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NEW DISABILITY CODING SYSTEM FOR HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
REHABILITATION SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20202

March 18, 1981

TO:
STATE REHABILITATION AGENCIES
(GENERAL)
STATE REHABILITATION AGENCIES
(BLIND)
RSA REGIONAL COMMISSIONERS
(INFORMATION)

SUBJECT: Revised RSA-300 Disability
Codes for Hearing Impairments

PURPOSE: This memorandum a) introduces new statistical codes for RSA-300 reporting for deafness and hard of hearing; b) presents, for the first time, definitions of deafness and hard of hearing; and c) revises the definition of "severely disabled" for the hard of hearing.

BACKGROUND: Considerable dissatisfaction with the existing codes for hearing impairments on the RSA-300 has been expressed. Among the problems cited was a) the absence of any guidance in distinguishing between deafness and hard of hearing; b) the outdated reference to the ability or inability to talk among deaf persons; and c) the overly restrictive definition for "severe disability" for the non-deaf hearing impaired. These and similar problems brought the validity of reported data in question since recording of information on hearing impairments was not standard from agency to agency.

To rectify the situation, the Oregon College of Education conducted a pilot test in six State agencies to determine the validity and reliability of a proposed coding system which was based on comments received in the Fall 1978 from a majority of State agencies. Many of the agencies explained in detail the difficulties the old system presented and offered suggestions for improvement. (See the following article. Editor.) The revised system, which was adjudged superior to the old one as a result of the pilot test, was reviewed and accepted by State Coordinators of the Deaf in a meeting in Rochester, New York in September 1980.

STRUCTURE OF THE NEW CODES: The three-digit code structure of all RSA-300 disability codes has been retained, but totally different codes for deafness and hard of hearing have been devised to avoid confusion with the old codes. The new codes will range from 231 to 289 compared to 200 to 229 for the old codes.

The first digit for all 20 new codes is 2, signifying a hearing impairment.

Codes 3, 4, and 5 in the second digit pertain to deafness in conjunction with the known or assumed time in the individual's life when this disability occurred. They stand for deafness: pre-lingual; deafness: pre-vocational; and deafness: post-vocational, respectively.

Codes 6, 7, and 8 in the second digit pertain to hard of hearing in conjunction with the known or assumed time in the individual's life when this disability occurred. They stand for hard of hearing: pre-lingual; hard of hearing: pre-vocational; and hard of hearing: post-vocational, respectively.

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For the third digit, only codes 1, 3, 4, and 9 are to be used. They refer to the origin or cause of the disability and stand for congenital origin, disease, accident, and "ill-defined/unspecified/unknown", respectively.

Attachment A lists the 20 new codes to be used for RSA-300 reporting. This compares to 15 codes in the current system.

Attachment B provides the definitions to be used for deafness, hard of hearing, the three broad time spans during which the disability occurred, three causes of disability (the fourth cause, "ill-defined/unspecified/unknown", is self-evident) and, most importantly, severity of disability for the hard of hearing. (All deaf persons are automatically classified as being severely disabled.)

Attachment C displays the closest comparison between the old and new RSA-300 codes for deafness and hard of hearing that can be made. No one-to-one equality is possible.

ITEMS AFFECTED: Three RSA-300 data elements are affected by the new codes for hearing impairments. They are a) major disabling condition; b) secondary disabling condition; and c) disability as reported at referral. For the latter data element, in instances when the cause of the disability is not known or reported at the time of referral, agencies can use either an "X" for the third digit, as is now the case, or "9", which would convey the same meaning. Thus, the disability code for a person who became deaf as a teenager with no cause reported at referral, would be either 24X or 249.

IMPLEMENTATION: Agencies will differ from one another in the speed with which they can incorporate the new codes. For this reason, they can begin using the new RSA-300 codes at any time during the balance of Fiscal Year 1981 which ends on September 30, 1981. For all of Fiscal Year 1981, therefore, both the old and new codes will be considered "legitimate."

Cases that are closed on October 1, 1981 and thereafter, should reflect only the new codes. However, it should be noted that information on cases closed from October 1,

1981 through September 30, 1982 (Fiscal Year 1982) is not due in RSA until November 15, 1982. Thus, considerable time is available to incorporate the new codes and, if necessary, to go back over some long-standing cases to change the old codes to the new ones. Should procedural problems arise, contact the address below.

