



Help Me Grow Affiliate States

Massachusetts



MASSACHUSETTS
Department of
Early Education and Care



Our System

Building upon the state's network of early childhood family and community engagement programs (Coordinated Family & Community Engagement programs, or CFCEs), Massachusetts has developed a community-based *Help Me Grow (HMG)* system. CFCEs' outreach and family engagement work, especially with hard-to-reach families, serves as the foundation of this system. CFCE efforts focus on providing support and education to parents and caregivers around child development through the Ages and Stages Questionnaire developmental screening tool, as well as connecting families to appropriate services and resources in their communities.

HMG Massachusetts has also connected the CFCE network with Mass 2-1-1, the state's toll-free information and referral hotline. Mass 2-1-1 has trained their child care specialist staff to refer families to CFCE grantees for local activities to enrich their child's development, including playgroups, developmental screening, home visits, transition to school, and early-literacy support. Current *HMG* efforts target expanding 2-1-1's early childhood referral capacity to include resources on Child Find and family resource centers statewide. *HMG* Massachusetts has also begun to connect the state's cohort of pediatricians to the CFCE network and provide them with a new referral source for families of young children who may require additional support. With the CFCEs as the hub, these coordinated efforts provide the framework to help ensure young children, especially those at-risk for developmental delay, and their families receive the services and supports they need to grow and thrive.

Affiliate since 2011

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How Our State's Strengths Helped Build *Help Me Grow* Massachusetts

Massachusetts is fortunate to have strong working relationships between the *HMG* lead agencies as well as a history of successful collaboration on early childhood initiatives. Key *HMG* staff members are involved in other statewide early childhood initiatives including Race to the Top, and the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Initiative and are well poised to align the objectives and activities of the various projects in order to build an integrated efficient system of care for young children and their families.

Additionally, key state policy initiatives provide a solid foundation for *HMG* system components. First, the Massachusetts Children's Behavioral Health Initiative ensures all young children who are insured by Medicaid have access to standardized developmental screening through well-child visits. Pediatricians have significant training and support on developmental screening tools and practices through this initiative. Second, the state's Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) has invested numerous trainings, funding, and resources into the network of CFCEs, whose mission is to support parents' understanding of their child's development and provide them with the information and resources they need to be advocates for their children, especially for children who are at risk for developmental delays.

Finally, *HMG* Massachusetts has had great success in engaging pediatric leaders as part of the *HMG* Advisory Committee. It was discovered that a consensus exists among these pediatric leaders as well as private and public stakeholders for the need to develop a centralized information and referral source for high-quality early childhood services and supports.

Despite leadership transitions in key agencies, *HMG* Massachusetts does not foresee any difficulties or challenges in continuing its work in the Commonwealth.

How These Strengths Are Incorporated into Our *Help Me Grow* Model

The model below illustrates the collaborative partnerships among the CFCEs, the Mass 2-1-1 hotline, and pediatricians to ensure that all children in Massachusetts are able to access developmental opportunities.



Lessons Learned: Successes

- Robust, multidisciplinary participation in the second statewide advisory committee meeting that yielded action plans and decisions for future steps.
- All 99 CFCEs have received ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE toolkits in English and Spanish, in addition to trainings on how to use the tools with families and how to use the online data entry system.
- Utilizing a cross-agency partnership between the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and EEC, in addition to partnership with one of its advisory committee members, *HMG* Massachusetts was able to coordinate and deliver three state-wide ASQ trainings for DHCD-contracted homeless shelter providers and early education and care providers who work with homeless families and children. These trainings focused on the basics of child development, how homelessness impacts child development, how to work with families regarding their children, and how to use the ASQ itself. Using the *HMG* Massachusetts framework, the shelter staff members were instructed to call Mass 2-1-1 to find the CFCE in their community, should they wish to collaborate on early childhood efforts or if parents in shelters want additional resources and information regarding child development.
- The *HMG* Massachusetts core team is currently coordinating efforts to create an ad hoc advisory group to increase Mass 2-1-1's resource and knowledge capacity.

Lessons Learned: Challenges

- The need to identify funding sources to sustain components of the *HMG* model, particularly the Mass 2-1-1 call center system.
- The need to align with, and avoid duplication of, other related state initiatives.
- The need to ensure that families, providers, and pediatricians in Massachusetts are aware of both the CFCE network and Mass 2-1-1 and how these services can provide assistance in identifying and accessing early education and care resources.