

# Hearing aid assistance for seniors in ne

**DEAR SAVVY SENIOR:** Are there any organizations that you know of that offer low-cost hearing aids to seniors on a very tight budget? — **HARD OF HEARING**

**DEAR HARD:** Unfortunately, there are millions of U.S. seniors with hearing loss who go without needed hearing aids because they simply can't afford them. Digital hearing aids are expensive, typically costing between \$1,000 and \$3,000 per ear, and most insurance companies, including Medicare, don't cover them.

But there's good news. Today there are a number of organizations that offer hearing aid assistance programs to help those in need. Most programs have income requirements that you'll need to meet to be eligible, and they all require a hearing evaluation by an audiologist, which in most cases you'll have to pay for yourself. Here's where to look for help.

## Lions Clubs

Provided by the Lions Clubs International Foundation and of-



**SAVVY SENIOR**

By Jim Miller

ferred through many local Lions Clubs throughout the United States, the Lions Affordable Hearing Aid Project provides the opportunity to purchase new, behind-the-ear, digital hearing aids manufactured by Rexton for \$200 per aid. To be eligible, most clubs will require your income to be below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, which is less than \$21,660 (or \$29,140 for a family of two) in 2009. Contact your local

Lions Club to see if they participate in this project. To reach your local club, visit [LionsClubs.org](http://LionsClubs.org) or call 800-747-4448 to get the number to your state Lions Club office, which can refer you to your community representative.

## Help America Hear

Provided by the Foundation for Sight & Sound and the EarQ Group, Help America Hear provides free digital hearing aids to individuals making less than \$25,000 per year. All applicants must be referred by an EarQ hearing professional (call 866-432-7500 or see [EarQ.com](http://EarQ.com) to find

one) and pay a \$75 nonrefundable application fee. Visit [FoundationForSightandSound.org](http://FoundationForSightandSound.org) or call 631-366-3461 for more information.

## HearNow

A national nonprofit program and part of the Starkey Hearing Foundation, HearNow provides new digital hearing aids to those in need, for practically free. Your only costs are a hearing test by an audiologist and an application fee of \$100 (\$200 if you're requesting two hearing aids). To be eligible in the lower 48 states, your income must be less than \$18,403 (or \$24,675 as a couple) with limited assets. To learn more, call 800-328-8602 or visit the Web site at [Sotheworldmayhear.org/hearnow](http://Sotheworldmayhear.org/hearnow), where you can download an application.

## Sertoma

Sertoma is a civic service organization that has more than 600 clubs nationwide, some of which collect used hearing aids, have them refurbished, and distribute them to local, low-income seniors in need. Call 816-333-8300 or visit [www.Sertoma.org](http://www.Sertoma.org) to

locate a club in your area. Next month, Sertoma is also launching Hearing Charities of America ([HearingCharities.org](http://HearingCharities.org)), an affiliate program that provides hearing aids to those in need who don't live near a participating club.

## Audient

This nonprofit service helps people purchase new digital hearing aids at discounts ranging from 30 to 75 percent. To be eligible, your income must be no higher than \$27,075, or \$36,425 for a family of two (the guidelines in Hawaii and Alaska are higher). Assets are not considered. Go to [AudientAlliance.org](http://AudientAlliance.org) or call 877-283-4368 for more information.

## Travelers

Travelers Protective Association of America offers a scholarship trust fund to help pay for hearing aids to those who need assistance. There are no income or asset qualifications. Applications must be received each year by March 1. To download an application, visit the Web site at [www.tpahq.org](http://www.tpahq.org) or call 314-371-0533.

## Local organiza

Depending on where you live, other hearing aid assistance programs may be available. Check with your Area Agency on Aging (call 800-677-1111 or your local number) or your local county or state programs. Also check the local nonprofit organizations that offer help. Also check the local service groups such as the Knights of Columbus, Maritimeists, Elks, Easter Seals, and Quota International. They, too, may offer assistance.

*Savvy Tip:* The Better Hearing Institute offers a comprehensive listing of hearing aid financial resources at [BetterHearing.org](http://BetterHearing.org) — click on "Resources," "Financial Assistance."

*Jim Miller is a regular contributor to NBC's "Today" show, author of a book titled "Savvy Senior." Send your suggestions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, [www.savvysenior.org](http://www.savvysenior.org).*