

# SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY AND HEARING AID DISPENSERS BOARD

## HEARING AID DISPENSERS



This report was prepared and written by the staff of the  
Office of Professional Examination Services  
California Department of Consumer Affairs

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board (SLPAHADB) requested the Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Professional Examination Services (OPES) to conduct an occupational analysis to identify critical job activities performed by hearing aid dispensers in California. The purpose of the occupational analysis is to define practice for licensed hearing aid dispensers (which include dispensing audiologists) in terms of actual job tasks that new licensees must be able to perform safely and competently. The results of this occupational analysis serve as the basis for the examination program for licensed hearing aid dispensers in California.

To develop a legally defensible examination outline for hearing aid dispensers in California, OPES conducted interviews with 15 California licensed hearing aid dispensers, researched the profession, and facilitated five focus group workshops between June 2011 and May 2012.

Working with an OPES test development consultant, the five focus groups of licensees used a content validation strategy to establish a description of practice. The first group of licensed hearing aid dispensers worked on reconciling and revising the task and knowledge statements included in the practical examination outline. The second group of licensed hearing aid dispensers reviewed task statements developed by OPES based on the research of the profession and the interviews. Licensees were asked to review, refine, and develop additional task statements to assist in defining the practice of licensed hearing aid dispensers in California. A third group of licensed hearing aid dispensers were asked to review the knowledge statements developed by OPES based on the research of the profession and the interviews. The licensees were asked to review, refine, and develop additional knowledge statements to ensure that the task and knowledge statements were accurately defined.

Upon completion of the first three focus groups, OPES developed a three-part questionnaire to be completed by licensed hearing aid dispensers statewide. In the first part of the questionnaire, licensees were asked to provide demographic information relating to their work setting and practice. In the second part, the licensees were asked to rate specific job tasks in terms of frequency (i.e., how often the licensee performs the task in their job) and importance (i.e., how important the task is to performance of the licensee's current job). In the third part of the questionnaire, licensees were asked to rate specific knowledge statements in terms of how important that knowledge is to performance of their current job. There were several new tasks and knowledge statements created during this process and some statements that were eliminated due to overlap and reconciliation.

The Board sent notification letters to all 1,775 licensed hearing aid dispensers in California inviting them to complete the questionnaire online. The Board implemented OPES's recommendation of providing an incentive to respondents by awarding continuing education credits for completing the survey. A total of 426 licensed hearing aid dispensers (24.0%) responded by logging into the Web-based survey. A total sample size included in the data analysis was 357 or 20.1% of the original sample that was invited to complete the questionnaire.

This response rate reflects a few adjustments, the details of which are described in the “Response Rate” section of this report. The 20.1% response rate indicates a successful level of participation by current licensees and reflects the contributions from the continuing education incentive and the Board’s active role in promoting the survey participation.

OPES used a multiplicative model using the frequency and importance ratings to arrive at a critical index for each task statement. The importance rating was used as the critical index for each knowledge statement. A fourth focus group of licensed hearing aid dispensers evaluated the task critical indices and knowledge ratings and agreed that all tasks and knowledge statements would be retained in the examination outline. During the content area development and task grouping the licensees decided to combine two previously separate groups “Candidacy” and “Selection” into one content area called “Candidacy and Selection,” because the two groups of tasks are difficult to separate and the tasks are performed at the same time. After the content area tasks were grouped the licensees were asked to establish the preliminary linkage between job tasks and knowledge statements.

The fifth and final group of licensees was tasked with reviewing the prior focus groups’ work to confirm the groups and linkage of task with knowledge statements. After the licensees reviewed and refined the content area details the last step was to identify the task and knowledge statements to be included in the written examination outline and to identify the task and knowledge statements to be included in the practical examination outline.

The written examination outline is structured into nine content areas and includes most of the task and knowledge statements developed for hearing aid dispenser practice. The practical examination outline is structured into six content areas which are comprised of a smaller “subset” of task and knowledge statements to be used in the development of the hearing aid dispensers’ practical examination. For the two examination outlines, each content area is weighted based on its criticality relative to other content areas. The written and practical examination outlines specify the job tasks that a California licensed hearing aid dispenser is expected to have mastered prior to licensure.

## OVERVIEW OF THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION OUTLINE

Content Area	Content Area Description	Percent Weight
Client History	This area assesses the candidate's ability to gather health information and medical history related to the client's hearing to determine client's hearing status.	18
Ear Inspection	This area assesses the candidate's ability to visually inspect the external ear to evaluate the physical condition of the client's ear.	8
Audiometric Assessment	This area assesses the candidate's ability to determine client's hearing acuity using standardized tests.	8
Audiometric Interpretation	This area assesses the candidate's ability to identify degree, type, and configuration of hearing loss based on audiometric test results and to communicate audiometric test results to client.	9
Candidacy and Selection	This area assesses the candidate's ability to determine whether a client may benefit from the use of amplification and provide hearing options as necessary.	21
Ear Impression	This area assesses the candidate's ability to produce an accurate impression of the client's ear.	9
Evaluating Hearing Instruments	This area assesses the candidate's ability to determine whether hearing instruments meet manufacturer and dispenser specifications.	6
Fitting	This area assesses the candidate's ability to validate fitting and instruct client in care and use of hearing instrument.	11
Postfitting	This area assesses the candidate's ability to identify sources of electronic and acoustic problems associated with common client complaints.	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>

## OVERVIEW OF THE PRACTICAL EXAMINATION OUTLINE

<b>Content Area</b>	<b>Content Area Description</b>	<b>Percent Weight</b>
Ear Inspection	This area assesses the candidate's ability to dispense hearing aids within legal and regulatory requirements and to use and maintain safe practices for client's hearing and health.	8
Audiometric Assessment	This area assesses the candidate's ability to determine client's hearing acuity using standardized tests.	11
Ear Impression	This area assesses the candidate's ability to produce an accurate impression of the client's ear.	34
Evaluating Hearing Instruments	This area assesses the candidate's ability to determine whether hearing instruments meet manufacturer and dispenser specifications.	9
Fitting	This area assesses the candidate's ability to validate fitting and instruct client in care and use of hearing instrument.	24
Postfitting	This area assesses the candidate's ability to identify sources of electronic and acoustic problems associated with common client complaints.	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>