



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

REHABILITATION APPLIANCES PROGRAM (RAP)

National Guideline

for

Personal Response Systems (PRS)

(RAP Schedule Nos AA03 & AA05)

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Introduction

The RAP Guidelines

The RAP Guidelines have been prepared to assist Departmental delegates when determining approval for RAP items and to inform prescribers and suppliers.

Legislative basis

In accordance with the Treatment Principles, which are prepared by the Repatriation Commission under Section 90 of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*, the Department can supply treatment aids for eligible persons.

The aim of the RAP

The aim of the Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP) is to achieve and maintain functional independence and/or minimise disability as part of the provision of health care to entitled persons. RAP provides appliances for self-help and rehabilitation purposes, for exclusive personal home use.

The Program provides equipment:

- (a) according to assessed clinical need;
- (b) in an efficient manner of delivery;
- (c) towards meeting health care objectives;
- (d) in a cost effective manner; and
- (e) on a timely basis.

The equipment provided through the Program should be:

- (a) appropriate for its purpose;
- (b) safe for the particular entitled person;
- (c) part of the overall management of health care for the entitled person; and
- (d) specifically designed for persons with an illness or disability, and is not widely used by persons without an illness or disability.

Definition of a personal response system (PRS)

Personal Response Systems (PRS) allow entitled persons to seek assistance quickly in an emergency.

Personal Response Systems may also be referred to as Emergency Alarm Systems (EAS) or Personal Emergency Alarm Systems (PEAS).

There are two categories of Personal Response Systems:

- **Monitored personal response systems** are systems, which involve installation and are monitored by an emergency alarm service. Generally the user wears a pendant or wrist device to activate the system.
- **Non-monitored alarm systems** are devices which, when activated, make a loud noise and/or flashing light to alert persons nearby or ring in a nearby residence (usually within a radius of approximately 60 to 80 metres).

Australian standards

Monitored alarms should meet Australian Standard 4607–1999 or latest revision.

There are no Australian Standards for non-monitored alarms. If Australian Standards are developed, compliance is required.

Types of equipment provided

Auto-dialler	An auto-dialler is a type of non-monitored alarm which, when activated by pushing a pendant, dials up to six pre-set phone numbers. On being answered the device indicates assistance is required. Such a device might be sufficient where an entitled person does not live alone but whose carer goes out for a few hours at a time and carries a mobile phone, or the entitled person has other suitable contacts close by who are able to respond in case of an emergency.
Sound monitor	A sound monitor is a portable listening device that picks up the sound from one room, using a receiver, and transmits it to a receiver either in another room or carried by the carer, either within the home or in the immediate proximity (eg. baby monitors).
Alarm pendant	An alarm pendant is a lightweight portable button worn around the neck which, when pressed, activates a monitored or non-monitored alarm.
Wrist alarm	A wrist alarm is a lightweight portable button worn around the wrist which, when pressed, activates a monitored or non-monitored alarm.
Mode 5 or 3 sockets	Mode 5 or 3 sockets are specialised phone connection sockets that allow the alarm to bypass an engaged phone line. These devices are recommended in cases where more than one phone set operates on a line, eg. phone extensions.
What is NOT funded by RAP	
Mobile phone	A mobile phone is a phone connected to mobile phone net services from which calls can be made and received anywhere within the mobile net range. This item is not funded under the RAP.
Buzzer	A buzzer is a fixed button (usually on wall near the bed or in the bathroom) which, when pressed, activates a monitored or non-monitored alarm system. This is not funded under the RAP.
Wall phone	A wall phone is a phone set that is mounted on the wall. These sets are not usually compatible with monitored alarm systems. This item is not funded by RAP.
Intercom	An intercom is a device that can be used between two rooms or nearby premises (eg. garden flat), and which gives the entitled person some ability to speak to a carer. This item is not funded under the RAP.

Prior to recommending a personal response system

Issues to consider

The following issues must be addressed before approving a Personal Response System:

- eligibility;
- clinical criteria;
- functional criteria; and
- social criteria.

Eligibility

Where the entitled person is the holder of a Repatriation Health Card—For All Conditions (Gold Card), there must be an assessed clinical need for the appliance.

