

Help Me Grow

Building Early Childhood Infrastructure

The Help Me Grow (HMG) initiative helps unify and coordinate efforts to address the needs of pregnant women, infants, young children, parents and families. Working closely with state and local early childhood stakeholders, HMG aligns early childhood efforts with the Departments of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Education, and DCF. HMG also works with other public and private partners to facilitate linkages across programs, disciplines and sectors—prenatal/parent and child health, behavioral health, home visiting, Head Start, family support, social services, child care, preschool and elementary education, early intervention, special education, and child welfare.

Services

The positive impacts of HMG are based on universal, early surveillance, screening, detection and linkage for all children birth through age eight. Instead of providing direct services, HMG offers a systems approach for improving access to existing community resources and services across sectors, including child health care, early care and education, and family support. Through comprehensive physician and community outreach, and establishing centralized information and referral centers (“central intake”), families are linked with needed services and supports.

Through its system wide approach, HMG seeks to:

- Expand infant and child developmental and social-emotional screenings in early care and education settings statewide
- Simplify connections for pediatric and health care providers to community services for families of infants and young children in their care.
- Assist parents and families get connected with medical homes, home visiting and other community programs, early intervention, early childhood education, and family support services.
- Identify systems partners (including providers and parents) communication, training and support needs.

Anticipated Outcomes

HMG promotes infant and child health, development, and social-emotional well-being; early learning and school readiness; and helps to prevent child neglect and abuse. HMG works with partners to improve the quality and availability of services at the state and local level, and eliminate disparities through early childhood systems integration.

QUICK FACTS

- In New Jersey, it is estimated that 27% of children between 4 months and 5 years old are at moderate to high risk for developmental, behavioral and/or emotional problems (source: 2013 NJ Baby Facts – Zero to Three).
- Help Me Grow is fully aligned with the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant funded by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).
- DCF funds central intake in 7 counties—Cumberland/Salem/Gloucester, Essex, Middlesex/Somerset and Passaic.
- RTT-ELC includes the HMG framework to help improve developmental screening and linkage across the state.