed under this
3 chapter in a capacity other than as a trainee. Direct supervision by
4 a licensed fitter-dispenser shall be required whenever the trainee is
5 engaged in the fitting or dispensing of hearing aids during the
6 trainee's first three months of full-time employment. The ((~~council~~))
7 board shall develop and adopt guidelines on any additional supervision
8 or training it deems necessary.

9 (4) The trainee license shall expire one year from the date of its
10 issuance except that on recommendation of the ((~~council~~)) board the
11 license may be reissued for one additional year only.

12 (5) No person licensed under this chapter may assume the
13 responsibility for more than two trainees at any one time, except that
14 the department may approve one additional trainee if none of the
15 trainees is within the initial ninety-day period of direct supervision
16 and the licensee demonstrates to the department's satisfaction that
17 adequate supervision will be provided for all trainees.

18 **Sec. 4.** RCW 18.35.110 and 1987 c 150 s 22 are each amended to read
19 as follows:

20 In addition to causes specified under RCW 18.130.170 and
21 18.130.180, any person licensed under this chapter may be subject to
22 disciplinary action by the ((~~council~~)) board for any of the following
23 causes:

24 (1) For unethical conduct in dealing in hearing aids. Unethical
25 conduct shall include, but not be limited to:

26 (a) Using or causing or promoting the use of, in any advertising
27 matter, promotional literature, testimonial, guarantee, warranty,
28 label, brand, insignia, or any other representation, however
29 disseminated or published, which is false, misleading or deceptive;

30 (b) Failing or refusing to honor or to perform as represented any
31 representation, promise, agreement, or warranty in connection with the
32 promotion, sale, dispensing, or fitting of the hearing aid;

33 (c) Advertising a particular model, type, or kind of hearing aid
34 for sale which purchasers or prospective purchasers responding to the
35 advertisement cannot purchase or are dissuaded from purchasing and
36 where it is established that the purpose of the advertisement is to
37 obtain prospects for the sale of a different model, type, or kind than
38 that advertised;

1 (d) Falsifying hearing test or evaluation results;

2 (e)(i) Whenever any of the following conditions are found or should
3 have been found to exist either from observations by the licensee or on
4 the basis of information furnished by the prospective hearing aid user
5 prior to fitting and dispensing a hearing aid to any such prospective
6 hearing aid user, failing to advise that prospective hearing aid user
7 in writing that the user should first consult a licensed physician
8 specializing in diseases of the ear or if no such licensed physician is
9 available in the community then to any duly licensed physician:

10 (A) Visible congenital or traumatic deformity of the ear, including
11 perforation of the eardrum;

12 (B) History of, or active drainage from the ear within the previous
13 ninety days;

14 (C) History of sudden or rapidly progressive hearing loss within
15 the previous ninety days;

16 (D) Acute or chronic dizziness;

17 (E) Any unilateral hearing loss;

18 (F) Significant air-bone gap when generally acceptable standards
19 have been established as defined by the food and drug administration;

20 (G) Visible evidence of significant cerumen accumulation or a
21 foreign body in the ear canal;

22 (H) Pain or discomfort in the ear; or

23 (I) Any other conditions that the ((department)) board may by rule
24 establish. It is a violation of this subsection for any licensee or
25 that licensee's employees and putative agents upon making such required
26 referral for medical opinion to in any manner whatsoever disparage or
27 discourage a prospective hearing aid user from seeking such medical
28 opinion prior to the fitting and dispensing of a hearing aid. No such
29 referral for medical opinion need be made by any licensee in the
30 instance of replacement only of a hearing aid which has been lost or
31 damaged beyond repair within six months of the date of purchase. The
32 licensee or the licensee's employees or putative agents shall obtain a
33 signed statement from the hearing aid user documenting the waiver of
34 medical clearance and the waiver shall inform the prospective user that
35 signing the waiver is not in the user's best health interest:
36 PROVIDED, That the licensee shall maintain a copy of either the
37 physician's statement showing that the prospective hearing aid user has
38 had a medical evaluation or the statement waiving medical evaluation,
39 for a period of three years after the purchaser's receipt of a hearing

1 aid. Nothing in this section required to be performed by a licensee
2 shall mean that the licensee is engaged in the diagnosis of illness or
3 the practice of medicine or any other activity prohibited under the
4 laws of this state;

5 (ii) Fitting and dispensing a hearing aid to any person under
6 eighteen years of age who has not been examined and cleared for hearing
7 aid use within the previous six months by a physician specializing in
8 otolaryngology except in the case of replacement instruments or except
9 in the case of the parents or guardian of such person refusing, for
10 good cause, to seek medical opinion: PROVIDED, That should the parents
11 or guardian of such person refuse, for good cause, to seek medical
12 opinion, the licensee shall obtain from such parents or guardian a
13 certificate to that effect in a form as prescribed by the department;

