ARIZONA · CHILD FIND · FOR FAMILIES

Starting with Child Find

How to begin a preschool special education evaluation for a child with hearing loss by contacting the school district directly.

For families anywhere in Arizona. Section 6 lists contacts for the school districts in Maricopa County. Current as of October 2026.

Your child has a hearing loss and is three years old. No agency is handing your file to the school district, so nothing is scheduled, nobody is going to call, and the process will not start on its own.

That is not a gap in the law. The school district has a legal duty to find and evaluate children like yours, and it exists whether or not anyone has told them your child is there. It is called **Child Find**. But a duty is not the same as a phone call, and in practice the families who get evaluated are the ones who ask, in writing, with a date on it.

This guide is how you do that.

> **What this guide is, and what it is not**
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> **This is the starting guide.** It covers what Child Find is, how to find the right office in your district, how to make the referral, and what happens next.
>
> **If your child is evaluated and found not eligible,** ask for our preschool eligibility guide. That is a separate situation with its own material, deliberately kept out of this one.
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> This guide is general information, not legal advice, and not a substitute for advice about your individual child.

1. What Child Find is

Federal law requires that **all children with disabilities who need special education are "identified, located, and evaluated."** That obligation sits with the public school district for the area where you live, and it does not depend on your child being enrolled anywhere. It covers children in private school, children who are homeschooled, children who have never set foot in a school, and children nobody has ever referred.

Two parts of the rule are worth knowing because districts sometimes talk as though they are not there:

- **A child can be doing well and still need evaluating.** Child Find expressly covers children who are suspected of having a disability even though they are advancing. Arizona's own guidance says the same thing: whether a child has a disability "is not limited to information about the child's academic performance."
- **You can ask.** Either a parent or the school district may start an initial evaluation. You do not need a referral from a doctor, a therapist, or a preschool. Your request is enough to start it.

> ### Expect this to take longer than it sounds
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> The legal clock is **60 calendar days, and it does not start until you sign consent.** Consent does not arrive until after the district has received your referral and decided what it wants to assess, and an IEP takes more time again after that.
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> So count backwards from when you want services to start, allow a few weeks for the referral to be processed, then 60 days, then time to write an IEP. Starting earlier than feels necessary is not over caution, it is arithmetic.

2. Before you send the referral

Everything you assemble now travels with the referral and shapes what the district decides to assess. A referral that arrives with a current audiogram attached is a different document from one that says "my child has hearing loss."

The audiological evaluation

Attach a current audiological evaluation showing the **type of loss, the degree, and the audiogram itself.** That one document does more work than anything else you can send, because it is what the eligibility category turns on.

If you do not have a copy to hand, check your patient portal first. If it is not there, call Banner audiology and request a copy of the most recent evaluation report, not just the graph.

Gather the rest

- [ ] The most recent audiogram, with its full written report.
- [ ] Hearing aid or cochlear implant fitting records, and any datalogging showing wear time.
- [ ] Reports from any private therapy your child has received, including speech language therapy or auditory verbal therapy.
- [ ] Anything from a preschool or childcare your child attends.

3. Making the referral

Put it in writing. A phone call can start a conversation, but only a dated written request creates a record of when you asked, and that record is what everything else is measured against later.

Six rules for the referral letter

1. **Date it,** and keep a copy of exactly what you sent.
2. **Send it by email** if you can, so delivery is timestamped. Ask them to confirm receipt.
3. **Use the words "I am requesting an initial evaluation for special education."** Vaguer wording, such as asking for a screening or for someone to take a look, can be treated as something short of a referral.
4. **Name the hearing loss and attach the audiogram.** Do not make them ask.
5. **Say what you want assessed,** using the list in section 4. A request made before the evaluation is cheap to honor. The same request afterward means redoing work and gets resisted.
6. **Ask for a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing** to take part in the evaluation and the eligibility meeting, and ask who that person will be.
7. **Name the provider supporting you,** and be precise about what she is and is not. See below.

Naming the provider supporting you, and being precise about her role

Your family is working privately with a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing, **Amber Saeli** of Hear Talk Grow, who is supporting you through this referral and evaluation process. Say so in the referral, so the district knows someone with deaf education expertise is involved on your side and can be included in meetings.

