



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

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

References

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