

Hearing Loss: Funding, Services and Access in Arizona

Every child deserves to be understood.

A guide for individuals of any age and their families — from newborn identification through adulthood. Arizona and Maricopa County resources first, then national programs, scholarships and accessibility rights.

Before applying anywhere, answer two questions.

First: what health coverage does the person have right now? Almost every program below turns on this. Some require AHCCCS; others exclude anyone who has it. Applying in the wrong order wastes weeks. If coverage recently changed — for example if SSI ended — confirm current status first.

Second: how old is the person? Arizona's system changes hands at age three, again at kindergarten, and again at school exit. Knowing which door is open now saves a great deal of time.

Part 1 — Birth to age five

The years before kindergarten have the most support attached to them and the shortest window to use it. Two separate systems operate here, and the handoff between them at age three is where families most often lose services.

Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) — birth to three

Arizona's statewide system under Part C of IDEA, for infants and toddlers with disabilities or developmental delays, including hearing loss. Services are delivered in the home and in everyday routines, and include specialized instruction from providers with deaf and hard of hearing expertise, speech and language services, audiological support, and family coaching.

Eligibility: Birth until the third birthday, Arizona resident, with an established condition or documented delay. A confirmed hearing loss is an established condition and does not require a demonstrated delay.

Cost: Evaluation, service coordination and the development of the family service plan are provided at no cost. Some services may be subject to a family cost participation schedule.

Referral: 1-888-592-0140 — online at azeip.azdes.gov — check referral status at 602-532-9960 — des.az.gov/azeip

Anyone can refer, including a parent. No physician referral is required, and families should not wait for one.

For children under three with hearing loss, the specialized deaf and hard of hearing services under AzEIP are provided by the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, through its Early Learning Program. Families should ask specifically that a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing be part of the team, since general early intervention services do not carry that expertise by default. Note that this is an early intervention role only — ASDB does not continue to provide services in this way once a child reaches school age unless the child attends one of their schools.

The transition at age three

At three, responsibility shifts from AzEIP to the local school district or charter under Part B of IDEA. This is a change of system, not a continuation, and services do not carry across automatically. A new evaluation, eligibility determination and IEP are required.

- **Start early.** Transition planning is supposed to begin well before the third birthday. Ask for the transition conference rather than waiting to be offered one.
- **Name hearing explicitly.** Request in writing that hearing be included as an area of evaluation, and that a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing take part. Areas not named in writing are frequently not assessed.
- **Preschool services are free.** Preschool special education is provided at no cost through the school district or charter, including specialized instruction, speech and language therapy, and assistive technology.

Arizona Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (AzEHDI) and newborn screening

Arizona screens newborns for hearing loss, and AzEHDI coordinates the follow-up when a screen is not passed. If a diagnostic evaluation has not happened after a referred screen, this is the program to call — delay at this stage has consequences that compound.

Contact: Arizona Department of Health Services — azdhs.gov, newborn screening program

Guide By Your Side — Arizona Hands & Voices

For families of a newly identified child, often the single most useful call. Trained parent guides who have raised a child who is deaf or hard of hearing provide unbiased information about communication options, connect families with deaf and hard of hearing adult mentors, and help families work with their providers. Unbiased means exactly that — the program does not advocate for any one communication approach.

Eligibility: Any Arizona family with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing.

Cost: Free to all Arizona families.

Contact: executivedirector@azhv.org — azhv.org

EAR Foundation of Arizona — HEAR for Kids

Phoenix-based, and particularly valuable in the early years. Provides loaner hearing aids, primarily for children with newly identified hearing loss, so that a child is not left unaided while funding is arranged. Also provides permanent hearing aids and earmolds for families meeting financial criteria, and vouchers for audiology or medical evaluations where cost is a barrier to assessment.

Eligibility: Children ages 0 to 18 living in Arizona. Income-based. Families covered by AHCCCS, KidsCare or other insurance covering hearing aids are not eligible for devices, though evaluation vouchers are worth asking about regardless.

How to apply: Through the child's audiologist. Schools, Head Start staff and medical professionals can request evaluation vouchers on a family's behalf.

Contact: Lylis Olsen — 602-690-3975 — hearforkids@earfoundationaz.com — earfoundationaz.com

Time limited: the evaluation vouchers end after December 2026.

The HEAR for Kids audiology and medical evaluation vouchers will no longer be available after December of this year. If cost is a barrier to getting a child evaluated, apply now rather than later. Confirm the current status of the loaner and permanent hearing aid programs at the same time, since those may be affected as well.

Desert Voices — birth to five programs

A Phoenix listening and spoken language program for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, serving infants from as young as four weeks through age five or six, with the goal of preparing each child and family to mainstream into the school of their choice.

Little Listeners: Individual parent coaching sessions for the earliest learners.

Jump Start: A transitional program between early coaching and classroom placement.

Toddler Program: Class-based instruction for toddlers.

Preschool: Classroom-based instruction through the preschool years.

Cost: Tuition-based, with substantial scholarship funding available — the program awarded \$235,000 in scholarships in a recent school year. Ask about assistance rather than assuming the tuition figure is what a family will pay.

Contact: 3426 E. Shea Boulevard, Phoenix, AZ 85028 — 602-224-0598 — info@desert-voices.org — desert-voices.org

Their audiology clinic operates at the same address, so families can often combine audiological care and early intervention programming in one place.

Head Start and Early Head Start

Early Head Start serves birth to three and Head Start serves three to five, both at no cost to eligible families. Children with disabilities have reserved enrollment slots, and programs are required to support children with identified needs. Worth pursuing alongside early intervention rather than instead of it.

Part 2 — School age through transition

Children's Rehabilitative Services (CRS)

The most significant medical funding program in Arizona for a child with hearing loss, and the first place to look at any age under 21. Administered through AHCCCS, CRS covers hearing aids, earmolds and fitting, replacement every three years, and a two-year replacement warranty, alongside specialty services including ENT, genetics and ophthalmology. Care is coordinated through multispecialty interdisciplinary clinics.

Eligibility: Under age 21, Arizona resident, U.S. citizen or qualified alien, with a qualifying medical condition. Most hearing impairments qualify. Must be enrolled in an AHCCCS acute health plan or ALTCS.

Cost: No cost. CRS coordinates benefits with private insurance where a family has both.

Contact: AHCCCS 602-417-4000 or 1-800-654-8713. Office for Children with Special Health Care Needs 602-542-1860. Referrals go to the AHCCCS Division of Member and Provider Services.

If a child is not currently on AHCCCS, establishing eligibility is often the highest-value single step available, because CRS sits behind it.

School services and equipment

Once a student is eligible for special education, classroom hearing technology is the school's responsibility, not the family's. This includes remote microphone systems, captioning and speech-to-text, and note-taking support. A school must also ensure the external components of a surgically implanted device are functioning during the school day, though it is never responsible for buying or replacing the implant or processor itself.

Arizona Vocational Rehabilitation and Pre-Employment Transition Services

Available from age 14 through Pre-ETS, and into adulthood through Vocational Rehabilitation. VR can in some circumstances assist with hearing technology tied to employment or postsecondary goals, and provides job coaching, training support and assistive technology assessment. Routinely overlooked because families assume VR is for adults only. Open a case early.

Contact: des.az.gov/services/employment/rehabilitation-services/vocational-rehabilitation-vr

Part 3 — Any age, statewide

Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing (ACDHH)

The statewide information and referral center for hearing loss, and administrator of the Arizona Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program.

AzTEDP provides: Free telecommunications equipment — amplified telephones, captioned telephones, Bluetooth options, TTYs, speech devices, and signaling, flashing or vibrating alerting devices.

Eligibility: Arizona residents who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind or speech-impaired. No income requirement and no age restriction.

Cost: Free.

Contact: 100 N. 15th Ave, Suite 104, Phoenix, AZ 85007 — 602-542-3365 — toll free 1-866-223-3412 — videophone 602-761-9541 — acdhh.org

Apply regardless of financial circumstances. There is no means test, and alerting devices matter for safety at home at every age.

Community Hearing Aid Program (CHAP)

An Arizona charity providing new and refurbished hearing aids, with all repairs covered and a replacement aid if the original cannot be repaired.

Eligibility: Arizona residency, total household income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Cost: \$75 application fee per hearing aid; no further cost.

Contact: Kimberly Langer-Roedel — 623-748-8814 — theearlady@cox.net — communityhearingaidprogram.org

Desert Voices Audiology

Pediatric audiology serving birth through age 18, including cochlear implant fitting and programming. Flexible payment options and financial assistance for qualifying families. Their birth to five education programs are described in Part 1.

Contact: 3426 E. Shea Boulevard, Phoenix, AZ 85028 — 602-224-0598 — dvaudiology.org

Listening and spoken language therapy providers

For families pursuing listening and spoken language, therapy from a provider with LSLS credentials is different in kind from general speech therapy. An LSLS-certified provider is trained specifically in developing listening and spoken language in children who are deaf or hard of hearing, and in coaching parents to carry that work into daily routines. Arizona has relatively few, so it is worth seeking them out directly.

