

Linda Morris



Linda Morris – VR client, Region 8 (Columbus Unit)

Linda Morris had known she had hearing loss most her life having failed all the annual hearing tests at her school. Linda was hired by Aflac as a Customer Specialist I, but was fearful because the position would require her to be on the phone all day. What made her worried was a previous job loss, specifically because of her hearing difficulties. Linda has bilateral hearing loss and uses hearing aides. When she began work she notified the trainer at Aflac of her hearing loss. The trainer informed her that Aflac would try and work with her. Aflac notified VR and worked diligently with our agency throughout the process of assisting Linda. She stated it put her mind at ease knowing that Aflac and VR were working with her. So much so, she stated to herself “hey I can do this”.

The main problem seemed to be that she could not hear the customers clearly using the standard headset for the call center to collect critical information. Aflac bought an amplified headset for the employee to try and solve the problem, but it could not be used effectively with her specific hearing aids. This was a result of the design of her ear pieces (hearing aids) and the head set. The head set was designed specifically for Aflac’s call center set up, so a different head set would not work. An amplified head set would work in most situations, but not this one. This was because she was using what they called deep ear molds with her hearing aids to be able to hear on the phone.

The AWT team comprising of technician Wayne Ammons, technologist Randy Medeiros, and engineer Scott Barr met at Aflac to observe the call center equipment and to evaluate for a possible solution. The Wayne came up with the concept of modifying the ear piece of the headset to allow Linda to be able to use the amplified headset along with her special ear molds. The headset was sent to Westech Hearing and Audiology LLC’s lab to have new ear molds developed around the amplified headset. Wayne removed part of the ear piece from the headset. He then had the audiology company to send the modified part of the ear piece back to the lab at Westech Hearing and Audiology LLC to have the lab redevelop the ear mold around the modified part of the headset.

After the new ear mold was received by the audiology lab, Wayne met with Linda and the audiology company, and aligned and set the ear piece to the headset properly. This required making sure the modified ear mold, the modified ear piece and the headset aligned properly in the client’s ear, and was comfortable for use. The ear mold ended up having to be bound to the earpiece and the attached to the head set. For job security, several of these were made (at no additional cost) to be used. This later became valuable as equipment does wear out, and the additional equipment was used.

Several follow-ups with Linda at Aflac were made by the AWT team, along with real time observations of the consumer on the job, to ensure the modification was working properly. It was clearly a success in the eyes of Linda and Aflac. Linda stated “it opened up a lot of doors personally and professionally”. She stated she feels much more confident in her abilities now.

Currently Linda is working at the call center for Aflac and is meeting and exceeding all of her job responsibilities. It is important to note that she was promoted at Aflac to a Customer Specialist II. This case resulted in several new referrals from Aflac being made to assist with other employees that required job modifications. There was multiple staff involved in making this process work smoothly at DOLVR. From the RA that was getting A&Is processed to the counselor that was directing services in coordination with the AWT team. This was truly a team effort and a success by VR in coordination with Aflac.