Then be precise about the limits, because districts fill gaps with assumptions:

- **This is a recent arrangement.** She has not been working with your child long enough to have developmental history, progress data, or written reports to contribute, and the letter should not imply otherwise. A district expecting records that do not exist is a district waiting instead of working.
- **She is not AzEIP.** Your child is not enrolled in the Arizona Early Intervention Program, because of the timing of the third birthday, so there is no IFSP to request. Saying only "early intervention" sends the district looking for a file that was never created.
- **She is not an ASDB itinerant provider.** This one matters most. A district that hears a teacher of the deaf is already involved may quietly conclude that it does not need to make its own referral to ASDB. It does. A provider your family is paying for privately is not a substitute for the district's obligation, and the ASDB referral in section 5 is still the district's job.

The referral letter

The letter itself is a separate editable document, *Child Find Referral Letter Template*, provided alongside this guide. Open it, replace everything in square brackets, delete the grey italic notes, and send it.

It is deliberately plain, with no practice letterhead on it. The letter goes to the district **in your name, from you as the parent**, and it carries more weight that way than it would coming from anyone else.

4. What happens next, and what to watch

1 AFTER YOUR LETTER

The district reviews what it already has.

The district has no file on your child, so that is whatever you sent. This is why section 2 matters.

2 NEXT

You receive prior written notice and a consent form.

The notice should say what the district proposes to do, why, and what it relied on. Read it before signing. If an area you asked for is missing, say so in writing before you consent.

3 60 CALENDAR DAYS FROM CONSENT

The evaluation is completed.

In Arizona the timeline runs from the district's receipt of your signed consent, not from your original letter. Note the date you sign.

4 AT THE END

The MET meeting.

MET stands for Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team, and it is both the team and the report it produces. Ask for a copy of the report several days before the meeting so you can read it rather than hear it read aloud.

5 THEN

Eligibility is decided, and if your child is eligible, an IEP follows.

Both are covered below.

What a good evaluation of a child with hearing loss covers

Arizona requires only two things for the hearing impairment category: an audiological evaluation by a qualified audiologist, and an evaluation of communication and language proficiency. That is the floor, not the ceiling.

Area	What it tells the team
Audiological status	Type, degree, and configuration in each ear, and how well the devices restore access.

Functional listening	How your child does at distance, in background noise, and with several people talking. **The piece most often left out, and the one that speaks most directly to a classroom.**
Receptive and expressive language	What language your child has, in every language and mode they use.
Speech production	How intelligible your child is, and whether the sounds they get wrong are the ones they cannot hear well.
Listening skills	Where your child sits on the path from detecting sound, to telling sounds apart, to identifying them, to understanding them.
Thinking and development	Ideally measured in ways that do not depend on spoken language. A test that leans on language will underestimate a deaf child.
Social and emotional	How your child joins play and handles group settings.
Vision	Worth checking for any child with hearing loss, since your child is already leaning on vision harder than a hearing child does.
Observation	Your child watched with other children, with the date, place, length, and observer recorded.
What you report	Your answers about how your child does across a whole day, in every setting. Required information, not a courtesy.

> ### If other diagnoses or concerns exist, raise them now
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> The evaluation is not limited to the hearing loss. The district must assess in every area related to any suspected disability. If your child has another diagnosis, or you have concerns about motor skills and balance, feeding, attention and regulation, social communication, or general development, put them in the referral letter. Adding an area before consent costs the district very little. Adding one afterward means redoing work.

The MET meeting, where eligibility is decided

When the evaluation is finished, the team meets. **Eligibility is decided at that meeting, not before it,** and you are a member of the team that decides. That is why it is worth asking for the report a few days ahead: so you arrive having read it.

The team has to answer three questions, and all three have to be yes:

1. **Does your child have a disability that fits one of Arizona's categories?** For a child with hearing loss the categories are *Hearing Impairment* and *Deafness*. Ask which categories the team considered, and ask for the answer to go in the notes.
2. **Does it interfere with your child in the educational environment?** Not whether your child is failing. Whether the hearing loss gets in the way.

3. **Because of it, does your child need specially designed instruction,** meaning teaching that is adapted in its content, its method, or the way it is delivered?

Whatever the team decides, ask for **prior written notice** of the decision, including if the answer is yes.

If your child is found eligible

You move to the next step, which is the **IEP**, the Individualized Education Program. Sometimes the IEP meeting runs straight on from the MET meeting the same day, which is allowed. You can also ask for a few days in between if you want time to read the MET report properly first.

At the IEP meeting the team writes where your child is now, the annual goals, the services and who provides them, and the accommodations. **Placement comes last, after the goals,** because the question is where those goals can be delivered. Services do not begin until you give written consent for them, and that first consent is yours to give or withhold.

If your child is found not eligible

It means the team concluded that one of the three questions above was a no. In practice it is almost always the second or the third, not the first.

