With respect to hearing aid dealers, existing law (R.S. 37:2442(6)) defines "unethical conduct" by listing the specific activities that qualify as unethical behavior.

New law modifies existing law by specifying that the list of "unethical conduct" is illustrative and not exhaustive.

New law (R.S. 37:2444.1(A)) requires a licensed hearing aid dealer who sells a hearing aid to a consumer to provide a written receipt or written contract to the consumer. Also, requires that the written receipt or contract contain a notification to the consumer that he has a 30-day right to cancel the purchase if he finds that the hearing aid does not function adequately. Also, allows the consumer to obtain a refund if he returns the hearing aid to the seller in the same condition, ordinary wear and tear excluded, as when purchased. Specifies that the written receipt or contract notifying the consumer of the 30-day right to cancel the transaction must be in at least 10 point type. Provides that the 30-day right to cancel period commences from either the date the hearing aid is originally delivered to the consumer or the date the written receipt or contract is delivered to the consumer, whichever is later. Also, specifies that the 30-day period is interrupted for any period during which the hearing aid seller, dealer, or fitter has possession or control of the hearing aid after its original delivery.

New law (R.S. 37:2444.1(B)) provides that if a consumer exercises the 30-day right to cancel a hearing aid purchase, the seller of the hearing aid can access a cancellation fee not to exceed 15% of all fees charged to the consumer, including testing, fitting, counseling, and the purchase price of the hearing aid. Requires the exact amount of the cancellation fee to be stated in the written receipt or contract provided to the consumer.

New law (R.S. 37:2444.2(A)) authorizes a consumer to cancel any transaction for the purchase of a hearing aid, without any penalty or obligation, within three business days from the date the hearing aid is actually ordered by the consumer; however, if the transaction is cancelled, any property traded in for credit, any payments made by the consumer under the contract or sale, and any negotiable instrument executed thereupon must be returned by the seller to the consumer within 10 business days following receipt by the seller of the cancellation notice. Also, any security interest arising out of the transaction must be immediately canceled.

New law (R.S. 37:2444.2(B)(1)) specifies that upon cancellation, the consumer must make available to the seller in the same mode as received, in substantially as good condition as when received, any goods delivered under the contract or sale. Further provides that if the product, if received by delivery to consumer, is made available to the seller and the seller does not pick it up within 20 days of the date of the notice of cancellation, the consumer bears no further obligation for the return of the product; however, if the consumer fails to make the product available to the seller, or agrees to return the product to the seller and fails to do so, then the consumer remains liable for performance of all obligations under the contract.

New law (R.S. 37:2444.2(B)(2)) provides that the notice of cancellation is effective if the consumer delivers the notice to the seller within the time frame described in new law and includes a signed and dated copy of the subject contract, receipt, sales form, or other document evidencing all the terms of the transaction and the consumer's written notice to cancel.

Prior law (R.S. 37:2446.1(C)) provided that any person who received a license by reciprocity or examination on July 1st or later in that year was not required to have 10 hours of continuing education until Dec. 31st of the following year.

New law changes the licensing process for out-of-state hearing aid dealers from reciprocity to endorsement. Also, increases the number of required continuing education hours from 10 to 15.

Existing law (R.S. 37:2449(B)) allows an applicant with a temporary training permit to participate in the fitting and selling of hearing aids, under supervision for a period ending 30 days after the conclusion of the next examination the applicant is required to take.

New law modifies existing law by specifying that the applicant must be under direct supervision when using a temporary permit to fit or sell hearing aids.

Prior law (R.S. 37:2449.1(B)(4)) provided that the guidelines for the training of temporary training permit holders had to include the responsibility of the sponsor for direct and indirect supervision of all aspects of the training.

New law provides that the guidelines for the training of temporary training permit holders must include the responsibility of the sponsor and cosponsor for the direct supervision of all aspects of the training.

Existing law (R.S. 37:2449.1(C)(1) and (2)) provides that the training period begins on the date of the issuance of the temporary permit. Also requires a temporary training permit holder to complete at least 150 hours of directly supervised practicum that includes:

(1) 25 contact hours of pure tone air conduction, bone conduction, and speech audiometry, recorded and live voice, with fifteen of the required hours being with actual clients; and

(2) 25 contact hours of hearing instrument evaluations, including sound-field measurements with recorded and live voice.

New law modifies existing law by specifying that a part of the required 25 contact hours may be completed through recorded or live voice.

Existing law (R.S. 37:2449.1(E)) provides that on completion of the directly supervised practicum required under existing law, the temporary training permit holder must complete the permit holder's training under the indirect supervision of the permit holder's sponsor.

New law modifies existing law by specifying that the temporary permit holder must continue the permit holder's training under the direct supervision of the permit holder's sponsor or co-sponsor.

Existing law (R.S. 37:2449.2(A)) provides that a sponsor of a temporary training permit holder must be a licensed hearing instrument dispenser having the qualifications established by existing law.

New law specifies that sponsor and co-sponsor of a temporary training permit holder must be a licensed hearing instrument dispenser having the qualifications established by existing law.

Existing law (R.S. 37:2449.2(B)) requires a sponsor, as appropriate, to directly and indirectly supervise a temporary training permit holder. Also, requires a sponsor to provide direct supervision by being located on the premises and available to the temporary training permit holder for prompt consultation. Finally, requires a sponsor to provide indirect supervision by reviewing daily a temporary training permit holder's patient contact and daily work.

New law modifies existing law by specifying that a sponsor and co-sponsor must directly supervise a temporary training permit holder. Also, requires a sponsor and co-sponsor to provide direct supervision by being located on the premises and available to the temporary training permit holder for prompt consultation. Finally, requires a sponsor and co-sponsor to provide direct supervision by reviewing daily a temporary training permit holder's patient contact and daily work.

Existing law (R.S. 37:2449.3(A)) allows a temporary training permit holder to provide routine fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments that have been ordered by the sponsor. Provides that the sponsor in consultation with the board, is the sole judge of whether the permit holder has the qualifications necessary to perform routine fitting and dispensing. Also, provides that a sponsor is accountable to the board for the actions and misdeeds of a temporary training permit holder acting at the sponsor's discretion.

Proposed law modifies existing law by adding co-sponsors to the oversight process of temporary permit holders.

Effective August 15, 2011.

(Amends R.S. 37:2442(6)(intro. para.), 2446.1(C), 2449(B), 2449.1(B)(4), (C)(1) and (2), and (E), 2449.2(A)(intro. para.) and (B), and 2449.3(A); Adds R.S. 37:2444.1 and 2444.2)