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Hearing Impairment

What is a Hearing Impairment?

According to the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) §15-761(iii) (7) and as determined by evaluation, a hearing impairment means “a loss of acuity... which interferes with the child’s performance in the educational environment and requires the provision of special education and related services.” The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA ‘04) includes “hearing impairment” and “deafness” as two of the categories under which children with disabilities may be eligible for special education and related services. Two key factors are involved: early identification of the hearing loss and appropriate early intervention services from qualified providers.

Hearing loss can be categorized into four types. They are conductive, sensorineural, mixed, or central. The types refer to where the loss occurs. A conductive loss is one where some condition prevents sound from reaching the middle ear. Some conditions are *obstructions* that can often be removed with surgery. Other conductive losses are caused by disease, fusion of the bones of the middle ear, or birth defects. Hearing aides or other assistive technology (AT) devices may improve some of these losses. The other types of losses (sensorineural, mixed, and central) are not easily aided by amplification, because more than just the hearing organ (ear) is involved. The sensory hair cells of the inner ear may be damaged. The auditory nerve may be impaired or the central nervous system itself may be involved. In many of these cases, repair is often not possible.

The amount of hearing loss can vary. It can be mild or profound loss. Some losses affect only the high sound frequencies, while some affect low frequencies. The range of sound and the amount of distortion received by the aided ear will depend on the type and degree of hearing loss. An AT evaluation can help determine what modifications or strategies and what low-technology to high-technology devices might be most helpful in the classroom.

How Common is a Hearing Impairment?

In the 2006–2007 school year, 2,060 students in Arizona were classified as having a hearing impairment and received special education services. This number represents 0.19% of the 1,112,610 children enrolled in Arizona public schools as of October 1, 2006 and accounts for 1.66% of the total special education population.

What Effect Does a Hearing Impairment Have on a Child?

Oral language (spoken words) is learned by hearing words spoken. Therefore, the length of time a child had the ability to hear before losing that sense will affect learning. Just as the type and the amount of the loss vary, so must the type of education be tailored to accommodate the type of loss.

The focus for teaching students with hearing losses must be on teaching them to communicate. Depending on the type of hearing loss, the way the individual learns, the preference of the family and the individual, an oral or manual method may be used. Sometimes a combination of sign language and speech is taught. If amplification is helpful, a student might be fitted with a hearing aid or another amplifying device.

Since children with hearing impairments are unable to receive some sounds accurately, they often cannot articulate words clearly. These students may benefit from training in voice and articulation.

For most children with hearing impairments, language acquisition and language development are significantly delayed. As a result, some may incorrectly estimate the child’s intelligence as low. Therefore, teaching a child to communicate early is vital in preventing severe learning delays. Early intervention programs include teaching the family how to stimulate their infant’s, hearing and provide cues for building language.

References

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National Information Center on Deafness. (2005). *Deafness: A fact sheet*. Washington DC: Gallaudet University.

Books

Lowell, Gloria Roth. (2000). *Elana's ears or how I became the best big sis in the world*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Maguire, Arlene. (2000). *Special people, special ways*. Arlington TX, Future Horizons.

Marschark, Marc. (2001). *Educating deaf students: From research to practice*. Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press.

Millman, Isaac. (2000). *Moses goes to school*. Baltimore MD, Brookes Publishing, www.pbrookes.com

Organizations/Hotlines/Web Sites

Alexander Graham Bell Association, 3417 Volta Pl. NW, Washington, DC 20007-2778, Voice: 202-337-5220, TTY: 202-337-5221, 800-255-4817, www.agbell.org

American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association, P.O. Box 480, Myersville, MD 21773-0727, Voice/TTY: 410-495-8440, www.adara.org

American Speech Language Hearing Association, P. O. Box 30988, Phoenix, AZ, 85046, 602-354-8062, 800-705-7510, www.arsha.org

Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, 1400 W. Washington, Room 126, Phoenix, AZ 85007, Voice: 602-542-3323, TTY: 602-364-0990, 800-352-8161, www.acdhh.org/

Arizona State Schools for the Deaf, 1200 West Speedway, P.O. Box 88510, Tucson AZ, 85754-5000, 520-770-3701, www.asdb.state.az.us

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

Hearing Loss Association of America, 7910 Woodmont Ave., Ste.1200, Bethesda, MD 20814, 301-657-2248, Voice/TTY: 301-657-2249, www.shhh.org

John Tracy Clinic, 806 West Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007, 213-748-5481 www.jtc.org

National Association of the Deaf, 8630 Fenton Street, Suite 820, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3876, Voice: 301-587-1788, TTY: 301-587-1789, www.nad.org

National Deaf Education and Deafness Clearinghouse, Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002, Voice/TTY: 202-651-5050, www.library.gallaudet.edu/

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013, Voice/TTY: 800-695-0285, www.nichcy.org

National Information Clearinghouse on Children Who are Deaf-Blind, 345 N. Monmouth Ave., Monmouth, OR 97361, Voice: 800-438-9376, TTY: 800-854-7013, www.tr.wou.edu/dblink

National Institute on Deafness & Other Communication Disorders Clearinghouse, 31 Center Dr. MSC 2320, Bethesda, MD 20892-2320, 800-241-1044, www.infolit.org/members/nidcd.htm

Parent Information Network, Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 2384 N. Steves Blvd., Flagstaff, AZ 86004, 928-679-8102, 800-352-4558, www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals

Raising Special Kids, 2400 N. Central, Ste.200, Phoenix, AZ 85004, 602-242-4366, Voice/TTY: 800-237-3007, www.raisingpecialkids.org

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