14 (iii) Fitting and dispensing a hearing aid to any person under
15 eighteen years of age who has not been examined by an audiologist who
16 holds at least a master's degree in audiology for recommendations
17 during the previous six months, without first advising such person or
18 his or her parents or guardian in writing that he or she should first
19 consult an audiologist who holds at least a master's degree in
20 audiology, except in cases of hearing aids replaced within six months
21 of their purchase;

22 (f) Representing that the services or advice of a person licensed
23 to practice medicine and surgery under chapter 18.71 RCW or osteopathy
24 and surgery under chapter 18.57 RCW or of a clinical audiologist will
25 be used or made available in the selection, fitting, adjustment,
26 maintenance, or repair of hearing aids when that is not true, or using
27 the word "doctor," "clinic," or other like words, abbreviations, or
28 symbols which tend to connote a medical or osteopathic profession when
29 such use is not accurate;

30 (g) Permitting another to use his or her license;

31 (h) Stating or implying that the use of any hearing aid will
32 restore normal hearing, preserve hearing, prevent or retard progression
33 of a hearing impairment, or any other false, misleading, or medically
34 or audilogically unsupportable claim regarding the efficiency of a
35 hearing aid;

36 (i) Representing or implying that a hearing aid is or will be
37 "custom-made," "made to order," "prescription made," or in any other
38 sense specially fabricated for an individual when that is not the case;
39 or

1 (j) Directly or indirectly offering, giving, permitting, or causing
2 to be given, money or anything of value to any person who advised
3 another in a professional capacity as an inducement to influence that
4 person, or to have that person influence others to purchase or contract
5 to purchase any product sold or offered for sale by the licensee, or to
6 influence any person to refrain from dealing in the products of
7 competitors.

8 (2) Engaging in any unfair or deceptive practice or unfair method
9 of competition in trade within the meaning of RCW 19.86.020 (~~as now or~~
10 ~~hereafter amended~~)).

11 (3) Aiding or abetting any violation of the rebating laws as stated
12 in chapter 19.68 RCW.

13 **Sec. 5.** RCW 18.35.140 and 1983 c 39 s 11 are each amended to read
14 as follows:

15 The powers and duties of the department, in addition to the powers
16 and duties provided under other sections of this chapter, are as
17 follows:

18 (1) (~~To purchase and maintain or rent audiometric equipment and~~
19 ~~facilities necessary to carry out the examination of applicants for~~
20 ~~license.)) To provide facilities necessary to carry out the examination
21 of applicants for license.~~

22 (2) To authorize all disbursements necessary to carry out the
23 provisions of this chapter.

24 (~~(3) To require the periodic examination of the audiometric~~
25 ~~testing equipment and to carry out the periodic inspection of~~
26 ~~facilities of persons who deal in hearing aids, as reasonably required~~
27 ~~within the discretion of the department.))~~

28 **Sec. 6.** RCW 18.35.150 and 1989 c 198 s 7 are each amended to read
29 as follows:

30 (1) There is created hereby the (~~council~~) board on fitting and
31 dispensing of hearing aids. The (~~council~~) board shall consist of
32 (~~nine~~) six members to be appointed by the governor.

33 (2) Members of the (~~council~~) board shall be residents of this
34 state. (~~Five~~) Two members shall represent the public. Two members
35 shall be persons experienced in the fitting of hearing aids who shall
36 hold valid licenses under this chapter and who do not have a masters
37 level college degree in audiology. One member shall be a medical

1 (~~doctor~~) or osteopathic physician specializing in diseases of the
2 ear. (~~One member shall be a nondispensing audiologist. Two members~~
3 ~~shall represent the public.~~) Two members must be experienced in the
4 fitting of hearing aids, must be licensed under this chapter, and shall
5 have received at a minimum a masters level college degree in audiology.

6 (3) The term of office of a member is three years. No member shall
7 be appointed to serve more than two consecutive terms. A member shall
8 continue to serve until a successor has been appointed. The governor
9 shall either reappoint the member or appoint a successor to assume the
10 member's duties at the expiration of his or her predecessor's term. A
11 vacancy in the office of a member shall be filled by appointment for
12 the unexpired term.

13 (4) The (~~chairman~~) chair of the (~~council~~) board shall be
14 elected from the membership of the (~~council~~) board at the beginning
15 of each year.

16 (5) The (~~council~~) board shall meet at least once each year, at a
17 place, day and hour determined by the (~~council~~) board, unless
18 otherwise directed by a majority of (~~council~~) board members. The
19 (~~council~~) board shall also meet at such other times and places as are
20 requested by the department or by three members of the (~~council~~)
21 board.

22 (6) Members of the (~~council~~) board shall be compensated in
23 accordance with RCW 43.03.240 and shall be reimbursed for their travel
24 expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

25 **Sec. 7.** RCW 18.35.161 and 1987 c 150 s 23 are each amended to read
26 as follows:

27 The (~~council~~) board shall have the following powers and duties:

28 (1) To establish by rule such minimum standards and procedures in
29 the fitting and dispensing of hearing aids as deemed appropriate and in
30 the public interest;

31 (2) To develop guidelines on the training and supervision of
32 trainees;

33 (3) To adopt any other rules (~~or regulations~~) necessary to
34 implement this chapter and which are not inconsistent with it;

35 (4) To develop, approve, and administer all licensing examinations
36 required by this chapter; and

37 (5) To require a licensee to make restitution to any individual
38 injured by a violation of this chapter or chapter 18.130 RCW, the

1 uniform disciplinary act. The authority to require restitution does
2 not limit the ((council's)) board's authority to take other action
3 deemed appropriate and provided for in this chapter or chapter 18.130
4 RCW.

5 **Sec. 8.** RCW 18.35.170 and 1973 1st ex.s. c 106 s 17 are each
6 amended to read as follows:

7 A member of the ((council)) board on fitting and dispensing of
8 hearing aids shall not be permitted to take the examination provided
9 under this chapter unless he or she has first satisfied the department
10 that adequate precautions have been taken to assure that he or she does
11 not and will not have any knowledge, not available to the members of
12 the public at large, as to the contents of the examination.

13 **Sec. 9.** RCW 18.35.185 and 1989 c 198 s 12 are each amended to read
14 as follows:

15 (1) In addition to any other rights and remedies a purchaser may
16 have, the purchaser of a hearing aid shall have the right to rescind
17 the transaction for other than the ((seller's)) licensee's breach if:

18 (a) The purchaser, for reasonable cause, returns the hearing aid or
19 holds it at the ((seller's)) licensee's disposal, if the hearing aid is
20 in its original condition less normal wear and tear. "Reasonable
21 cause" shall be defined by the ((council)) board but shall not include
22 a mere change of mind on the part of the purchaser or a change of mind
23 related to cosmetic concerns of the purchaser about wearing a hearing
24 aid; and

25 (b) The purchaser sends notice of the cancellation ((to the
26 licensee at the licensee's place of business)) by certified mail,
27 return receipt requested, to the establishment employing the licensee
28 at the time the hearing aid was originally purchased, and the notice is
29 posted not later than thirty days following the date of delivery, but
30 the purchaser and the ((seller)) licensee may extend the deadline for
31 posting of the notice of rescission by mutual, written agreement. In
32 the event the hearing aid is in the possession of the ((seller))
33 licensee or the ((seller's)) licensee's representative during the
34 thirty days following the date of delivery, the deadline for posting
35 the notice of rescission shall be extended by an equal number of days
36 that the aid is in the possession of the ((seller)) licensee or the
37 ((seller's)) licensee's representative. Where the hearing aid is

1 returned to the ((seller)) licensee for any inspection for modification
2 or repair, and the ((seller)) licensee has notified the purchaser that
3 the hearing aid is available for redelivery, and where the purchaser
4 has not responded by either taking possession of the hearing aid or
5 instructing the ((seller)) licensee to forward it to the purchaser,
6 then the deadline for giving notice of the rescission shall begin seven
7 working days after this notice.

8 (2) If the transaction is rescinded under this section or as
9 otherwise provided by law and the hearing aid is returned to the
10 licensee, the licensee shall refund to the purchaser any payments or
11 deposits for that hearing aid. However, the licensee may retain, for
12 each hearing aid, fifteen percent of the total purchase price or one
13 hundred dollars, whichever is less. The licensee shall also return any
14 goods traded in contemplation of the sale, less any costs incurred by
15 the licensee in making those goods ready for resale. The refund shall
16 be made within ten days after the rescission. The buyer shall incur no
17 additional liability for such rescission.

18 (3) For the purposes of this section, the purchaser shall have
19 recourse against the bond held by the establishment entering into a
20 purchase agreement with the buyer, as provided by RCW 18.35.240.

21 **Sec. 10.** RCW 18.35.220 and 1987 c 150 s 25 are each amended to
22 read as follows:

23 (1) If the ((council)) board determines following notice and
24 hearing, or following notice if no hearing was timely requested, that
25 a person has:

26 (a) Violated any provisions of this chapter or chapter 18.130 RCW;
27 or

28 (b) Violated any lawful order, or rule of the ((council)) board
29 an order may be issued by the ((council)) board requiring the person to
30 cease and desist from the unlawful practice. The ((council)) board
31 shall then take affirmative action as is necessary to carry out the
32 purposes of this chapter.