Holders of a Repatriation Health Card—For Specific Conditions (White Card) must have an assessed clinical need for the appliance due to a war caused injury/disease and/or as specified under Treatment Principle 2.4.

RACF residents and CACP recipients

The Department does not supply personal response systems to entitled persons who are residents receiving **high-** or **low-level** care in a Residential Aged Care (RACF) as the RACF is responsible for providing these.

Entitled persons receiving Community Aged Care Packages (CACP) **may** be eligible for provision of a PRS appliance if clinical and functional criteria are met

Assessment

The clinical **assessment** and **report** for personal response systems must be provided by an occupational therapist, on referral from Local Medical Officer. Where no occupational therapist is available, special arrangements for assessment may be made after consultation with DVA. In some States specialist Aged Care Assessment Teams/Services may provide suitable assessors. This should be discussed with the relevant DVA State Office.

All measures to reduce the risk of falls should be investigated; eg. any need for mobility equipment or home modifications.

Clinical criteria

The entitled person *should* meet one or more of the following clinical criteria prior to the approval of a personal response system:

Either

- The entitled person has a significant risk of medical emergencies. The entitled person ought to have a medical condition that requires immediate and urgent response and be unlikely to be able to obtain assistance through conventional means, eg. poorly controlled diabetes or epilepsy. *The assessor should contact the entitled person's Local Medical Officer to obtain information on their medical status relevant to the request.*

or

- The entitled person has a recent history (within the past 12 months) of falls. The falls should have been investigated and the cause of the falls eliminated where possible. Therefore personal response systems should only be considered if there is a continued risk of falls.

or

- The entitled person displays a number of factors that would put them at high risk of a fall. Risk factors include severe visual impairment, severe mobility and balance problems, severe incontinence, and medical conditions which affect balance and mobility (such as Parkinson's or Meniere's Disease).

Functional criteria

The entitled person should meet **all** the functional criteria listed below prior to the approval of a Personal Response System.

The entitled person should have:

- sufficient physical function to operate the alarm; **and**
- sufficient cognitive function to wear and to operate the alarm; **and**
- a willingness to wear the alarm device 24 hours a day; **and**
- a willingness to activate the system if necessary.

Social criteria

The entitled person should meet **one** of the following social criteria prior to the approval of a personal response system:

The entitled person **either**:

- lives alone; **or**
- does not live alone but is without assistance for a significant proportion of the day or night; **or**
- does not live alone, but their carer is unable to provide or obtain assistance (eg due to significant hearing impairment, dementia or mobility problems).

Reasons for not issuing equipment

Monitored alarms will **not normally be supplied** in any of the following situations:

- Where options other than monitored alarm systems would provide the entitled person with the ability to summon assistance when required. Options may include additional phone extensions, purchase of cordless phone, increased supervision, non-monitored alarms. (**Note:** DVA does not normally fund phone extensions or cordless phones under the RAP).
- Where an entitled person has impaired cognitive status such as poor memory (may forget to wear pendant), poor insight (may not see the need to wear pendant), or confusion (may not understand how to activate the pendant or be disturbed by voices from the system). Where there is some doubt as to an entitled person's ability to operate an alarm, a trial and re-assessment should be carried out.
- Where an entitled person has impaired mobility, resulting in increased falls, and has not had his/her mobility equipment requirements assessed by an appropriate health professional. Mobility equipment may be the

most appropriate item to reduce falls and this may eliminate the need for an alarm system.

- Where an entitled person is unsafe left alone and in-home respite options are more suitable.
- As a security device against intruders to persons who feel vulnerable living alone.

Consideration of alternatives

Introduction

This section provides details about non-monitored personal response system that should be considered prior to recommending a monitored personal response system.

Non-monitored PRS

Recommendation of a non-monitored PRS should be considered where the clinical and functional criteria for a monitored PRS are met but where the entitled person lives in a partly separate residence, eg. self-contained living quarters such as garden flat and there is someone able to respond to the alarm.

