

# Audiology Assistant Training Guide



## Audiology Assistant Training Guide

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## WELCOME

### A NOTE FROM DR. KINGHAM

As the field of Audiology has transitioned to a doctoring profession and patients have expanded access to the exceptional hearing healthcare that audiologists provide, the need for support staff has increased. I believe that the Audiology Assistant is an integral part of the Hearing Healthcare team. With a well-rounded educational background, the Audiology Assistant will improve the efficiency of the clinic and increase overall productivity of the practice.

I hope that you will find the following training guide helpful in training your Audiology Assistant. Using this Guide, the Audiology Assistant Protocol and the essential documents that were developed to help you communicate well with your Audiology Assistant along with the hands-on supplemental training you yourself provide, I believe you will have every confidence in your Audiology Assistant's knowledge and skills in the art of patient care in just 15 short weeks.

To the Audiology Assistant: Congratulations! And welcome to your new journey. Patient care is one of the most exciting and rewarding careers and I know that you will find the role of the Audiology Assistant both challenging and gratifying. Over the next few weeks, you will learn more material than you thought possible. It will be challenging at times but gratifying when you finally begin to interact with patients with confidence in your new-found skills. I wish you the best of luck in your endeavors.

To your success, your training partner,

Nichole Kingham, Au.D.

Clinical Audiologist

# Audiology Assistant Training Guide



Dr. Kingham is the Past President of the Washington Academy of Audiology, and was 1 of 12 audiologists chosen as a James Jerger Future Leader of Audiology in 2012 by the American Academy of Audiology.

Dr. Kingham has a passion for helping her colleagues become successful, whatever the definition of success is for them. She has extensive experience in practice development, protocol development, efficiency improvement, marketing strategies and staff training. She developed the Audiology Assistant training program that is utilized in many clinics around the US and is sought after to speak about practice growth strategies and how to successfully incorporate audiology assistants into a busy practice.

Dr. Kingham earned her Clinical Doctorate in Audiology from the Arizona School of Health Sciences, A.T. Still University, having previously been awarded a Masters degree in Audiology from the University of Washington.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

### GUIDELINES

This training guide has been written for a training context in which the guide will be the main delivery source for the educational experience. However, the guide is not intended to be used as a self-guided learning experience without the directed mentorship of an experienced audiologist or hearing instrument specialist. Instead, this training guide should be used as a guideline for hands-on training.

### WEEKLY MODULES

The Audiology Assistant Training Guide is divided into 14 weeks of training and a final fifteenth week of review and goal setting. Each Module includes the Audiology Assistant weekly Training Module and Homework. There is also a weekly quiz that can be used by the Supervisor to determine if the Audiology Assistant is understanding and retaining the covered material. A Supervisor's Planning Guide to supplement and prepare for each week of the training process is available separately.

### WORKSHEETS AND ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Many of the Modules discuss a worksheet or Word document that we consider useful for communication between the Audiology Assistant and the Provider. These documents are not required, but are available for download separately. Please see the Appendix for a description. The documents can be formatted with your clinic logo or re-written to meet your specific clinic needs. However, we ask that you not distribute, disseminate, publish or circulate these documents and worksheets to others outside of your clinic without express written permission by the Hearing & Balance Lab, P.C. Or, similar documents can be fashioned on your own using your own clinic protocols.

# Audiology Assistant Training Guide

## MODULE ONE

### WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

We will begin with a discussion of why a 14 week commitment is necessary and what you will gain by working to increase your knowledge with a methodical, well-planned step-by-step process.

We believe you will finish your training with the knowledge and skills necessary to be an autonomous Audiology Assistant who works with confidence and excellent decision making skills. Our goal is to make you one of the most important assets in your clinic. We'll also discuss what you can expect from this guide and what your direct Supervisor will expect from you.

But first, you have to have a clear understanding of what an Audiology Assistant is and what you can and cannot do. You must also understand patient care in the audiology clinic. Lastly, we'll discuss your homework for the week and we'll end with the first of your weekly quizzes.

