Hearing Loss Association of America
Wisconsin State Association

Support for Legislation Regarding Telecoil Enabled Hearing Devices

America's Hearing Land
LOOP WISCONSIN

REQUIRING STATE-LICENSED AUDIOLOGISTS AND HEARING INSTRUMENT SPECIALISTS TO INFORM THEIR CONSUMERS ABOUT TELECOIL TECHNOLOGY FEATURES, BENEFITS AND USE.

A telecoil is a highly valuable feature built into all cochlear implants and an estimated 71% of hearing aids sold in the United States.1 When coupled with ADA mandated assistive listening systems (ALS), like Hearing Loops, telecoil enabled hearing devices dramatically reduce background room noise and deliver clear, pure sound directly to the user's hearing device. In this way, **telecoils greatly improve a user's ability to hear clearly and understand dialogue in large and/or noisy environments** like civic gatherings, work, emergency rooms, information counters, transportation hubs, and in meetings, classrooms, theaters, and places of worship.

Because of the proven telecoil benefits, five states have enacted consumer protection statues/legislation requiring audiologist to inform, educate and demonstrate telecoil features to consumers — we are asking Wisconsin State to do the same.

THE NEED

About 500,000 Wisconsin State residents have diagnosed hearing loss and that number is rising.2 The aging Baby Boomer generation is increasing age-related hearing loss exponentially, and hearing loss among children and teens has increased 30 percent in the last decade.3 As these trends continue, **telecoil technology has the potential to benefit more people – but only if consumers are made aware of the technology and its benefits**

THE PROBLEM

Wisconsin State consumers are not being told about the features, benefits and proper use of telecoil enabled hearing devices, even when purchasing devices that are telecoil enabled. As a result, hundreds of thousands of citizens are being denied access to the accommodations they need in public venues where hearing aid compatible assistive listening systems are required to be installed.

THE ACTION REQUIRED

Our state legislature needs to **develop and pass consumer protection legislation** or licensing requirements mandating and enabling, state-licensed audiologists and hearing instrument specialists **to verify,**

1. Clients have been informed about telecoil technology benefits, including enhanced audio from telephones and public ADA mandated assistive listening systems (ALS).
2. Clients purchasing a telecoil enabled hearing device have been educated in its proper use, and have experienced a demonstration including assistive listening devices and systems.
3. Clients are made aware of the universal symbol indicating availability of telecoil compatible assistive listening systems like hearing loops.

ALS provide to people with hearing loss what wheelchair ramps provide to people with mobility issues: **ACCESS.**

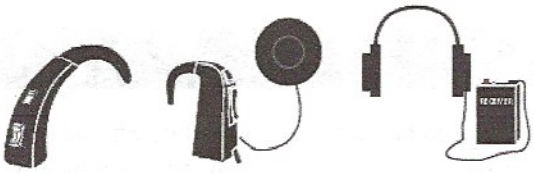
The Telecoil: Tiny Technology , Big Benefits

For people with hearing aids, cochlear implants, or personal amplification devices, telecoils are the essential feature necessary to utilize ADA mandated public assistive listening systems (ALS).

How do Telecoils Work With Public Assistive Listening Systems (ALS)?

Every assistive listening system has three primary components:

1. A microphone to capture the sound
2. A transmitter or loop amplifier to send the sound
3. A receiver to receive the sound:



Hearing Loops use an induction wire to transmit amplified sound via an electromagnetic signal that is picked up directly by telecoils in hearing aids and cochlear implants. To use a hearing loop, one simply flips the t-switch on their hearing device — **no additional receiver or equipment is needed.** Venues can provide telecoil enabled headsets/receivers for people with hearing loss who don't have telecoil equipped devices. Hearing Loops are also known as Induction Loops (ILs); the wire surrounds or 'loops' the room.

Infrared systems use invisible light beams to transmit amplified sound to a special IR receiver and headset or neck loop, Venue staff must dispense, retrieve and maintain IR equipment which is borrowed by individuals with telecoil enabled hearing aids or cochlear implants. Those who do not own prescriptive hearing devices also check out an earpiece receiver.

FM Frequency Modulated systems use radio waves to transmit amplified sound to special FM receivers. Similar to IR systems, FM receivers are borrowed with either a headset or a neck loop.

All three systems work with telecoil enabled hearing devices and can be used by most everyone, provided the appropriate secondary pieces are available when needed. Secondary pieces may include ear buds and headsets or neck loops and ear hooks.

This universal symbol indicates a Hearing Loop is available.

Why are consumers NOT being told about telecoils?

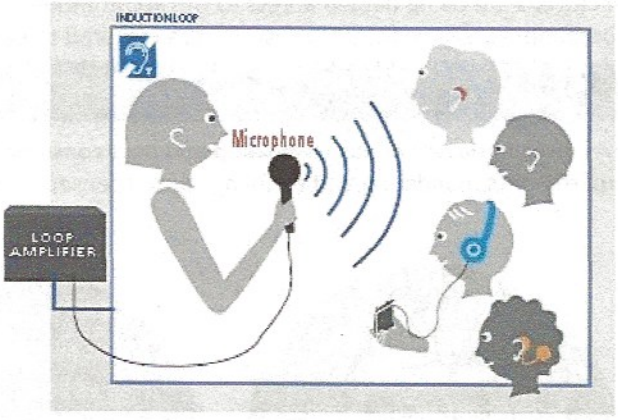
Hearing aid manufacturers promote proprietary solutions which do not work with publicly available assistive listening systems.

Audiologists and hearing aid specialists are not incentivized to spend time explaining the features, benefits and proper use of telecoil enabled hearing aids and cochlear implants.

As a result, many patients choose a hearing aid without a telecoil, or the existing telecoil is not activated, or the patient does not know how and when to use their telecoil.

What is the impact on consumers with hearing loss?

The inability to clearly hear and understand dialog in large and/or noisy environments leads to difficulty in school, reduced and underemployment, and potentially dangerous misunderstandings—such as not understanding emergency instructions, legal proceedings or travel directions.



For both providers and users, Hearing Loops have become the preferred ALS in Scandinavia and the United Kingdom, and are becoming increasingly prevalent in the United States.

Sources: 1 Consumer's Guide to Hearing Aids, 20, 2 WI DHS ODHH website 3 Starkey Hearing Foundation