



IDEA: Categories of Disabilities -- Hearing Impairment

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines **Hearing Impairment** as:

an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

What is a Hearing Impairment?

The term "hearing impairment" refers to a hearing loss not covered by the definition of deafness. There are four types of hearing loss as follows:

- **Conductive hearing losses** are caused by diseases or obstructions in the outer or middle ear (the pathways for sound to reach the inner ear). Usually affect all frequencies of hearing evenly and do not result in severe losses. A person with a conductive hearing loss usually is able to use a hearing aid well or can be helped medically or surgically.
- **Sensorineural hearing losses** result from damage to the delicate sensory hair cells of the inner ear or the nerves that supply it. These hearing losses can range from mild to profound. They often affect the person's ability to hear certain frequencies more than others. Thus, even with amplification to increase the sound level, a person with a sensorineural hearing loss may perceive distorted sounds, sometimes making the successful use of a hearing aid impossible.
- A **mixed hearing loss** refers to a combination of conductive and sensorineural loss and means that a problem occurs in both the outer or middle and the inner ear.
- A **central hearing loss** results from damage or impairment to the nerves or nuclei of the central nervous system, either in the pathways to the brain or in the brain itself.

What are the signs of a Hearing Impairment?

Some signs that a child may not be hearing normally are:

- speech is delayed/unclear;
- child does not follow directions. This is often mistaken for not paying attention or ignoring, but could be the result of a partial or complete hearing loss.
- often asks for things to be repeated;
- turns the volume up too high.

This information is not meant to diagnose any child and should not take the place of consultation with a qualified healthcare professional.

Where to call for a free evaluation from the state depends on your child's age:

Under Three (3) Years Old

Contact SoonerStart Early Intervention Services at 405-521-3351

<http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/2013%20Referral%20Guide%20back.pdf>

Three (3) Years Old and Older

Contact your local public school system.

www.ok.gov/sde/state-school-directory

Even if your child is not yet old enough for kindergarten or enrolled in a public school, call your local elementary school and ask to speak with someone who can help you have your child evaluated.

If you're not sure who to contact, call the **Oklahoma Parents Center** toll-free at 877-553-4332 and we can help you!

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Source:

Hearing Impairment, Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Deafness and Hearing Loss, Parent Center Hub.



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