HearTalkGrow

Services are provided by a certified Listening and Spoken Language Specialist and Auditory-Verbal Therapist who is also a certified Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and a certified Special Education Teacher, with more than ten years in early intervention and itinerant services.

Services: Auditory-verbal therapy for listening and spoken language development and hearing device use; family coaching and caregiver training; itinerant Teacher of the Deaf services through partnerships with schools; special education and developmental special instruction; and social-emotional and motor skill development for the birth to five years.

Also serves: Children with Down syndrome, autism, cognitive delay, auditory processing differences and language delays, alongside the specialty in deaf and hard of hearing.

Ages: Birth through grade 12, and all ages for listening and spoken language services. All communication modalities welcome.

Delivery: Statewide across Arizona, both virtual and in person. The virtual option makes LSLS therapy reachable for families outside the Phoenix and Tucson metro areas, where in-person LSLS providers are scarce.

Resources: Home curriculum guides and materials designed for families to use between sessions — useful where sessions are spaced out or a family wants structured activities to continue the work at home.

Payment: Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) funds accepted, and self-pay options available.

Contact: (585) 484-7697 — amber@hearttalkgrow.com — hearttalkgrow.com

Zimmerman Speech & Hearing Center

Auditory-verbal therapy, evaluations, and post cochlear implant therapy, with an LSLS-certified speech-language pathologist. They work with children with hearing loss from first amplification through the early stages of language and into the school years, and provide speech therapy for all ages.

Contact: 4700 S. McClintock Drive, Suite 135, Tempe, AZ 85282 — 602-919-2068 or 480-347-0853 — sally@zimmermanspeech.com — zimmermanspeech.com

Encircle Families (formerly Raising Special Kids)

Arizona's federally designated Parent Training and Information Center, and the organization to call when a family does not know which door to knock on first. Parent-to-parent mentoring matched by diagnosis, family support and coaching, transition navigation, and help understanding special education and complex systems of care.

Phoenix: 5025 E. Washington Street, Suite 204, Phoenix, AZ 85034 — 602-242-4366

Statewide toll free: 1-800-237-3007 (within Arizona)

Tucson: 520-441-4007 **Yuma:** 928-444-8803

Contact: info@encirclefamilies.org — encirclefamilies.org

Because they hold the Parent Training and Information Center designation under IDEA, their special education assistance is free and independent of any school or district. Worth saying to families explicitly, since many assume this kind of help must be paid for.

Arizona Hands & Voices

Parent-driven support for families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing, unbiased as to communication approach. Runs Guide By Your Side and maintains an Arizona resource list.

Contact: azhv.org

Sertoma and Lions Clubs

Seven Sertoma clubs operate in Arizona, and Lions clubs throughout Maricopa County. Both fund hearing assistance locally with criteria set club by club, so contact the nearest club directly rather than relying on national guidance.

Sertoma: 1-816-333-8300 — sertoma.org

Arizona ABLE account

A tax-advantaged savings account for a person whose disability began before age 26. Funds can be used for qualified disability expenses including assistive technology, therapies and health care, without affecting means-tested benefit eligibility up to the applicable limits. Useful for accumulating money toward predictable future costs such as processor upgrades.

Contact: az.savewithable.com

Part 4 — National programs

Cochlear Implant Awareness Foundation — Hear Again Program

The most directly relevant national program for cochlear implant equipment. CIAF operates an equipment bank rather than a cash grant program, matching eligible applicants with donated equipment from inventory. The manufacturer-specific application must be completed in full; if a match is found, their program director contacts the recipient's implant audiologist or physician directly.

Contact: ciafonline.org/get-help — info@ciafonline.org

UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation

Medical grants for expenses not covered, or not fully covered, by a family's commercial health plan, applied after the commercial plan pays.

Eligibility: Child 16 or younger at application. Must be covered by a commercial health benefit plan. Families on AHCCCS, ALTCS or KidsCare are not eligible. Income limits apply by family size.

Contact: 952-992-4459 — uhccf.org

Note the mirror-image relationship with CRS: CRS requires AHCCCS, while UHCCF excludes it. A family will generally qualify for one or the other, not both.

Starkey Foundation — Hear Now

Provides Starkey hearing aids to individuals qualifying under national poverty guidelines with no other resources for hearing aids. The family remains responsible for evaluation, a processing fee, batteries, extended warranty and fitting costs, and pediatric audiologists are not always participating providers.