CONTACT: Any questions, comments, or problems arising from this memorandum should be addressed to:

Director, Division of Program Data
and Analysis
Office of Administrative Support
Rehabilitation Services Administration
Switzer Building - Room 3621
Washington, D. C. 20202
Phone: (202) 472-3796

FREDERICK SACHS
Acting Deputy Commissioner of
Rehabilitation Services

Attachment A: Revised RSA-300 Disability Codes for Hearing Impairments

(2--)	HEARING IMPAIRMENTS
(23-)	Deafness, pre-lingual, due to:
231	congenital condition
233	degenerative or infectious disease
234	accident, injury or poisoning
239	ill-defined, unspecified or unknown cause
(24-)	Deafness, pre-vocational, due to:
241	(Do not use. See Attachment B, instruction 7.)
243	degenerative or infectious disease
244	accident, injury or poisoning
249	ill-defined, unspecified or unknown cause
(25-)	Deafness, post-vocational, due to:
251	(Do not use, See Attachment B, instruction 7.)
253	degenerative or infectious disease
254	accident, injury or poisoning
259	ill-defined, unspecified or unknown cause
(26-)	Hard of hearing, pre-lingual, due to:
261	congenital condition
263	degenerative or infectious disease
264	accident, injury or poisoning

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269	ill-defined, unspecified or unknown cause
(27-)	Hard of hearing, pre-vocational, due to:
271	(Do not use. See Attachment B, instruction 7.)
273	degenerative or infectious disease
274	accident, injury or poisoning
279	ill-defined, unspecified or unknown cause
(28-)	Hard of hearing, post-vocational, due to:
281	(Do not use. See Attachment B, instruction 7.)
283	degenerative or infectious disease
284	accident, injury or poisoning
289	ill-defined, unspecified or unknown cause

Attachment B: Definitions for Terms Used in Coding Hearing Impairments in the RSA-300 System

1. *Deafness* — A hearing impairment of such severity that the individual must depend *primarily* upon *visual* communication such as writing, lip reading, manual communication, and gestures.
2. *Hard of hearing* — A hearing impairment resulting in a functional loss, but not to the extent that the individual must depend primarily upon *visual* communication.
3. *Pre-lingual* hearing impairment — An impairment that is known or is assumed to have occurred prior to the third birthday.
4. *Pre-vocational* hearing impairment — An impairment that is known or is assumed to have occurred on or after the third birthday, but prior to the 19th birthday.
5. *Post-vocational* hearing impairment — An impairment that is known or is assumed to have occurred on or after the 19th birthday.
6. *Congenital condition* — A hearing loss that is known or is assumed to have been

present at birth. Examples would include, but not be limited to, maternal rubella and hemolytic disease of the newborn.

7. *Degenerative or infectious disease* — A cause of hearing loss that would include, but not be limited to, meningitis, scarlet fever and diphtheria. (*NOTE: A condition present at birth which does not result in a hearing loss until later in life is, for reporting purposes, caused by "degenerative or infectious disease."*)
 8. *Accident, injury or poisoning* — A traumatic cause of hearing loss, including noise-induced loss. This cause would encompass, but not be limited to, ototoxic agents.
 9. *Severely disabled hard of hearing* — A person who is hard of hearing is considered to be severely disabled if any *one* of the following three situations apply:
 - a. At least a 55 dB loss, *unaided*, reference American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 1973 (revised) speech reception threshold (SRT)^{1/} in the more useful ear
or (if a speech audiometric assessment is unavailable)
 - b. At least a 55 dB loss, *unaided*, reference (ANSI), pure tone average (PTA)^{2/} in the more useful ear
or
 - c. Between 30-54 dB loss, *unaided*, reference (ANSI) SRT or PTA in the more useful ear with one of the following:
 - (1) Speech discrimination^{3/} less than 50 percent or
 - (2) A statement from a physician skilled in diseases of the ear, indicating progressive loss.
- 1/ SRT is the softest level of sound at which a client can correctly respond to at least 50 percent of a list of spondee (bi-syllabic) words.
- 2/ PTA is determined for each ear by computing the average of the pure tone thresholds at 500 Hz, 1000 Hz, and 2000

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Hz. For example, if the thresholds are 60 dB at 500 Hz, 80dB at 1000 Hz, and 90dB at 2000 Hz, the pure tone average would be $\frac{60 + 80 + 90}{3} = \frac{230}{3} = 77\text{dB}$.

3/ Speech discrimination would be determined by a phonetically balanced (PB) word list. The PB list should be administered at the maximum comfort level (MCL).

Attachment C: Comparison of Old and New Codes for Hearing Impairments in the RSA-300 System

The list below displays the closest comparison between the old and new RSA-300 codes for hearing impairments that can be made. This comparison encompasses the disability (deafness or hard of hearing) and the etiology (disease, congenital condition, accident, or "ill-defined"). No old vs. new comparison is possible for the new concept presenting the approximate age at the onset of the disability (pre-lingual, pre-vocational, or post-vocational).

Old Codes	New Codes	Disability/Cause
200, 202, 210, 212	233, 243, 253	Deafness/Disease
206, 216	231	Deafness/Congenital
208, 218	234, 244, 254	Deafness/Accident
209, 219	239, 249, 259	Deafness/Ill-defined
220, 222	263, 273, 283	Hard of Hearing/Disease
226	261	Hard of Hearing/Congenital
228	264, 274, 284	Hard of Hearing/Accident
229	269, 279, 289	Hard of Hearing/Ill-defined