



Free Special Education Resources, Consultation, Trainings Your Arizona Parent School Connection

Preschool Delays: Moderate, Severe, and Speech/Language

What is a Preschool Delay?

A preschool child is one “who is at least three years of age but who has not reached the required age for kindergarten” (five by September 1), according to Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) §15-761(22).

ARS §15-761(23) defines a preschool moderate delay as “performance by a preschool child 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:

- (a) Cognitive development.
- (b) Physical development.
- (c) Communication development.
- (d) Social or emotional development.
- (e) Adaptive development.”

The results of the tests must be supported by information from a comprehensive developmental assessment and from parental input.

According to ARS §15-761(25), a severe delay is defined as “performance by a preschool child on a norm-referenced test that measures more than three standard deviations below the mean for children of the same chronological age in one or more” of the areas listed in (a)–(e) above.

A preschool speech/language delay means “performance by a preschool child on a norm-referenced language test that measures at least one and one half standard deviations below the mean for children of the same chronological age or whose speech, out of context, is unintelligible to a listener who is unfamiliar with the child” [ARS §15-761(25)]. Eligibility under this category is only appropriate when a child meets evaluation criteria and is not eligible for services under other preschool categories.

A standard deviation is a unit used to measure the amount by which a particular score differs from the

average (mean) of all scores in the sample. Different tests have different standard deviations.

How Common are Preschool Delays?

In the 2007–2008 school year, 9,808 Arizona students were classified as having preschool delays and received special education services. This number represents .93% of the 1,061,095 children enrolled in Arizona public schools as of December 1, 2007 and accounts for 7.7% of the total special education population. The total number of students with preschool delays does not include the preschool aged children who have hearing and vision impairments.

What Effect Do Preschool Delays Have on a Child?

Each child with a preschool delay has a unique combination of abilities and disabilities. Skills that most children acquire in the first five years of life need to be specially taught to children with a combination of deficits. A program which helps improve thinking, language, movement, self-help, play, and social skills is important for development of a preschool child’s potential. As with all students, appropriate placement in the least restrictive environment is essential.

With advances in research and technology, especially assistive technology, children with disabilities can achieve at levels not previously thought possible. Assistive technology examples are: computer assisted communication, powered mobility, fixed and adjustable back supports, magnification aids, amplification devices, and specially designed switches.

As preschool children make the transition to kindergarten, the preschool category in which they were served is reviewed. Eligibility criteria for students, ages 5–21, is used to determine which disability classification for special education in ARS §15-761 is appropriate.

References

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Books for Adults

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Norlin, J.W. (2003). *Special education dictionary*. Arlington, VA: LRP Publications. www.lrp.com

Books for Children

DeLoach, K. (2004). *Daniel's world: A book about children with disabilities*, www.threemoonsmedia.com

Hanson, M.J. & Beckman, P. (2001). *Me, too!* (A 6-booklet series on Transition to Preschool). Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing. www.brookespublishing.com

Powell, T. & Gallagher, P.A. (2005). *Brothers and sisters: A special part of exceptional families*. (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing. www.brookespublishing.com

Saunders, K. (2000). *Happy ever afters: A storybook guide to teaching children about disability*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Organizations/Hotlines/Web Sites

Arizona Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 12256 N. 26th Pl., Phoenix, AZ 85032, 602-354-8062, 800-705-7510, www.arsha.org

Council for Exceptional Children, Early Childhood Division, 1110 Glebe Rd., Ste. 300, Arlington, VA 22201-5704, 888-232-7733, www.cec.sped.org

Enhancing Arizona's Parent Networks (EAPN), www.azed.gov/ess/eapn

Easter Seal Society of Arizona, Tucson: Easter Seals, Blake Foundation, 5704 E. Grant Rd., Tucson, AZ 85712, 520-327-1529 www.blakefoundation.org
Phoenix: Easter Seals, Southwest Human Development, 2850 N. 24th St., Phoenix, AZ 85008, 602-266-5976 www.swhd.org

Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, 3839 N. Third St., Ste. 306, Phoenix, AZ 85012, 602-277-4986, 602-277-4949 (TDD), 866-771-9378, www.azgcd.org

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, P. O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013-1492, 800-695-0285, www.nichey.org

Parent Information Network, Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 2384 N. Steves Blvd., Flagstaff, AZ 86004, 928-679-8102, 877-230-PINS (7467), www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals

Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona, 2600 N. Wyatt Dr., Tucson, AZ 85712, 520-324-3150, www.pilotparents.org

Raising Special Kids, 5025 E Washington St., Ste. 2C, Phoenix, AZ 85034, 602-242-4366, 800-237-3007, www.raisingpecialkids.org

The contents of this publication were developed in 1995 and revised in 2008 by the Parent Information Network (PIN) with funds allocated by the U.S. Department of Education under IDEA 2004. These contents do not necessarily represent the guideline of the agency, nor should endorsement by the federal government be assumed. The Arizona Department of Education of the State of Arizona does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs, activities or in its hiring and employment practices. If you have questions or concerns regarding this statement, please contact Administrative Services at 602-542-3186. This document is in the public domain and may be freely reproduced in its current format. For more information, call the Parent Information Network at 877-230-PINS (7467) or visit our website at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals.