

Audiologist

Professional Activities

Audiologists work with people who have hearing, balance, and related ear problems. They examine individuals of all ages and identify those with the symptoms of hearing loss and other auditory, balance, and related sensory and neural problems. They then assess the nature and extent of the problems and help the individuals manage them. Using audiometers, computers, and other testing devices, they measure the loudness at which a person begins to hear sounds, the ability to distinguish between sounds, and the impact of hearing loss on an individual's daily life. In addition, audiologists use computer equipment to evaluate and diagnose balance disorders. Audiologists interpret these results and may coordinate them with medical, educational, and psychological information to make a diagnosis and determine a course of treatment.

Hearing disorders can result from a variety of causes including trauma at birth, viral infections, genetic disorders, exposure to loud noise, certain medications, or aging. Treatment may include examining and cleaning the ear canal, fitting and dispensing hearing aids, and fitting and programming cochlear implants. Audiologic treatment also includes counseling on adjusting to hearing loss, training on the use of hearing instruments, and teaching communication strategies for use in a variety of environments. For example, they may provide instruction in listening strategies. Audiologists also may recommend, fit, and dispense personal or large-area amplification systems and alerting devices.

In audiology clinics, audiologists may independently develop and carry out treatment programs. They keep records on the initial evaluation, progress, and discharge of patients. In other settings, audiologists may work with other health and education providers as part of a team in planning and implementing services for children and adults. Audiologists who diagnose and treat balance disorders often work in collaboration with physicians, and physical and occupational therapists.

Some audiologists specialize in work with the elderly, children, or hearing-impaired individuals who need special treatment programs. Others develop and implement ways to protect workers' hearing from on-the-job injuries. They measure noise levels in workplaces and conduct hearing protection programs in factories and in schools and communities.

Audiologists who work in private practice also manage the business aspects of running an office, such as developing a patient base, hiring employees, keeping records, and ordering equipment and supplies.

Some audiologists conduct research on types of, and treatment for, hearing, balance, and related disorders. Others design and develop equipment or techniques for diagnosing and treating these disorders.

Audiologists usually work at a desk or table in clean, comfortable surroundings. The job is not physically demanding but does require attention to detail and intense concentration. The emotional needs of patients and their families may be demanding. Most full-time audiologists work about 40 hours per week, which may include weekends and evenings to meet the needs of patients. Those who work on a contract basis may spend a substantial amount of time traveling between facilities.

Educational Requirements

All States regulate licensure of audiologists; requirements vary by State. At least a master's degree in audiology is required, but a doctoral degree is increasingly necessary. In 2009, 18 States required a doctoral degree or its equivalent for new applicants to practice audiology. The doctoral degree in audiology is a graduate program typically lasting 4 years and resulting in the Au.D. designation.

The Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA) is an entity of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) that accredits education programs in audiology. In 2009, the CAA accredited 70 doctoral programs in audiology. Graduation from an accredited program may be required to obtain a license in some States and professional credentialing.

Requirements for admission to programs in audiology include courses in English, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, and communication. Graduate coursework in audiology includes anatomy; physiology; physics; genetics; normal and abnormal communication development; auditory, balance, and neural systems assessment and treatment; diagnosis and treatment; pharmacology; and ethics. Graduate curriculums also include supervised clinical practicum and externships.

Audiologists are regulated by licensure in all 50 States. Some States regulate the practice of audiology and the dispensing of hearing aids separately, meaning some States will require an additional license called a Hearing Aid Dispenser license. Many States require that audiologists complete continuing education for license renewal. Eligibility requirements, hearing aid dispensing requirements, and continuing education requirements vary from State to State. For specific requirements, contact your State’s medical or health board.

Audiologists can earn the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Audiology (CCC-A) offered by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; they may also be credentialed through the American Board of Audiology. Professional credentialing may satisfy some or all of the requirements for State licensure.

Academic Programs

[Illinois State University](#)

[Northern Illinois University](#)

[Northwestern University](#)

[Rush University](#)

[University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](#)

Employment/Salary Outlook

Employment of audiologists is expected to grow 25 percent from 2008 to 2018, much faster than average for all occupations. Hearing loss is strongly associated with aging, so increased growth in older population groups will cause the number of people with hearing and balance impairments to increase markedly.

Medical advances also are improving the survival rate of premature infants and trauma victims, who then need assessment and sometimes treatment. Greater awareness of the importance of early identification and diagnosis of hearing disorders in infants also will increase employment. In addition to medical advances, technological advances in hearing aids may drive demand. Digital hearing aids have become smaller in size and also have quality improving technologies like reducing feedback. Demand may be spurred by those who switch from analog to digital hearing aids, as well as those who will desire new or first-time hearing aids because they are becoming less visible.

Employment in educational services will increase along with growth in elementary and secondary school enrollments, including enrollment of special education students.

Growth in employment of audiologists will be moderated by limitations on reimbursements made by third-party payers for the tests and services they provide.

State and National Wages

Location	Pay Period	2009				
		10%	25%	Median	75%	90%
United States	Hourly	\$19.55	\$24.63	\$30.40	\$38.18	\$48.31
	Yearly	\$40,700	\$51,200	\$63,200	\$79,400	\$100,500
Illinois	Hourly	\$19.42	\$25.24	\$29.50	\$35.95	\$43.17
	Yearly	\$40,400	\$52,500	\$61,400	\$74,800	\$89,800

State and National Trends

United States	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2008	2018		
Audiologists	12,800	16,000	+25%	580
Illinois	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings ¹
	2008	2018		
Audiologists	430	510	+19%	20

¹Job Openings refers to the average annual job openings due to growth and net replacement.

Professional Organizations

American Academy of Audiology
11730 Plaza America Drive, Suite 300
Reston, VA 20190
Phone: 800-AAA-2336
<http://www.audiology.org/>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
2200 Research Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20850-3289
301-296-5700
<http://www.asha.org/>

References

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition, Audiologists, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos085.htm>.

O*NET OnLine, on the Internet at <http://online.onetcenter.org/link/summary/29-1121.00>

Date Last Modified: May 26, 2011