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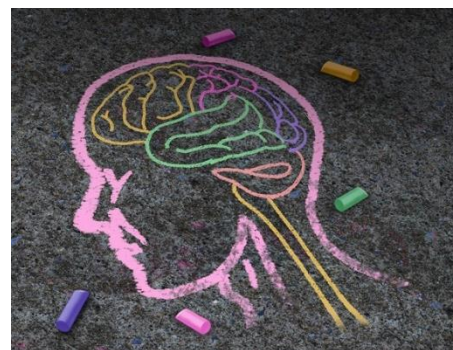
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February Wake Chapter Meeting

Help Shape Mental Health Crisis Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

On **Thursday, February 29**, the Hearing Loss Association of America Wake Chapter will present a program on a state project to develop mental health crisis services for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind individuals in North Carolina.

Meeting attendees will have the opportunity to assist in the development of these services by completing a survey on their needs in medical settings. This meeting will be in-person attendance only. Future meetings will include both in-person and Zoom attendance.



The meeting will take place at [Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church, 200 High Meadow Dr. in Cary](#), and begin at 7 p.m. Beverages and snacks will be available during and after the presentation. The church's Fellowship Hall is equipped with a hearing loop, which will provide telecoil-equipped hearing aid or cochlear implant users with an enhanced listening experience. Further accessibility will be provided through captioning and American Sign Language interpreters.

Consultant David Rosenthal will present on the project purpose and planned activities.

“For over 30 years, North Carolina has provided specialized behavioral health services directly to deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind individuals,” he says. “With the recent implementation of managed care in North Carolina for state-provided programs, these individuals may be ‘lost’ during the system transformation and this will negatively impact their ability to receive accessible services – particularly crisis services.”

Moving to the managed care model may result in some confusion for new service providers on their role and responsibility to ensure communication access using tools such as sign language interpreters and CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation).

More information on services for the deaf and hard of hearing – including crisis solutions – is offered through the [NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services](#).

In addition to this consultant role, David is the chair of the NC Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. He previously served as director of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division, Minnesota Department of Human Services.

[April Wake Chapter Meeting](#)

Appreciating Music Despite Hearing Loss – One of the most common frustrations expressed by hearing aid and cochlear implant users is that “music just doesn’t sound like it used to.” Taylor Sands, MED-EL Senior Consumer Engagement Manager, and a speech-language pathologist, will explore this issue and provide advice during our **Thursday, April 25**, hybrid chapter meeting. The meeting will take place at [Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church, 200 High Meadow Dr. in Cary](#), and begin at 7 p.m. It also will be available remotely via Zoom. The Zoom link will be distributed in an email a few days prior to the meeting. For participants in the church’s Fellowship Hall, beverages and snacks will be available during and after the presentation. The hall is equipped with a hearing loop, which will provide telecoil-equipped hearing aid or cochlear implant users with an enhanced listening experience. Captions will be provided for both the in-person and Zoom audiences.



[January Lunch Social: Overcoming Challenges](#)

More than 25 HLAA Wake Chapter members attended a lunch social at Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church in Cary on January 13. Thanks to the volunteers responsible for making the event a success and to the participants who shared the biggest challenges they have overcome during their hearing loss journeys.



[HLAA 2024 Convention](#)

Set aside June 26-29 on your calendar to attend the HLAA 2024 Convention at the Sheraton Grand Resort at Wild Horse Pass. As HLAA’s first-ever event at a resort rather than an urban hotel, this year’s convention in Phoenix promises to be a brand-new experience! This annual event is the largest of its kind, designed to support hundreds of people with hearing loss from all walks of life around the United States. Start planning your trip to the Valley of the Sun now! Early bird registration is now open online at hearingloss.org/convention.



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Tech Focus: BTEs, RICs, Receivers, Domes, and Earmolds

Hearing aids deliver amplified sound to your ear canal where it causes your eardrum to vibrate. The amplified sound is delivered by a “receiver.” Yes, that seems like the wrong name for the only thing in your hearing aid that actually makes the sounds, but nevertheless, it’s called a “receiver” in hearing aid terms. Behind the Ear (BTE) hearing aids have their receiver in the aid’s body, and it sends the amplified sounds to your ear canal down a hollow plastic tube to an earmold or dome. Other aids are called “Receiver In the Canal (RIC) aids and are not called BTE aids, despite being behind the ear. In RIC aids, the receiver is in the ear canal.

RIC hearing aids are the most common aids today. They deliver the sound, not as actual sound through a tube to your ear canal but as an electrical signal via a thin wire in a plastic covering. The receiver in your ear canal then transforms that signal to physical sound waves. With a RIC hearing aid, the receiver is held in place by either a “dome” or a custom earmold.

Domes and custom earmolds come in many different shapes and forms. Here are a few examples, but you can see lots of examples of them at these links:

- [Domes](#)
- [Custom Earmolds](#)



The main purposes of either domes or custom earmolds are to secure the tube in the canal, deliver the amplified sound so it can be directed at the eardrum, and to prevent too much amplified sound from leaking out of the ear canal. Where possible, it’s usually a good idea to let a little sound get by the dome or custom earmold. If the canal is too airtight, your hearing aid may sound like you are in a drum. But you don’t want too much amplified sound to leak out of the ear canal either around the edges of the dome or earmold, or through an intentional opening in the dome or earmold. For domes, the holes determine how “open” it is. For earmolds, the hole is called a “vent.” Either way, if leaked sound can get back to the aid’s microphones and be amplified ... again and again ... feedback or whistling is the result.