Contact: 1-800-648-4327 for eligibility; 1-800-328-9602 for applications — starkeyfoundation.org

Others worth checking

- **AG Bell Association.** Financial aid and hearing technology resources for families, alongside its scholarship program. agbell.org/financial-aid
- **First Hand Foundation.** Grants for children's health-related needs not covered by insurance, including hearing technology.
- **Miracle-Ear Foundation.** Assists with hearing aids for individuals with limited income.
- **Hearing Charities of America.** Affiliated with Sertoma; supports hearing health projects and equipment.
- **The implant center.** Ask directly whether they hold a loaner pool. Implant centers often have informal access to short-term equipment that is never advertised.

Part 5 — Scholarships

Most are for graduating seniors or undergraduates, so the useful action earlier in high school is to note the criteria and keep documentation of hearing loss and academic record current.

- **Sertoma Scholarships.** \$1,000 scholarships for deaf or hard of hearing high school seniors and undergraduates with clinically significant bilateral hearing loss, plus graduate scholarships in audiology or speech-language pathology. sertoma.org
- **AG Bell College Scholarship Program.** College scholarship program for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and use listening and spoken language. agbell.org

- **Louise Tumarkin Zazove Foundation.** Scholarships for students with significant bilateral hearing loss pursuing higher education. ltzfoundation.org
- **Travelers Protective Association Scholarship Trust.** Scholarships for students with hearing loss. Confirm current terms and deadlines.

Part 6 — Insurance and public coverage

- **AHCCCS and EPSDT.** For anyone under 21 on AHCCCS, the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment provision requires medically necessary services and equipment even where an adult would not be covered. This is a strong basis for hearing technology and therapy requests, and the argument should be made explicitly rather than submitted as a general request.
- **KidsCare.** Arizona's CHIP program, for families whose income is above the AHCCCS limit. Worth checking if coverage was recently lost.
- **A caution about SSI.** If SSI eligibility ends, categorically linked AHCCCS coverage may end with it. Confirm status directly rather than assuming coverage continues. An SSA determination can generally be appealed within 60 days of the notice.
- **Private insurance — a common gap.** Many insurers will not authorize a replacement processor until the device is five years old, while upgrade warranties may run only three, leaving a gap where neither covers it. Ask about manufacturer repair pricing before pursuing a replacement claim.

Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA)

Arizona's ESA program deposits state education funding into an account a family directs themselves. It is worth understanding because it can pay for therapies and educational services that no other program on this list covers — but it carries a trade-off that must be understood before signing.

Eligibility: Universal for K-12 students eligible to attend Arizona public schools, and specifically including preschool students with disabilities and students with an IEP, MET report, 504 plan or independent evaluation. Also children of parents who are legally blind, deaf or hard of hearing.

Amount: Approximately 90% of what the state would have spent on that student in public school. A disability designation affects the amount, so students with documented needs generally receive more.

Can pay for: Speech, occupational and physical therapy from licensed practitioners; educational evaluations from qualified examiners; assistive technology and hardware supporting educational access; curriculum and instructional materials; tuition at participating private schools. Listening and spoken language therapy is provided by some ESA-accepting practitioners.

Apply: esaportal.azed.gov — ADE reviews within 30 days, after which the family signs the ESA contract to activate funding.

The trade-off: accepting ESA means withdrawing from public school.

A student on an ESA cannot be enrolled in a public district school, charter school or public online school. That means giving up the IEP, the entitlement to a free appropriate public education, and the procedural protections that come with it — including the right to an evaluation, prior written notice, and dispute resolution. For a family whose child is well served at school, this is usually the wrong trade. For a family whose needs are not being met and who want to direct services themselves, it can be the right one. It should be a deliberate decision, made with full information, and not a step taken because ESA was the first funding anyone mentioned.

Part 7 — Accessibility rights and accommodations

Funding is only half the picture. Much of what makes daily life accessible is not something a family buys — it is something the law already requires, provided free, on request. These rights apply at every age.

The core right: effective communication

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, a person with a communication disability is entitled to the auxiliary aids and services necessary for effective communication. In practice that means qualified sign language interpreters, real-time captioning, assistive listening devices, and written materials in alternative formats.

- **Hospitals and health care.** A hospital or medical provider must provide an interpreter for appointments. A person cannot be required to bring their own interpreter, and family members or companions cannot be made to interpret.
- **Government agencies.** Public meetings require interpreters on advance request. Courts, schools, licensing offices and public agencies are all covered.
- **Businesses open to the public.** Restaurants, theaters, entertainment venues, gyms, retail. Movie theaters are required to provide captioning devices for films distributed with captions.
- **Housing.** Homeowners associations and property management companies are covered, and reasonable modifications include visual alerting systems.
- **Employers.** During hiring, training and job performance. Reasonable accommodations are required unless they impose undue hardship.

The cost of providing these is carried by the covered entity, never charged to the person requesting them.

