



Disability Categories for Preschool Special Education Services

1. Developmental Delay

The regulations that implement the IDEA allow states to determine eligibility for special education to children aged three through nine who are experiencing developmental delays in one or more of the following areas: physical development; cognitive development; communication development; social or emotional development; or adaptive development. [34 C.F.R. 300.8(b)] Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) state that “Developmental delay” means performance by a child who is at least three years of age but under ten years of age on a norm-referenced test that measures at least one and one-half, but not more than three, standard deviations below the mean for children of the same chronological age in two or more of the following areas: cognitive development; physical development; communication development; social or emotional development; [or] adaptive development.” [A.R.S. 15-761(3)]

2. Hearing Impairment

Hearing impairment means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section. [34 C.F.R. § 300.8(c)(5)]

A determination of Hearing Impairment requires an audiological evaluation by an individual holding a master’s or doctoral degree in audiology, and an evaluation of communication/language proficiency.

3. Preschool Severe Delay

Arizona defines preschool severe delay as “performance by a preschool child on a norm-referenced test that measures more than three standard deviations below the mean for child of the same chronological age in one or more of the following areas: cognitive development; physical development; communication development; social or emotional development; [or] adaptive development.” The results of the norm-referenced measure must be corroborated by information from a comprehensive development assessment and from parental input, if available, as measure by a judgment based assessment or survey. If there is a discrepancy between the measures, the evaluation team shall determine eligibility based on a preponderance of the information presented. [A.R.S. 15-761(24)]

4. Speech or Language Impairment (SLI)

Speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. [34 C.F.R. 300.8(c)(11)]

A determination of Speech-Language Impairment requires an evaluation by a certified speech-language pathologist or speech-language technician. For students whose speech impairments appear to be limited to articulation, voice, or fluency problems, the written evaluation may be limited to: an audiometric screening within the past calendar year; a review of academic history and classroom functioning; an assessment of the speech problem by a licensed and certified speech-language pathologist or speech-language technician; or an assessment of the student's functional communication skills.

5. Visual Impairment (VI)

Visual impairment including blindness means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness. [34 C.F.R. § 300.8(c)(13)]

A determination of Visual Impairment requires verification of a visual impairment by an ophthalmologist or optometrist.