Your audiologist or hearing aid specialist can choose the dome that is best for your loss. The important thing is that the dome should securely keep the tube or wire correctly positioned in your ear canal and not allow so much openness that you experience feedback. Many people do well with domes ... especially people who have mild to moderate losses. But many people have difficulty with either comfort, security, or openness of a dome. In these cases, a custom earmold may solve those problems.

To make a custom earmold, your audiologist or hearing aid specialist will squirt some soft plastic-like material into your ear and canal to make an impression of your exact shape. Some may, instead, use a scanner to digitally take a 3D image of your ear and ear canal. They send that physical or digital impression to a manufacturing facility that creates the earmold. Custom earmolds are made to precisely fit your ear canal. They are more likely to be comfortable and to fit well. Custom earmolds can be made in different materials, some hard, some soft. Many people like the ability to have earmolds in different colors to make their aids distinctive. Well-made custom ear molds may better focus the amplified sound directly on your eardrum, and they can also provide a better delivery of the sound by a special shaping of the bore (the hole that delivers the sound to your eardrum). Making the perfect earmold is as much an art as a skill. Often the audiologist may need to adjust the fit, or even have a second or third one made. Of course, custom earmolds are more expensive than domes. There are many different styles and colors you can choose from, and your audiologist or hearing aid specialist will choose an appropriate “vent” (a hole through the mold) that determines how “open” your mold is. Custom earmolds can be used for either standard (non-RIC) aids or for RIC aids. With RIC aids that use an earmold, the receiver is molded right into the custom earmold.

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[Please Promote the Wake Chapter Scholarship Program](#)

Do you know a Wake County high school senior with hearing loss who plans to pursue further education?

Let them know about the Hearing Loss Association of America Wake Chapter Scholarship Program.

Applications for the 2024 program are available from the [HLAA Wake Chapter website](#) or the links below. Submissions will be accepted through March, and recipients will be announced in May. The chapter has awarded scholarships to 10 students since the program began in 2020.

- [Application form](#)
- [Reference form](#)

Applicants must reside in Wake County and be seeking acceptance at an accredited university, college, community college or trade school. They also must have a moderate hearing loss or more and wear a hearing aid or cochlear implant. Financial need is not a consideration. The \$500 scholarship is a one-time award and will be sent to the recipient when s/he begins classes.

The HLAA Wake Chapter scholarship program is made possible by the generous support of participants in the North Carolina Walk4Hearing, a hearing health awareness and fundraising event.

[Over The Counter \(OTC\) Hearing Aids Webinar](#)

HLAA is presenting a series of four webinars on this topic, underwritten by a grant from the Consumer Technology Association Foundation. The second webinar in the [OTC 101: Ask the Experts Webinar Series](#) on February 20 will feature medical and hearing loss experts from AARP and the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), National Institutes of Health (NIH), answering questions about OTC hearing aids.

[Register for OTC 101: Ask the Experts Webinar #2](#)
February 20, 2024, 2–3 p.m. ET

[Connect with the Wake Chapter Facebook Group](#)

Wake Chapter has a Facebook page where members can post or share interesting information about hearing loss or about our chapter. It's a great place to stay connected with timely information between newsletters. You can join at [This Link](#). If you're already a member of our Wake Facebook group, that link will take you to the page.



HLAA Wake Chapter

Public group · 68 members

[MED-EL Hearing Health Seminar*](#)

On February 26, MED-EL, one of three cochlear implant manufacturers, will host a Hearing Health Seminar in collaboration with Duke's hearing implant team. The program will be led by Duke professionals, MED-EL team members and HearPeer mentors. There will be a comprehensive presentation on how implants work, updated candidacy, expectations, understanding the importance of rehabilitation, and specific information about MED-EL. HearPeer mentors will then share their personal experiences and field questions from attendees. If you are interested in this cochlear implant related seminar, use [this flyer](#) to register.

*Although HLAA does not endorse any hearing loss product, manufacturer, supplier, or vendor, HLAA Wake Chapter does provide information about opportunities they announce that might be of interest to our members.

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[HLAA Changes Membership Criteria](#)

Hearing Loss Association of America membership is now simpler and includes all our valued supporters. **If you make any type of gift to HLAA you will be an HLAA member.**

This change in membership was announced February 8 in a [letter from Executive Director Barbara Kelley to HLAA members and donors](#).

"Thank you for believing that the work we do is worthwhile – whether it's in public policy, our programs, belonging to an HLAA Chapter, or being part of our nationwide community of support," said Kelley. "You help HLAA empower people with hearing loss across the country."

Prior to the announcement, an HLAA annual regular individual membership cost \$45.

Anyone expressing interest in the HLAA Wake Chapter by attending meetings or events or requesting inclusion on the chapter's mailing list is considered a local chapter member. Wake Chapter does not charge dues, but we encourage chapter members to join the national organization.

Learn more about this change on the HLAA website [Membership page](#).

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