Here is what it does *not* mean:

- It does not mean the hearing loss is not real, or that it does not matter.
- It does not mean the district is finished with your child. You can refer again, and you should if anything changes.
- It does not mean the decision is correct. It is a judgment made by a group of people on a particular day using the information in front of them, and it can be wrong.

What to do first: **ask for prior written notice in writing.** It has to say what was refused, why, every record and report the team relied on, and the other options the team considered and the reasons each was rejected. It is the single most useful document you can hold, and a decision that cannot survive being written out carefully often does not survive review.

Then ask whether a **Section 504 plan** is appropriate. That is a different law with a different test, and it provides access and accommodations rather than specially designed instruction. It is worth having if it is offered. It is not a substitute for eligibility, and accepting one does not close the eligibility question.

> #### If the answer is not eligible, get the other guide
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> Ask us for the preschool eligibility guide. It covers what the district actually has to prove, the five reasons districts most often give for saying no and what is wrong with each, your right to an outside evaluation paid for by the district, and the three formal ways to disagree in Arizona. That material is deliberately kept out of this guide so that it is there in full when you need it, and out of the way when you do not.

5. The ASDB referral, which only the district can make

Many Arizona districts do not employ their own teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing. They obtain that expertise through a contract with an **ASDB regional cooperative**, run by the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. Whether your district does is worth establishing early, because it changes who will actually evaluate your child.

> **You cannot refer your own child to ASDB**
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> Services through the cooperative are requested by the school district, under its cooperative contract, using a form the district submits to ASDB. There is no other way in. A parent cannot submit it. An outside provider cannot submit it. Calling ASDB yourself and describing your child will not start anything, however reasonable that seems.
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> So the obligation sits squarely with the district. **It is the district's job to tell ASDB that there is a child in its boundaries who needs to be evaluated and served.** If that referral is never submitted, ASDB does not know your child exists and nothing happens. Nobody has refused anything. The form was simply never sent.
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> Ask in writing: *"Has the district submitted the ASDB referral for my child, and on what date?"* If the answer is no or vague, ask when it will be submitted and ask to be told once it has been. "We considered it" is not the same as "we sent it."

You can still call ASDB yourself to confirm whether your district holds a cooperative contract. That is a question about the district and they will answer it. What you cannot do is refer your child.

In Maricopa County the districts that work with the cooperative rather than employing their own teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing include Alhambra, Avondale, Balsz, Buckeye Elementary, Cartwright, Cave Creek Unified, Creighton, Fountain Hills Unified, Fowler, Glendale Elementary, Isaac, Liberty, Litchfield, Littleton, Madison, Murphy, Osborn, Palo Verde, Pendergast, Phoenix Elementary, Riverside, Roosevelt, Saddle Mountain Unified, Tempe Elementary, Tolleson, Union and Wilson. Arrangements are voluntary and change from year to year, so confirm rather than assume. If your district is not on that list it most likely employs its own.

6. Finding the right office in your district

Your referral goes to the **public school district for the area where you live**, whether or not your child has ever been enrolled anywhere. For preschool that is almost always the **elementary district**. Many parts of Maricopa County are served by a separate elementary district and union high school district, and union high school districts run grades nine through twelve and do no preschool at all. If you are not sure which district you are in, your address decides it, and the district office will tell you in one call.

When you call

1. Use the number for your district in the table below. Ask for **Child Find**, **preschool special education**, or **Exceptional Student Services**. Do not call an individual school's front desk; preschool referrals are handled at the district office.
2. Say that you are making a Child Find referral for a preschool age child with a documented hearing loss, and that you are sending it in writing today.
3. Ask for the **name and direct email of the person who will receive it**, and send your letter to that address as well as to any general one.
4. Ask what their process is after a referral, and how long before you should expect the consent paperwork.
5. Write down who you spoke to and when. Keep that with your copy of the letter.

> **If nothing happens**
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> Give it about ten business days from your written referral. If you have heard nothing, send a short follow up to the same address, attaching your original letter and noting its date. A second dated email is often all it takes.
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> If you still hear nothing, ask the district in writing for **prior written notice** of its decision on your referral. A district that is declining to evaluate has to say so in writing and explain why, and asking for that document tends to produce either the notice or the evaluation.
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> Beyond that, you can contact the Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, at 602 542 4013, or file a state complaint with its Dispute Resolution Unit on 602 542 3084. A failure to act on a Child Find referral is exactly the kind of thing that process exists for.

