



AMERICAN
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-
HEARING
ASSOCIATION

Severely Hearing Handicapped

WHEREAS, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandates that state Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation provide a full range of services to all “severely disabled” persons, and

WHEREAS, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) presently defines a “severely disabled” hearing-impaired person as one whose hearing “loss exceeds 70 decibels in the better ear in conversational range with correction” (Federal RSA Manual, July 1974, Section 3005.03, p. 59), and

WHEREAS, severe hearing handicap cannot be defined adequately without minimally considering unaided speech threshold and speech discrimination measures, and

WHEREAS, the Executive Board, as a result of the resolution of the Legislative Council (LC 54-77), formed the Task Force on Definition of the Hearing Handicap to address this issue and to formulate a definition of severe hearing handicap; therefore

LC 33-78. RESOLVED, That the following definition of severe hearing handicap be forwarded to the Rehabilitation Services Administration on behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association as a suggested revision for the definition of severe hearing disability in the *Federal RSA Manual*:

A severely hearing handicapped person is one who demonstrates:

1. An unaided speech reception threshold in the better ear of 55 dB HL or more, or
2. An unaided speech reception threshold in the better ear of less than 55 dB HL with any of the following:
 - a. aided performance on a recognized measure of speech discrimination ability of 60% or less at a sound field test presentation level of 75 dB SPL (loud conversational speech);
 - b. evidence of rapidly progressive hearing loss;
 - c. an inability to tolerate amplification and unaided performance on a recognized measure of speech discrimination ability of 60% or less at a sound field test presentation level of 75 dB SPL (loud conversational speech), or
3. In the event that recognized measures of speech reception or speech discrimination are inapplicable—for example, because of a foreign language barrier, receptive or expressive language disorder, etc.—an unaided pure tone average in the better ear of 55 dB HL or more.

(Executive Board)

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