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HELP ME GROW NATIONAL CENTER SECURES GENEROUS INVESTMENT TO MITIGATE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

HARTFORD, Conn. – Help Me Grow National Center, a program of Connecticut Children's Office for Community Child Health, will further its support of vulnerable children and families across the country thanks to a three-year grant from The JPB Foundation.

The multi-year award will enable the National Center to expand its nationwide effort to help young children and their families overcome poverty-related stressors so they are better positioned to achieve success in school and in life. It will also allow the National Center to develop a framework to measure the impact of its work.

“We have long recognized the value that Help Me Grow brings to early childhood systems and are thankful that The JPB Foundation is investing in our capacity to take this work to the next phase,” said Kimberly Martini-Carvell, the executive director of Help Me Grow National Center. “This funding enables us to invest in bringing Help Me Grow to new communities, in strengthening the model where it is already in place, and in learning more about how we can maximize our impact through this approach.”

Research has shown that children from low-income families face greater deficits in kindergarten readiness, which impacts long-term academic success, leads to greater high school dropout rates and hinders future career success. The Help Me Grow model supports communities in promoting the early identification of developmental and behavioral concerns in at-risk children, which is a population that too often goes undiagnosed and untreated. Once identified, Help Me Grow affiliates connect children to helpful services in order to enhance their developmental trajectories and better prepare them for school success.

“Ensuring community capacity to mitigate the adverse effects of poverty and toxic stress requires outside-of-the-box thinking,” said Barbara Picower, the president and chair of The JPB Foundation. “We are encouraged by the scale of Help Me Grow at both a national and local level, its emphasis on embedding innovations and interventions within the context of comprehensive system building, and its potential to inspire a shared vision of strengthening families to promote optimal health, well-being, and development.”

Grant Description

The grant will enable the National Center to expand its nationwide affiliate network and strengthen the support it provides to current affiliates. For example, the National Center will connect affiliates to early childhood experts at Connecticut Children's Office for Community

Child Health, the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut, as well as position affiliates to strengthen their portfolios by adopting and scaling proven local strategies that enhance Help Me Grow model components and address toxic stress in vulnerable young children and their families. The grant also allows for the creation of a national steering committee comprised of key partners in early childhood system building to guide new strategies to further enhance the collective impact of their work.

The grant also funds research to develop a groundbreaking framework for measuring both the short- and long-term return on investment (ROI) related to Help Me Grow initiatives, which may also have profound implications for documenting ROI in the larger early childhood field. While past research has shown a substantial ROI for early childhood initiatives, data related to cross-sector community investments, such as Help Me Grow, remains difficult to pinpoint because outcomes sought (e.g., enhanced literacy, enhanced graduation rates, reduced corrections expenses, higher income levels, etc.) are typically realized years, and even decades, into the future and often take place in sectors outside early childhood services, making them difficult to track.

To establish a framework for measuring ROI, the National Center will partner with the Center for Health Care Strategies, a national resource center providing expertise in health care financing and delivery for low-income populations. The goal will be to identify an appropriate way to measure processes, costs, and outcomes associated with the Help Me Grow approach to developmental promotion and prevention.

“Supporting early childhood development through cross-sector partnerships is more critical than ever in communities across the U.S., yet the return for investing in this type of upstream prevention has not yet been adequately assessed and articulated,” said Allison Hamblin, MSPH, senior vice president at the Center for Health Care Strategies. “We look forward to partnering with Help Me Grow to uncover exciting new ways to capture the value of community-wide efforts focused on improving the health and well-being of at-risk children and families.”

The Help Me Grow National Affiliate Network

Help Me Grow National Center is the only national organization working to coordinate services system-wide in the early childhood sector while providing access to a broad range of interventions specifically targeting vulnerable children and families. The Help Me Grow model was developed by Paul H. Dworkin, MD in 1997 and pilot tested in Hartford, Connecticut. It expanded statewide in 2002 and is now adopted by 28 affiliate states that receive technical assistance and support from Help Me Grow National Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

The nationwide Help Me Grow affiliate network serves more than 81,000 children and families each year through centralized access points where care coordinators field questions from physicians and caregivers, connect families to services, and follow up to ensure such services are beneficial. In addition, Help Me Grow affiliates reach more than 150,000 families through targeted outreach events and media campaigns each year.



“This funding from The JPB Foundation is critical toward expanding the Help Me Grow national footprint and being able to demonstrate the impact of our work on children and families,” stated Paul H. Dworkin, MD, the executive vice president for community child health at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center and the founding director of Help Me Grow National Center. “The long-term return on investment for models such as Help Me Grow cannot be overstated. Being able to document that ROI will expand our appeal to both public and private funders, which will allow us to further help children overcome the stressors of poverty and position them on a path toward academic success, lifelong health and well-being.”

About Connecticut Children’s Medical Center:

Connecticut Children’s Medical Center is the only hospital in Connecticut dedicated exclusively to the care of children and is ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the best children’s hospitals in the nation. With a medical staff of more than 1,000, Connecticut Children’s provides comprehensive, world-class health care in more than 30 pediatric specialties and subspecialties. Connecticut Children’s Medical Center is a not-for-profit organization, which serves as the primary pediatric teaching hospital for the UConn School of Medicine, has a teaching partnership with the Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University and is a research partner of The Jackson Laboratory. Connecticut Children’s Office for Community Child Health is a national leader in community-based prevention and wellness programs.