

Help Me Grow connects at-risk children with necessary community based services. The *Help Me Grow* (HMG) National Network consists of more than 25 affiliate states that are at various stages of implementation of the HMG system model, intended to advance children's optimal health and development. Across the network, affiliates serve more than 50,000 children and families annually. At the local level, each affiliate leverages information about its HMG population to ensure children are successfully linked to helpful programs and services and to continuously improve the ability to support developmental promotion, early detection, referral and linkage through ongoing program evaluation and by tracking key gaps in the system. Local evaluations have highlighted the cost effectiveness of HMG and the impact of HMG on enhancing protective factors among children and families.

Sarah Zucker, Program Specialist for Innovation and Collaboration at the *Help Me Grow* National Center answered some key questions for us. You can reach out to Sarah to find out more about *Help Me Grow* at szucker@connecticutchildrens.org.

1. What is value add of *Help Me Grow* to child health care providers?

Child health care providers are uniquely positioned to identify developmentally vulnerable children. However, child health care providers often face challenges in identifying early signs of developmental or behavioral concerns, and even when needs are recognized, keeping comprehensive and updated information on community-facing services is difficult. Also, successful connection to those programs is time-consuming.

Help Me Grow (HMG) is defined by the integration and cohesion of four core components:

1. Child Health Care Provider Outreach (education to providers on developmental promotion, detection, intervention)
2. Centralized Access Point (supports connection to community-based programs/services)
3. Family and Community Outreach (promotion/advocacy for developmental promotion, early identification, intervention)
4. Data Collection (evaluate gaps, capture impact)

HMG supports community-based pediatricians by enhancing their effective developmental promotion and early detection activities for all children and families. This support is provided through educating and motivating providers to conduct systematic surveillance and screening of young children, as well as providing community-based pediatricians with access to a centralized access point that can serve as a care coordination arm for busy pediatric primary care practices.

2. For child health care providers that are in states that have access to *Help Me Grow*, how can they connect to their state program?

To find out if your state is a HMG affiliate, you can visit the *Help Me Grow* National Center website www.helpmegrownational.org. Click on your state's link for the name and contact information of the individual serving as the HMG lead in your area. This person may be able to connect you and your practice to in-office trainings, resources and materials, and other partners in your community so that you may integrate HMG and its care coordination services into your daily work and better support your patient families. Some states also work with the *Help Me Grow* National Center to engage in practice based QI projects that focus on the core components of the HMG system. Additionally, staff at the HMG National Center is always willing to facilitate an introduction and connection to the HMG lead in your state. Contact us by email or phone any time.

3. For those child health care providers whose states do not have *Help Me Grow*, how would you recommend that they advocate for a resource?

For those states that do not have a *Help Me Grow* system in place but an interested child health provider is willing to advocate for the resource, the National Center advises seeking out existing early childhood multi-sector coalitions or collaboratives within their community of practice. There are a number of existing initiatives in most communities that align with and support the *Help Me Grow* system and child health is one of many sectors engaged in reforming policies and practices to support early childhood and family development. The *Help Me Grow* National Center has many contacts throughout the country and is always seeking to connect people, providers and opportunities. An easy first step is to reach out to the local/state chapter of the AAP and discuss their strategies for addressing the AAP's recent poverty/toxic stress statement. Across the HMG national network, various different types of organizations, such as state agencies, private non-profits, universities, and medical centers can and do serve as the HMG Lead

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Entity, providing administrative and fiscal oversight and initially helping to identify and coordinate partners into a Leadership Team that will guide the *HMG* system as it evolves.

Thank you to Sarah and the team at *Help Me Grow* for sharing this valuable information about a model that integrates care for children and youth.