
Audiologists

Significant Points

- About 64 percent worked in health care facilities; many others were employed by educational services.
- All States regulate licensure of audiologists; requirements vary by State.
- A master's degree in audiology (hearing) is the standard level of education required; however, a doctoral degree is becoming more common for new entrants.
- Job prospects will be favorable for those possessing the doctoral (Au.D.) degree.

Nature of the Work

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.

Work environment. 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.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

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.

Education and training. Individuals pursuing a career will need to earn a doctoral degree. 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 treat-



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Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2008	Projected Employment, 2018	Change, 2008-2018	
				Number	Percent
Audiologists	29-1121	12,800	16,000	3,200	25

(NOTE) Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

ment; diagnosis and treatment; pharmacology; and ethics. Graduate curriculums also include supervised clinical practicum and externships.

Licensure and certification. Audiologists are regulated by licensure in all 50 States. Eighteen of those States require a doctoral degree for licensure. 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.

Other qualifications. Audiologists should be able to effectively communicate diagnostic test results, diagnoses, and proposed treatments in a manner easily understood by their patients. They must be able to approach problems objectively and provide support to patients and their families. Because a patient's progress may be slow, patience, compassion, and good listening skills are necessary.

It is important for audiologists to be aware of new diagnostic and treatment technologies. Most audiologists participate in continuing education courses to learn new methods and technologies.

Advancement. With experience, audiologists can advance to open their own private practice. Audiologists working in hospitals and clinics can advance to management or supervisory positions.

Employment

Audiologists held about 12,800 jobs in 2008. About 64 percent of all jobs were in healthcare facilities—offices of physicians or other health practitioners, including audiologists; hospitals; and outpatient care centers. About 14 percent of jobs were in educational services. Other jobs for audiologists were in health and personal care stores and in State and local governments.

Job Outlook

Much faster than average employment growth is projected. However, because of the small size of the occupation, few job openings are expected. Job prospects will be favorable for those possessing the Au.D. degree.

Employment change. 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.

Job prospects. Job prospects will be favorable for those possessing the Au.D. degree. Only a few job openings for audiologists will arise from the need to replace those who leave the occupation, because the occupation is relatively small and workers tend to stay in this occupation until they retire. Demand may be greater in areas with large numbers of retirees, so audiologists who are willing to relocate may have the best job prospects.

Earnings

Median annual wages of audiologists were \$62,030 in May 2008. The middle 50 percent earned between \$50,470 and \$78,380. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$40,360, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$98,880. Some employers may pay for continuing education courses. About 15 percent of audiologists were union members or covered under union contracts in 2008.

Related Occupations

Audiologists specialize in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of hearing problems. Workers who treat other problems related to physical or mental health include:

- Occupational therapists
- Optometrists
- Physical therapists
- Psychologists
- Speech-language pathologists

Sources of Additional Information

State licensing boards can provide information on licensure requirements. State departments of education can supply information on certification requirements for those who wish to work in public schools.

For information on the specific requirements of your State, contact that State's licensing board. Career information, a description of the CCC-A credential, and information on State licensure is available from:

➤ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association,
2200 Research Blvd., Rockville, MD 20850. Internet:
<http://www.asha.org>

For information on the Au.D. degree, contact:

➤ Audiology Foundation of America, 8 N. 3rd St., Suite 301,
Lafayette, IN 47901. Internet: **<http://www.audfound.org>**

The Occupational Information Network (O*NET) provides information on a wide range of occupational characteristics. Links to O*NET appear at the end of the Internet version of this occupational statement, accessible at **<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/ocos085.htm>**