

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about Hearing Conservation

**1. How do I determine if a hearing conservation program is needed at my center?**

When noise survey or exposure monitoring data indicates that students or staff are exposed to noise levels that meet or exceed the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA) of 85 decibels (dB) when measured on the A scale of a standard sound level meter at slow response, a hearing conservation program, including a written plan, must be developed and implemented in accordance with 29 CFR 1910.95.

**Note:** If noise survey and exposure monitoring data does not indicate that a noise hazard exists, a hearing conservation program is not necessary. The center should document the rationale why a hearing conservation program is not needed in a statement signed by the Center Director, which must be maintained on center and readily accessible if requested to produce such information. Noise survey data should be included with this document.

**2. What are the required components of the hearing conservation program?** The hearing conservation program required by 29 CFR 1910.95 is detailed in paragraphs (c) through (o) of the standard. The program requirements include:

- a. noise monitoring;
- b. notification of affected persons;
- c. providing affected persons the opportunity to observe noise monitoring;
- d. an audiometric testing program with specific requirements for testing equipment, procedures, and frequency;
- e. hearing protection;
- f. a training program;
- g. access to information and training materials; and
- h. recordkeeping.

**3. Does the hearing screening performed as part of the student's initial physical examination meet the requirements of the audiometric testing program (as required by 29 CFR 1910.95(g))?** No. The hearing screening performed as part of a student's initial physical examination (required by PRH 6.10 R1) does not meet the required audiometric testing for those students included in the center's hearing conservation program. The hearing screening may be used to fulfill the required baseline audiogram required as part of the hearing conservation program only if it is performed within 6 months of the student's first exposure to noise at or above the action level, and the testing environment and audiometric equipment meet the minimum requirements set forth in 29

CFR 1910.95 Appendices C, D, and E. Students and staff included in the center's hearing conservation program must be administered a baseline audiogram within 6 months of first exposure at or above the action level (e.g., TWA of 85 dB or a dose of 50 percent); a valid baseline audiogram is established so that subsequent audiograms can be compared. For each person included in the hearing conservation program, a new audiogram must be performed at least annually.

- 4. Is it necessary for centers to purchase audiometric testing equipment to comply with PRH 6.10 or 29 CFR 1910.95?** No. The PRH does not state or imply that centers are required to purchase audiometric testing equipment. However, the center must ensure that the hearing screening is conducted according to PRH 6.10 and that audiometric testing is conducted according to 29 CFR 1910.95, if the student or staff is included in the center's hearing conservation program.
- 5. Our center has purchased equipment to perform audiograms. Must the person who administers audiograms be certified to use this equipment?** Yes. The OSHA hearing conservation standard requires that audiometric tests be performed by a licensed or certified audiologist, otolaryngologist, or other physician, or by a technician who is certified by the Council of Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation, or who has satisfactorily demonstrated competence in administering audiometric examinations, obtaining valid audiograms, and properly using, maintaining and checking calibration and proper functioning of the audiometers being used. A technician who operates microprocessor audiometers does not need to be certified. A technician who performs audiometric tests must be responsible to an audiologist, otolaryngologist or physician. (Refer to 29 CFR 1910.95(g)(3))
- 6. Equipment used to perform hearing screenings or audiograms does not meet the requirements detailed in 29 CFR 1910.95(h) and Appendix C; is the center required to purchase new equipment?** No. However, the center is required to ensure that those individuals included in the hearing conservation program are administered audiograms in accordance with the standard.
- 7. Who is responsible for performing the baseline audiogram as part of the hearing conservation program?** PRH Chapter 6, Exhibit 6-4 Section A, Job Corps Basic Health Care Responsibilities, lists vision and hearing screenings as basic health care requirements. The PRH does not specify requirements for the equipment used or the testing environment. If a center intends to use the hearing screening performed during the student's initial physical examination to meet the baseline audiogram requirement as part of the hearing conservation program, the testing environment and audiometric equipment must meet the minimum requirements set forth in 29 CFR 1910.95 Appendices C, D, and E. If the minimum testing and equipment requirements cannot be met, the center should arrange to have the baseline audiogram and all subsequent audiometric testing performed by a mobile testing van or other off-center testing facility.
- 8. What if our center is located in a rural area and are unable to identify a facility certified to conduct required testing?** Audiometric testing is a required component of

the hearing conservation program. As such, students and staff included in the center's hearing conservation program must be tested according to the standard. If the center is having difficulty identifying a facility that can provide audiometric testing, please contact the Job Corps Regional Office project manager who will contact the National Office safety representative.