### AGENDA

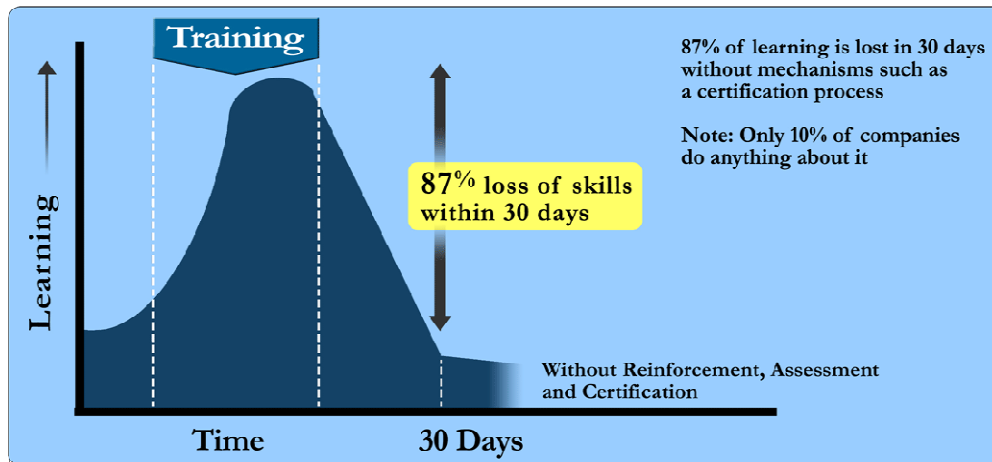
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- 1.2 Training vs. Certification
- 1.3 Understanding Your Role
- 1.4 Definition of an Audiology Assistant
- 1.5 What an Audiology Assistant Can't Do
- 1.6 Homework
- 1.7 Quiz

### LET EXPERIENCE BE YOUR TEACHER

It really takes about 6 months to be functioning on a completely independent basis in the clinic as an Audiology Assistant. Having a strong foundation is key. This 14-week course will focus on the back office duties that are necessary for the efficiency of the clinic, as well as increasing your knowledge of Audiology, patient care and general customer service skills. To perform your job well, you will need a strong understanding of hearing aids and hearing aid programming as well as the diagnostic testing that is at Audiology's core. Having an understanding of the anatomy and physiology of the ear as well as why certain tests are necessary is not optional, in my opinion. If you don't understand the tests performed by the audiologists and why they are performed, you won't truly be able to offer comprehensive care to your patients. This is the true difference between a technician and an assistant.

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## TRAINING VS. CERTIFICATION



Here's a great graph on short-term training versus a weekly focused and assessed training. This is one of the main reasons we believe a long-term program along with in-clinic training is vital to your long-term success.

What this graph indicates is that 87% of the skills you learn at a one-time training is *LOST* within 30 days. If you don't have any reinforcement of new information or assessment of the skills you've learned, research says you will not retain that information. Only 10% of the companies that find out about this do anything about it. So, I applaud your company for taking the first step to try to make your job easier by giving you some great tools that will help you be more successful, which helps increase revenue for the clinic and helps your patients get the hearing help they need.

The nice thing about this training is that it really is meant to augment the training you will be getting in the clinic. Experience is the best teacher. So, you're not going to need to take a lot of time out of your weekly schedule to study large amounts of material or read a lot of information. You're going to be busy in the clinic and you'll be constantly multi-tasking. That's most important. Expect to spend 30 to 45 minutes each week reviewing each module and completing the homework so that you'll know what to expect out of each week's training. And, there will also be a short quiz each week that will actually help you learn and retain the information that you will go over each week.

After the 14 weeks, you'll have a week to review the information you've learned and will then sit with your Supervisor to answer any questions you might have. You can then review any information that might be unclear or that needs to be explained again. Then, you'll create a 6 and 12-month plan to make sure that you are continually improving on your newfound skills.

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## UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROLE

Let's talk about the "official" definition of an Audiology Assistant. The role of an Audiology Assistant is dynamic. You'll find that each day is different from the next, even though the underlying tasks are the same. But, the definition of an Audiology Assistant is really very simple. Your job, at its core, is to assist in improving the efficiency of the clinic. You will work side-by-side with the audiologists in your clinic so that ultimately, they can see patients, which is what makes the clinic viable. But let's look a little deeper.

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*Someone who is trained to "perform routine tasks and duties" that are "prescribed, directed and supervised by an audiologist."*

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When we talk about a successful Audiology clinic, it is one that provides patient care that cannot be matched by our competitors. It is also a clinic that runs efficiently—patients with hearing loss do NOT want to wait for a repair if their hearing aids break down. They don't want to wait 2 weeks to get their new hearing aids. We live in an immediate gratification society and people with hearing loss are no different. To become more successful, we must provide faster, more efficient service, all while providing an unforgettable experience. We also have to be aware of what will keep our business growing well into the future. As an Audiology Assistant, you will be intimately involved with helping the clinic achieve its business goals.

Let's discuss business goals in terms of "3 R's." Successful businesses want to increase revenue, receive referrals and repeat business and make sure they have a good return on their investment. The goals of the Audiology Assistant should be the same. If the businesses goals were to change, then so would the goals of the Audiology Assistant.



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## THE THREE R'S

### RETENTION AND REACTIVATION

We want to make sure that we retain the patients we have or bring back patients who haven't been in to see us for a while. The Audiology Assistant is directly involved with that process by making sure patients come back into the office at least twice a year, by making appropriate recommendations for follow-up care and by assisting in marketing efforts to what we call the "goldmine" or established patient base, which are the charts you have on the wall—the patients who have already been in to the clinic who have experience with you and your clinic and the fantastic services you provide.

