

The goal of Help Me Grow[®] Florida is to promote healthy development for **every** child in our state.

56%

of families served reported their children were **not** in an early care and education setting.

79%

of children served were ages four and younger.

2,728

families received care coordination services.

\$2.47

million invested in Help Me Grow[®] Florida.

2,845

developmental/behavior screenings completed.

Over 50%

of Florida's children have access to Help Me Grow[®] Florida services in 27 counties.

Only 30%

of children with developmental issues are identified before kindergarten

54%

of screenings completed resulted in at least one concern.

\$5.3

million saved through screening services.

27 of 67

counties in Florida had a Help Me Grow[®] program.

2,313

families reported that their children were not receiving services prior to contacting Help Me Grow[®]

76%

families who indicated that early intervention services had a positive impact on their children.



3,356

children received services from Help Me Grow Florida[®].



Action Requested:

Support for Help Me Grow Florida at \$2,457,143, consistent with the Office of Early Learning request, ensures that *Help Me Grow* can expand to six additional counties and provide comprehensive and coordinated services to more children in Florida.

Issue: Nationally, approximately one in six or about 13% of children have one or more developmental disabilities such as autism, intellectual disability, or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and fewer than 30% of children with developmental delays are identified before starting kindergarten, by which time opportunities for treatment may have been missed. The early intervention services that children are able to access as a result of early detection not only improves the chances of a child developing to their full potential, but accrues economic gains. *Help Me Grow* is the most efficient way to link children who need early intervention with needed services. *Help Me Grow* saves the taxpayers money and helps leverage the greatest value from state spending by avoiding duplication of services and by providing better care coordination and more cost-effective screening only for those children who truly need help. *Help Me Grow* promotes healthy development for every child in Florida, therefore addressing the gap of early detection and intervention by providing a centralized access point for information and referral, promoting surveillance and screenings, and educating and informing the community. Catching issues early in life prevents expensive problems in the future, prioritizes limited state resources, and enhances self-reliance. *Help Me Grow* has consistently produced positive results for thousands of families in the state since its inception.

Background: Florida became an affiliate of the Help Me Grow National Network in 2012 with the simultaneous launching of initiatives in Hillsborough and Miami-Dade counties. In 2014, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$2M to establish a Help Me Grow Florida State Coordinating Office providing an infrastructure for the statewide Help Me Grow Florida program. The 2014 appropriation allowed for the launching of an additional five *Help Me Grow* sites serving a total of 19 counties. In 2015, Help Me Grow Florida expanded to an additional four sites serving Florida's families in 27 counties. For FY 2016-17, the Florida Legislature allocated \$2.4M for Help Me Grow Florida allowing *Help Me Grow* to expand its outreach to families, healthcare providers, and community service providers and implementation of community screening events. As of June 2017, two additional counties were added to the Florida network increasing the number of counties served to 29 counties (*over 50% of Florida's children live in these counties*). The Legislative appropriation for 2017-18 was decreased to \$1.8M leading to a reduction of needed resources to reach families where they are.

***Help Me Grow* saved taxpayers more than \$5.3 million by ensuring that children were connected with the appropriate services.** In 2016-17, Fifty-four percent of all screenings conducted by *Help Me Grow* revealed the need for services or interventions and almost half (46%) of HMG screenings showed no need for interventions. Screening through other sources may lead to costly secondary screening and evaluation services for children who may not need it. Through collaboration with healthcare professionals and service providers, *Help Me Grow* navigated existing community resources for parents who suspected their children had a delay or other problem allowing for intervention at the right time – “the critical window.” Children who receive early intervention maintained or showed improvement by an average of 98.5% in self-help, early literacy skills, pro-social behavior, and cognitive development.* Additionally, *Help Me Grow's* ability to screen out children who don't need services directly reduces Medicaid costs, since 78% of children screened by *Help Me Grow* are on Medicaid.

How Help Me Grow Florida Works: Families, child healthcare providers, and community organizations can easily access *Help Me Grow* by dialing 211. Through partnerships with the 211 agencies, *Help Me Grow* is able to leverage resources and connections to community-based resources for families seeking information or a referral to local governmental, health and social services. Additionally, *Help Me Grow* care coordinators remain in contact with the families they serve until they have been successfully connected to one or more services to meet their needs. Comprehensive physician, family, and community outreach, centralized information and referral centers linking families with needed programs and services, and continuous quality improvement are key pillars of the *Help Me Grow* philosophy. Ongoing data collection and analysis are also essential components to identify gaps and barriers to receiving services that children and families may experience. The Children's Forum in Tallahassee, FL administers the Help Me Grow Florida program. For additional information, contact the Children's Forum at (850) 681-7002 or visit the website at: <https://www.helpmegrowfl.org/>.