Intercom systems

Generally, intercom systems require the entitled person to press a fixed wall mounted button in order to speak and be heard. While such a system is valuable for general communication between two partly separated residences, its use as an emergency alarm device is restricted. Therefore supply of a non-monitored alarm with pendant or wrist activating device should be considered in the first instance. **This item is not available under the RAP.**

Sound monitors

Supply of sound monitors should only be considered in cases where:

- the entitled person has a medical condition which would prevent them from pressing a button or calling out to a carer in another room; *and*
- the entitled person's sounds of distress could be heard over the monitor by a carer in another room; *and*
- The carer and entitled person keep the monitor turned on.

Mobile and portable/cordless phones

These items are not available under the RAP.

Inclusive costs

Where the Department has accepted financial responsibility for the supply of a PRS this will normally include costs associated with:

- installation of the PRS unit (including required mode 3 or 5 socket connections and power point if required);
- monitoring of the PRS;
- service maintenance for normal wear and tear for PRSs purchased by DVA. (Where units are rented this cost will be the responsibility of the supplier.)

Temporary supply

Where indicated, short-term supply of a personal response system may be considered. This may not be viable for periods of less than one month.

Excluded costs

DVA is not responsible for costs associated with:

- installation of or adjustment to a telephone or telephone line;
- increase in telephone charges;
- key boxes;
- wilful misuse of the equipment.
- additional pendants.

When approval has been determined

Notification

When the Department has approved the issue of the equipment, notification is sent to:

- the entitled person, including a list of his/her responsibilities;
- the prescriber; and
- the supplier.

Notification to the LMO

The notification to the LMO should inform her/him of supply of the appliance. The advice should request the LMO to inform the Department of any changes in the entitled person's condition, which would affect his or her ability to use the appliance.

Notification to the entitled person

The notification to the entitled person should include full details of the entitled person's responsibilities as listed in these guidelines and advice on:

- how to contact the supplier;
- selection of suitable contact persons;
- basis of supply e.g. permanent, trial or temporary;
- appropriate methods of accessing maintenance and repair;
- wearing the activation device 24 hours a day;
- the Department's right to withdraw the appliance at any time if it is used in an inappropriate manner.
- return of the appliance.

Notification to prescriber

Where indicated a 3–6 month trial of a PRS or temporary issue may be approved, followed by a re-assessment.

The entitled person's responsibilities

Repair and maintenance

The entitled person/carer should notify the alarm supplier if the alarm is not in working order. Subject to prior approval where the Department owns the alarm system, the entitled person/carer should arrange repair through the alarm supplier. In some areas, where equipment is hired, local arrangements may be made for repair or replacement at the supplier's cost without reference to DVA. The entitled person/carer must not undertake any repairs. Replacement of a PRS appliance will be at the discretion of the Department.

Safe usage

The entitled person must use the appliance in a safe manner, and only in the manner for which it was designed, eg. waterproof pendants can only be used in showers and should *not* be immersed in a bath.

Change(s) in circumstances

The entitled person or carer should notify the Department of any change in circumstances that would impact on the supply or use of the appliance. eg. change in living circumstances, phone being disconnected etc.

Return of appliance

Where the PRS is no longer deemed necessary or is unable to be used by the entitled person, it must be returned as directed by the Department

Supplier Responsibilities

Labelling of the unit

The supplier must affix a label to the PRS unit with the company name and contact details.

Maintenance

The supplier is responsible for maintaining the unit and activating device in working order, including replacement of batteries.

Test calls

The supplier is responsible for conducting regular unit checks to ensure that the PRS is working.

Response

The supplier must provide immediate response to an activated system.

The response should be commensurate with the need, ie. establishing voice contact, phoning designated contact persons, contacting emergency services (ambulance, police) where necessary.

Notification

The supplier must notify the Department upon becoming aware of any circumstances that affect the use of the alarm, eg. if the phone is disconnected. The supplier must also notify the Department upon becoming aware of either inappropriate usage or consistent variation in the agreed usage of the alarm

Reporting

The supplier must provide the Department with appropriate reports on monitoring information including records of utilisation and test calls, and any other information consistent with National Standards for reporting.

Confidentiality

The supplier must ensure that personal client details are kept confidential and updated regularly.