

**Hearing Aid Legislation
Enrolled as ACT No. 816**

Regular Session, 2003

SENATE BILL NO. 408

BY SENATORS GAUTREAUX AND HINES AND REPRESENTATIVES FAUCHEUX, MURRAY AND PEYCHAUD

AN ACT

To enact R.S. 22:215.24, relative to health insurance; to provide hearing aid coverage for minor children; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana: Section 1. R.S. 22:215.24 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

§215.24. Hearing aid coverage for minor child

R.S. 22:215.24 is all new law.

A. As used in this Section, "hearing aid" shall mean a non-disposable device that is of a design and circuitry to optimize audibility and listening skills in the environment commonly experienced by children.

B. This Section shall apply to the following entities:

(1) Insurers and nonprofit health service plans, including the office of group benefits, that provide hospital, medical, or surgical benefits to individuals or groups on an expense-incurred basis under health insurance policies or contracts that are issued or delivered in this state.

(2) Health maintenance organizations as defined and licensed pursuant to Part XII of Chapter 2 of this Title that provide hospital, medical, or surgical benefits to individuals or groups under contracts that are issued or delivered in this state.

C.(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of Act No. 1115 which originated as House Bill No. 1606 of the 2003 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature to the contrary, an entity subject to this Section shall provide coverage for hearing aids for a child under the age of eighteen who is covered under a policy or contract of insurance if the hearing aids are fitted and dispensed by a licensed audiologist or licensed hearing aid specialist following medical clearance by a physician licensed to practice medicine and an audiological evaluation medically appropriate to the age of the child.

(2)(i) An entity subject to this Section may limit the benefit payable under Paragraph (1) of this Subsection to **one thousand and four hundred dollars per hearing aid for each hearing-impaired ear** every thirty-six months.

(ii) An insured or enrolled individual may choose a hearing aid that is priced higher than the benefit payable under this Subsection and may pay the difference between the price of the hearing aid and the benefit payable under this Subsection without financial or contractual penalty to the provider of the hearing aid.

(iii) In the case of a health insurer or health maintenance organization that administers benefits according to contracts with health care providers, hearing aids covered pursuant to this Section shall be obtained from health care providers contracted with the health insurer or health maintenance organization. Such providers shall be subject to the same contracting and credentialing requirements that apply to other contracted health care providers.

D. This Section does not prohibit an entity subject to the provisions of this Section from providing coverage that is greater or more favorable to an insured or enrolled individual than the coverage required under this Section.

E. The provisions of this Section shall apply to any new policy, contract, program, or plan issued by an entity subject to the provisions of this Section on or after January 1, 2004. Any such policy, contract, program, or plan in effect prior to January 1, 2004 shall convert to the provisions of this Section on or before the renewal date thereof but in no event later than January 1, 2005. Any policy affected by the provisions of this Section shall apply to an insured or participant under such policy, contract, program or plan whether or not the hearing impairment is a pre-existing condition of the insured or participant.

F. The provisions of this Section shall not apply to individually underwritten, guaranteed renewable limited benefit health insurance policies.