Disability Rights Arizona

Arizona's protection and advocacy organization. Provides legal representation, advocacy, outreach and training on communication access in public accommodations, health care, government services and employment — at no cost to clients. The place to go when a request for accommodation has been refused.

Phoenix: 602-274-6287 or 1-800-927-2260

Tucson: 520-327-9547 or 1-800-922-1447

Contact: center@disabilityrightsaz.org — disabilityrightsaz.org

Emergency access

- **Text-to-911.** Text-to-911 is available statewide in Arizona, including the Maricopa region. Text the numbers 911 with the location and the nature of the emergency. Where possible a voice call still reaches a dispatcher faster, so text-to-911 is for situations where speaking is not possible or not safe.
- **Emergency registries.** Many jurisdictions allow residents to register household information — including that someone in the home is deaf or hard of hearing — so it appears to dispatchers automatically. Worth setting up before it is needed.
- **Home alerting.** Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms with strobe or bed-shaker components, doorbell signalers and weather alerts. Available through AzTEDP at no cost and no means test.

Telecommunications and everyday access

- **Relay and captioned telephone services.** Free nationwide services connecting standard telephone users with people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired. Captioned telephone service displays the other party's words in real time.
- **Hearing loops.** Increasingly installed in theaters, places of worship and public venues. A telecoil in a hearing aid or processor picks the signal up directly. Ask venues whether a loop is installed, and ask the audiologist whether the device has an active telecoil.
- **Air travel.** Under the Air Carrier Access Act, airlines must provide accessible communication of safety briefings, gate announcements and boarding information on request.
- **Hearing service dogs.** Trained to alert to doorbells, alarms, telephones and a person's name. Considered service animals under the ADA, with the same access rights.

Education and employment access

- **Postsecondary education.** There is no IEP and no 504 team after high school. A student must self-identify to the disability services office, provide documentation, and request accommodations. This is a learnable skill and should be taught before graduation, not after.
- **What colleges must provide.** Accommodations may include interpreters, captioning, note-taking support, priority seating and assistive listening technology. Colleges must provide these at no cost to the student.
- **Job Accommodation Network.** A free national service providing confidential guidance on workplace accommodations for hearing loss, for both employees and employers. askjan.org

What each need maps to

Need	Where to look
Birth to three services	AzEIP, with deaf and hard of hearing services through ASDB's Early Learning Program. Referral by anyone at 1-888-592-0140.
Age three to five services	The local school district or charter, under an IEP. Free.
CI processors and repair	Manufacturer warranty first, then private insurance or AHCCCS/EPST, then the CIAF equipment bank.
Hearing aids and earmolds	CRS, HEAR for Kids, CHAP, Starkey Hear Now, Lions AHAP.
Audiology evaluations	CRS, Desert Voices financial assistance, AHCCCS/EPST. HEAR for Kids vouchers until December 2026 only.
Therapies	AHCCCS/EPST and CRS. School-based services through the IEP. ESA funds, with the trade-off noted in Part 6. LSL providers listed in Part 3.
Alerting and telecom equipment	AzTDP — free, no income test, no age limit.
Classroom hearing technology	The school, under an IEP.
Interpreters and captioning in public	The covered entity, free, on request, under the ADA.
Help when access is refused	Disability Rights Arizona — free.
Understanding the system	Encircle Families and Guide By Your Side — both free.
Future education costs	Sertoma, AG Bell and Zazove scholarships; ABE account savings.

Suggested order of approach

1. Confirm current health coverage. Everything else depends on it.
2. For a child under three, refer to AzEIP today. No physician referral is needed and anyone can make the referral.
3. For a newly identified child of any age, contact Guide By Your Side.
4. If on AHCCCS, pursue a CRS designation. If not, check AHCCCS and KidsCare eligibility.
5. Check manufacturer warranty before treating any equipment failure as a funding problem.
6. Apply to AzTDP regardless of income — there is no means test.
7. Contact the EAR Foundation about evaluation vouchers if cost is a barrier to assessment — these end after December 2026, so do this now rather than later.
8. Open a Vocational Rehabilitation case at age 14 or older.
9. Approach national programs last. Most are slower, and several require a denial letter first.

Every child deserves to be understood.

Language grows where it's nurtured.

Hear Talk Grow • amber@heartalkgrow.com • (585) 484-7697 • heartalkgrow.com

Auditory-verbal therapy, listening and spoken language services, and family coaching across Arizona — virtual and in person.

*Program terms, income limits and contact details change. Confirm current criteria directly with each organization before applying. Compiled August 2026.
This guide is informational and is not financial, medical or legal advice.*