



## **FLORIDA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL, INC.**

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### **Help Me Grow Florida**

#### **The Council supports funding for Help Me Grow Florida to expand and strengthen the Help Me Grow Network and System.**

Help Me Grow Florida (HMGF) is a unique, comprehensive, and integrated statewide system designed to address the need for early identification of a child's developmental and/or behavioral concerns, and then to link children and their families to community-based developmental and behavioral services and supports. It is an effective system because its efforts revolve around uniting a community to address the need for early detection through the screening of children and building connections to community-based services and supports to address their needs. First initiated in Connecticut in 2002, Help Me Grow is now in 23 states across the nation.

There are four components to Help Me Grow Florida:

- A centralized telephone access point that assists families of young children with early childhood questions, conducts basic child developmental screening, and links families with sources of support and services to address concerns about a child's health, development, behavior and learning in a child's first eight years of life.
- Child health care provider outreach to educate and motivate physicians and other child health care providers to conduct child developmental screenings, and use the HMGF telephone access point.
- Community outreach to develop partners in the local community, promote HMGF, and inform families and the community of the importance of child screening and role of HMGF.
- Data collection to understand all aspects of the HMGF system, including the identification of gaps and barriers in order to provide more effective services.

The 2014 Florida Legislature appropriated \$2 million to establish a Help Me Grow Florida State Coordinating Office, provide an infrastructure for a state Help Me Grow Florida program, and to launch 3-5 additional HMGF sites. With this funding a State Coordinating Office was established, 5 HMGF sites were implemented reaching 19 counties, and 6 strategic plans were developed to implement HMGF in additional sites in 2015-2016. As part of this plan, physician and early education training was developed, public awareness resources to promote HMGF were created, a HMGF Florida website was established, a statewide common database referral system is being implemented, and a third party project evaluation was conducted.

The 2015 Florida Legislature continued funding Help Me Grow Florida with an allocation of \$1,883,957 to expand HMGF in Florida. With this funding the State Coordinating office will continue to support the implementation of HMGF across the state. The 5 HMGF sites will continue to operate HMGF, and a minimum of 4 new HMGF sites will be implemented. With the addition of these new HMGF sites, the counties with HMGF services will grow from 21 to at least 29.

Already, data from April-June 2015 indicates that the number one concern that parents present are around their child's development and 89% of callers had not received support for a delay or diagnosis.