Maricopa County districts that serve preschool

Compiled from district websites in October 2026. Where a district publishes a direct Child Find or special education line, that is the number given. Where it does not, the main district number is given and you will need to ask to be put through. **Districts reorganize and staff change, so treat this as a starting point and confirm when you call.**

District	Number to call
Alhambra Elementary	602 336 2920, main. Ask for Exceptional Student Services. Email exceptionalstudentservicesdept@alhambraesd.org

Avondale Elementary	623 772 5038, Exceptional Student Services. Preschool 623 772 4427
Balsz Elementary	602 629 6822, special education
Buckeye Elementary	623 925 3922, Child Find
Cartwright Elementary	623 691 4090, Special Services
Cave Creek Unified	480 575 2009, Exceptional Student Services. Developmental preschool 480 575 2435
Chandler Unified	480 883 5865, Preschool Child Find
Creighton Elementary	602 381 4600, Preschool Child Find office
Deer Valley Unified	623 445 4991, Early Childhood Services. We could not confirm this from the district's own site, so check it when you call
Dysart Unified	623 876 7022, option 2, Child Find screening
Fountain Hills Unified	480 664 5000, main. Not confirmed from the district site. Ask for special education
Fowler Elementary	623 474 7276, Exceptional Student Services
Gila Bend Unified	928 683 2225, extension 268, special education
Gilbert Public Schools	480 497 3474, special education and Child Find referral. Preschool 480 497 3471. Email spedreferral@gilbertschools.net
Glendale Elementary	623 237 4014, Child Find for ages 2 years 9 months to 5
Higley Unified	480 279 8027, Preschool Evaluation Team. Special education 480 279 7059
Isaac Elementary	602 455 6700, main. Ask for Child Find
Kyrene Elementary	480 541 1157, Exceptional Student Services. Email ChildFind@kyrene.org
Laveen Elementary	602 364 4015, Child Find
Liberty Elementary	623 327 2880, extension 1812, for screening. Special Services 623 474 6671
Litchfield Elementary	623 535 6068, Child Find Preschool Program Specialist
Littleton Elementary	623 478 5695, Exceptional Student Services
Madison Elementary	602 664 7927, Student Services
Mesa Public Schools	480 472 0200, main. Ask for Specialized Student Services

Mobile Elementary	520 568 9361, main. Not confirmed from the district site
Morristown Elementary	623 546 5100, main. No separate special education line is published
Murphy Elementary	602 353 5072, preschool. Student Support Services 602 353 5336
Nadaburg Unified	623 253 6856, Child Find screening
Osborn Elementary	602 707 2014, Child Find and Student Services
Palo Verde Elementary	Not published in a form we could confirm. Ask the Maricopa County School Superintendent's office for the current number
Paloma Elementary	928 683 2588, main. No separate special education line is published
Paradise Valley Unified	602 449 2150, special education
Pendergast Elementary	623 772 2332 or 623 772 2326, Exceptional Student Services
Peoria Unified	623 773 6685, Preschool Assessment Team
Phoenix Elementary	602 257 3808, Preschool Child Find screening
Queen Creek Unified	480 655 6213, Early Childhood Special Education. Department 480 987 5990
Riverside Elementary	602 477 8900, extension 1338, Exceptional Student Services
Roosevelt Elementary	602 243 4800, main. Ask for Exceptional Student Services
Saddle Mountain Unified	623 474 5108, special education
Scottsdale Unified	480 484 5070, special education
Sentinel Elementary	928 323 3300, main. No separate special education line is published
Tempe Elementary	480 897 6233, Preschool Child Find
Tolleson Elementary	623 533 3921, Special Programs
Union Elementary	623 478 5017, Exceptional Student Services, for Child Find screenings
Washington Elementary	602 347 4850, Special Needs Preschool
Wickenburg Unified	928 668 5350, main. Ask for special education
Wilson Elementary	602 683 2400, extension 8500, Exceptional Student Services

Union high school districts, including Agua Fria, Buckeye Union, Glendale Union, Phoenix Union, Tempe Union and Tolleson Union, serve grades nine through twelve and do not provide preschool. If your address falls in one of those, your referral goes to the elementary district that covers the same area. Charter schools are their own public education agencies, and many do not offer preschool at all; if your child attends one, ask whether it provides preschool special education, and if it does not, ask which agency is responsible for evaluating your child.

7. Your tracker

- [ ] Current audiological evaluation in hand, showing type, degree, and the audiogram.
- [ ] Provider named in the referral, with all three clarifications stated.
- [ ] Records gathered.
- [ ] District Child Find or special education office called. Who you spoke to: _____ Date: _____
- [ ] Written referral sent, dated, with audiogram attached. Date sent: _____
- [ ] Receipt confirmed by the district. Date: _____
- [ ] Prior written notice and consent form received.
- [ ] Consent form read against the requested assessment list before signing.
- [ ] Consent signed. Date: _____ Sixty days from that date: _____
- [ ] ASDB referral confirmed as submitted by the district. Date: _____
- [ ] MET report requested in advance of the eligibility meeting.
- [ ] Eligibility meeting attended, every category considered confirmed on the record.
- [ ] Prior written notice of the decision requested, whatever the decision.

