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In the Spotlight

Help Me Grow Champions

Patsy Hampton



**Director, California Project LAUNCH
Manager, Help Me Grow-California**

Patsy Hampton is the Project Director at the WestEd Center for Prevention and Early Intervention, where she directs California Project LAUNCH, a SAMSHA-funded grant operating in 16 states, one tribe, the District of Columbia, and six other local communities to create a public health approach to early childhood. In this capacity, and as manager for *HMG-California*, Patsy works to bring together the many agencies that work on behalf of children ages birth to 8, in order to improve outcomes for children and families in need.

A native of Louisiana, Patsy has lived in California for 16 years.

What is the most positive aspect of your work as Project LAUNCH director and Help Me Grow-California manager?

I have this great job that allows me to work across agencies. As staffing is reduced, workloads increased, and dollars significantly reduced at different agencies around the state, the various staffs have less and less time to think about what might happen beyond their own borders. I get to be a conduit for that: I can connect people who might want to be connected, but perhaps aren't able to create those opportunities. I can help them think about what collaboration could be like, or what it might be like to infuse new practices or models, like *HMG*, into their work. It is very cool to see how it all plays out.

How is California, a large, diverse state, approaching the challenge of expanding HMG statewide?

Let me give you a sense of the size of the state first. Orange County, the first *HMG* replication site, is literally the same geographic size as Connecticut — and it has the same-size population. Trying to do anything statewide here is really daunting, and in any case, there is no new money for anything to happen on a big scale.

At the same time, people are thinking hard about how best to achieve early identification of at-risk children. Many of our counties are really ready to look at how we can be the most collaborative and creative in working across agency and county boundaries so that families can get seamless care. *HMG* is able to walk those boundary lines, to think about families not belonging to an agency, but belonging to the community, and to think about how best to support them.

So, one thing we're doing is developing learning communities across the state for counties that are interested in *Help Me Grow*. We'll select counties in September and spend a year with them, helping to build interest and capacity to implement the *HMG* system. I am really excited for how *HMG* might provide for the children and families of our state.

How is HMG key to improving services for at-risk California kids?

Help Me Grow is the safety net for our kids. It's an opportunity for families to be connected to physicians and appropriate services as early as possible, because we can protect those who are identified early on, at ages two, three, and four, so much better than in Kindergarten.

HMG has great potential for the kids in our state in particular, because our population is very mobile. We miss a lot of kids as families move from county to county. *HMG*, a model that can work across counties, is an opportunity to help us support those kids.

Dr. Dworkin describes *Help Me Grow* as elegant in its simplicity. I love that. It is a very simple and straightforward model. Maybe it isn't always simple for a state to implement, but it's realistic. It makes sense no matter where you sit.

If you are a parent, a resource center, or a Head Start, the HMG model makes sense. That's what makes people so excited — everybody can be part of HMG.