33 (2) If the ((council)) board makes a written finding of fact that
34 the public interest will be irreparably harmed by delay in issuing an
35 order, a temporary cease and desist order may be issued. Prior to
36 issuing a temporary cease and desist order, the ((council)) board,
37 whenever possible, shall give notice by telephone or otherwise of the
38 proposal to issue a temporary cease and desist order to the person to

1 whom the order would be directed. Every temporary cease and desist
2 order shall include in its terms a provision that upon request a
3 hearing will be held to determine whether the order becomes permanent.

4 (3) The department, with or without prior administrative
5 proceedings, may bring an action in the superior court to enjoin the
6 acts or practices and to enforce compliance with this chapter, or rule
7 or order under this chapter. Upon proper showing, injunctive relief or
8 temporary restraining orders shall be granted and a receiver or
9 conservator may be appointed. The department shall not be required to
10 post a bond in any court proceedings.

11 **Sec. 11.** RCW 18.35.240 and 1991 c 3 s 85 are each amended to read
12 as follows:

13 (1) Every establishment engaged in the fitting and dispensing of
14 hearing aids shall file with the department a surety bond in the sum of
15 ten thousand dollars, running to the state of Washington, for the
16 benefit of any person injured or damaged as a result of any violation
17 by the establishment's employees or agents of any of the provisions of
18 this chapter or rules adopted by the secretary.

19 (2) In lieu of the surety bond required by this section, the
20 establishment may file with the department a cash deposit or other
21 negotiable security acceptable to the department. All obligations and
22 remedies relating to surety bonds shall apply to deposits and security
23 filed in lieu of surety bonds.

24 (3) If a cash deposit is filed, the department shall deposit the
25 funds with the state treasurer. The cash or other negotiable security
26 deposited with the department shall be returned to the depositor one
27 year after the establishment has discontinued the fitting and
28 dispensing of hearing aids if no legal action has been instituted
29 against the establishment, its agents or employees, or the cash deposit
30 or other security. The establishment owners shall notify the
31 department if the establishment is sold or has discontinued the fitting
32 and dispensing of hearing aids in order that the cash deposit or other
33 security may be released at the end of one year from that date.

34 (4) A surety may file with the department notice of withdrawal of
35 the bond of the establishment. Upon filing a new bond, or upon the
36 expiration of sixty days after the filing of notice of withdrawal by
37 the surety, the liability of the former surety for all future acts of
38 the establishment terminates.

1 (5) Upon the filing with the department notice by a surety of
2 withdrawal of the surety on the bond of an establishment or upon the
3 cancellation by the department of the bond of a surety under this
4 section, the department shall immediately give notice to the
5 establishment by certified or registered mail with return receipt
6 requested addressed to the establishment's last place of business as
7 filed with the department.

8 (6) The department shall immediately cancel the bond given by a
9 surety company upon being advised that the surety company's license to
10 transact business in this state has been revoked.

11 (7) Each invoice for the purchase of a hearing aid provided to a
12 customer must clearly display on the first page the bond number of the
13 establishment or the licensee selling the hearing aid.

14 NEW SECTION. Sec. 12. A new section is added to chapter 18.35 RCW
15 to read as follows:

16 (1) A person licensed under this chapter and not actively fitting
17 and dispensing hearing aids may be placed on inactive status by the
18 department at the written request of the licensee. The board shall
19 define by rule the conditions for inactive status licensure. In
20 addition to the requirements of RCW 43.24.086, the licensing fee for a
21 licensee on inactive status shall be directly related to the costs of
22 administering an inactive license by the department. A person on
23 inactive status may be voluntarily placed on active status by notifying
24 the department in writing, paying the remainder of the licensing fee
25 for the licensing year, and complying with subsection (2) of this
26 section.

27 (2) Inactive licensees applying for active licensure shall comply
28 with the following: A licensee who has not fitted or dispensed hearing
29 aids for more than five years from the expiration of the licensee's
30 full fee license shall retake the practical examinations required under
31 this chapter and shall have completed continuing education requirements
32 within the previous twelve-month period. Persons who have been on
33 inactive status from two to five years must have within the previous
34 twelve months completed continuing education requirements. Persons who
35 have been on inactive status for one year or less shall upon
36 application be reinstated as active licensees. Persons who have
37 inactive status in this state but who are actively licensed and in good
38 standing in any other state shall not be required to meet continuing

1 education requirements or to take the practical examinations, but must
2 submit an affidavit attesting to their knowledge of the current
3 Washington Administrative Code rules and Revised Code of Washington
4 statutes pertaining to the fitting and dispensing of hearing aids.

--- **END** ---