8. Where to get help in Arizona

Organization	What they do
Raising Special Kids	Arizona's federally funded parent training and information center. Free. They will explain the process, review your paperwork, and in many cases attend a meeting with you.
Arizona Hands & Voices, Guide By Your Side	Free parent guides who are themselves parents of deaf and hard of hearing children. Unbiased about communication approach.
Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing	State agency. Information, referral, and advocacy resources.
Disability Rights Arizona	Arizona's protection and advocacy organization. Legal information and, in some cases, representation.

AZ FIND, at the Arizona Department of Education	The state's Child Find program. General ESS line 602 542 4013.
ADE Exceptional Student Services, Dispute Resolution	Runs the state complaint, mediation, and due process systems. 602 542 3084.

> ### If you take one thing from this guide
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> Nothing in this process starts until you put something in writing with a date on it, and almost everything that goes wrong later is easier to fix if you can show when you asked. Send the letter, keep the copy, and ask for each answer in writing. That single habit does more work than any argument.

Where this information comes from

Child Find

34 CFR 300.111(a), requiring that all children with disabilities who are in need of special education "are identified, located, and evaluated." 34 CFR 300.111(c), extending child find to children "suspected of being a child with a disability … even though they are advancing from grade to grade," and to highly mobile children. Arizona Department of Education, AZ FIND and Child Find FAQs, which state the obligation covers children "aged birth through 21" within a public education agency's boundaries, including children in private schools and children who are homeschooled, and that whether a child has a disability "is not limited to information about the child's academic performance."

Who may request an evaluation, and the timeline

34 CFR 300.301(a) and (b), under which "either a parent of a child or a public agency may initiate a request for an initial evaluation," and the evaluation must be conducted within 60 days of receiving parental consent. A.R.S. 15-766(B) and A.A.C. R7-2-401(E), setting Arizona's timeline at 60 calendar days from the public education agency's receipt of the parent's informed written consent.

Consent and prior written notice

34 CFR 300.300(a) and (b), informed parental consent for initial evaluation and for the initial provision of services. 34 CFR 300.503(b), the required elements of prior written notice, including a description of the other options the team considered and the reasons they were rejected.

What the evaluation must cover

34 CFR 300.304(c)(4), assessment "in all areas related to the suspected disability." 34 CFR 300.304(c)(6), sufficiently comprehensive to identify all needs "whether or not commonly linked to the disability category." 34 CFR 300.304(c)(1), administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel. A.A.C. R7-2-401(E), which requires for hearing impairment an audiological evaluation by a qualified professional and an evaluation of communication and language proficiency.

The MET report

Arizona Department of Education, AZ-TAS Evaluation Process, covering the review of existing data, team composition, the requirement that the description of impact be individualized rather than generic, and the findings of a qualifying disability, impact on learning, and need for specially designed instruction.

ASDB and the regional cooperatives

Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind operates five regional cooperatives, which are voluntary partnerships with public education agencies, funded through special education vouchers, district membership fees, and tuition, and which serve children in their home districts. Arizona Joint Legislative Budget Committee, ASDB baseline. The list of Maricopa County districts working with the cooperative comes from Hear Talk Grow's own records.

The Maricopa County district directory

Compiled in October 2026 from the districts' own public websites wherever possible, and from the Arizona 211 directory where a district site could not be read. Numbers labelled as not confirmed are exactly that. A number of Arizona district websites are rendered in a way that hides their contact pages from automated reading, so this list is a starting point rather than an authority, and district staffing changes every year. Confirm the contact when you call.

Arizona dispute resolution

Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, Dispute Resolution Unit, 1535 West Jefferson Street, Bin 62, Phoenix, Arizona 85007. Telephone 602 542 3084. A state complaint must allege a violation occurring within one year before the complaint is received, and ADE must investigate and issue a written decision within 60 calendar days.

Hear Talk Grow. Deaf and hard of hearing services, birth through grade 12. heartalkgrow.com

This guide is general information and is not legal advice. It does not create a professional relationship of any kind. Laws, agency addresses,

district contacts, and program details change, and arrangements between districts and ASDB change from year to year. Verify current information with the district and with the Arizona Department of Education before relying on any deadline or contact in this guide. Prepared October 2026.