### REFERRALS

One of your roles is to help in creating Raving Fans. You can do that by offering support to the audiologists and other team members in your clinic so that you all can provide efficient but extraordinary service that exceeds your patient's expectations. Our hope is that patients receive such exceptional service each and every time that they are in to see you or one of your team members that they tell their friends and family...who tell their friends and family...and in that way, the success of the clinic is perpetuated.

### RETURN ON INVESTMENT

When you invest in something, you hope that you receive something in return. Sometimes that's the satisfaction of a job well done. By investing your time and efforts into this training, you will gain knowledge, confidence and a host of skills that will be helpful to those in your team. Hopefully, you will want to exceed your employers expectations and in doing so, they receive a return on the investment they have made in you.

So, now that we've discussed the role of the Audiology Assistant in general, let's summarize a little bit. We sat down with a group of very smart people to discuss what WE thought the role of the Audiology Assistant is and we came up with what we think is a succinct definition of the role of the Audiology Assistant and it is directly related to the 3 R's:



# Audiology Assistant Training Guide

## DEFINITION OF AN AUDIOLOGY ASSISTANT

### PRIMARY JOB FUNCTION:

To support the fiscal goals of the hearing clinic and the audiologist(s) whom he/she supports.

### POSITION SUMMARY:

As one of the main contacts for patients, be it by phone or in person, the Audiology Assistant is responsible for ensuring that every contact with the clinic is a positive one and that each experience helps in the differentiation of the clinic from other experiences the patient may have had with other similar businesses. He/she is responsible for identifying candidates for hearing tests and hearing aids and for recommending solutions to resolve hearing/hearing aid issues. The Audiology Assistant also supports the office staff in all marketing, operational, customer service and administrative functions.

## WHAT AN AUDIOLOGY ASSISTANT CAN'T DO

The Audiology Assistant is indispensable. In fact, as the Audiology Assistant, you will become intimately involved in nearly every aspect of the Audiology practice. Over the next 14 weeks, you will learn what an Audiology Assistant CAN do. So, let's spend a little bit of time discussing what an Audiology Assistant CANNOT do.

### PERFORM DIAGNOSTIC TESTING

It should be understood that performing diagnostic hearing and balance evaluations requires a degree in Audiology. No diagnostic test can be performed solely by an Audiology Assistant. However, an Audiology Assistant can assist the audiologist during a diagnostic test—such as assisting with a child during a hearing test. We'll discuss this subject in a future module.

### INTERPRET TEST FINDINGS

Audiology Assistants should not interpret test findings or relay test results to patients. Instead, refer the patient to the audiologist to discuss test results.

### PROVIDE COUNSELING

Audiology Assistants cannot counsel patients in terms of the cause of their hearing loss, the type or severity of the hearing loss, what to expect from the hearing loss long-term or regarding hearing aid technology. Although you will have the knowledge that may allow you to do so, the Department of Health in most states requires such conversations to be led by a licensed clinician.

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## SELECT OR RECOMMEND HEARING INSTRUMENTS

Very often, patients will see you as one of their main contacts at the clinic. They will trust you as a provider of hearing healthcare. Instances may arise where a patient asks your opinion on whether or not they need new hearing aids, what new technology is available or if they need new hearing aids. You will very likely know the answer to the patient's questions. However, you will need to involve the audiologist in such conversations. Talk with your Supervisor on the best way to handle such inquiries from your patients.

## MAKE REFERRALS FOR ADDITIONAL TESTING

There are some tests that you may provide to patients as a screening exam. For example, some clinics have Audiology Assistants run screening Otoacoustic Emissions or Tympanograms. When looking at the results, you may wish to suggest further testing. However, referrals for further testing are considered outside of the job description for an Audiology Assistant. Instead, if you feel that further testing would be appropriate, notify your Supervisor or another audiologist on your team and allow them to discuss the screening exam with the patient.

## MODIFY AN EARMOLD OR HEARING AID

Audiology Assistants work with hearing aids every day. You will clean, check and even program hearing aids. However, if anything that is done to the earmold or hearing aid affects or changes the output of the hearing aid at the eardrum from how it originally performed, it should be considered outside of the job description for an Audiology Assistant and will require an audiologist to assist in completion.

## MODULE 1 HOMEWORK

### **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT ONE:**

Do a Google search for the AAA Position Statement of the role of an Audiology Assistant in the Audiology Clinic. Read the position statement.

### **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT TWO:**

Review the End-of-Month Control Sheet with your Supervisor.

### **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT THREE:**

Review your job description with your Supervisor using the Essential Job Functions worksheet

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