

Help Me Grow South Carolina and the Foster Care Pathway

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BACKGROUND

Children in foster care continue to be among the most vulnerable populations due to family circumstances that affect the parent's ability to adequately meet the needs of the young child. Help Me Grow South Carolina (HMG SC), through a partnership with the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SC DSS) has served this population since 2013, connecting all children between the ages of 0-5 to services that meet their developmental, behavioral and educational needs.

Through this partnership, HMG SC supports DSS caseworkers and foster parents. As of December 2017, HMG SC has served 508 foster children and 73 children from child welfare and child protective services.



APPROACH

Initial developmental screenings (ASQ3 and ASQ SE-2 for eligible children) are completed by the birth parent(s) or primary caregiver within 72 hours of the child entering foster care, with assistance from the DSS caseworker. Another way a family may connect with Help Me Grow is through a physician referral.

Care coordination is offered to foster families to assist with successful connection to services and alternate referrals/supports if the child is not eligible for Early Intervention (Baby Net – Part C) and Special Education (Part B).

Children who do not have developmental, behavioral, or learning concerns are enrolled in ongoing developmental screening with HMG. Children ineligible for services are also enrolled in HMG SC.

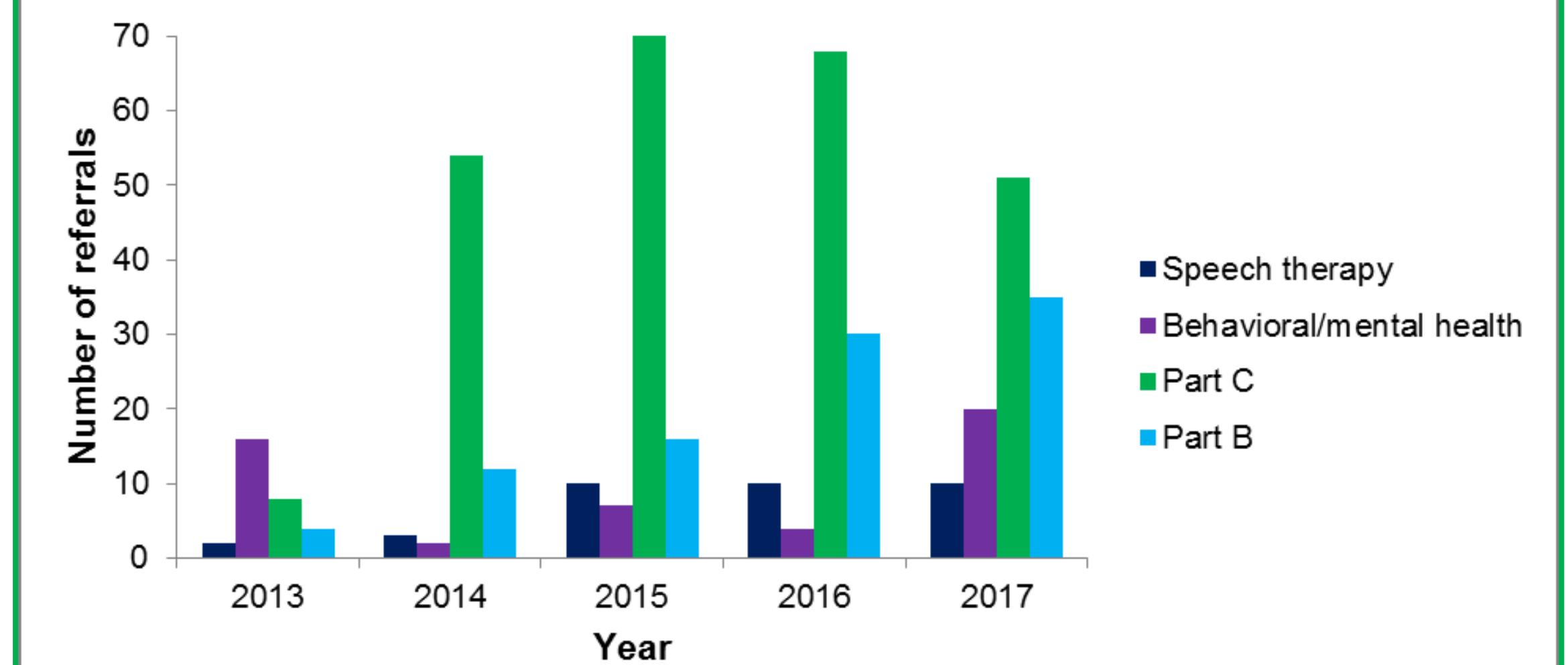
LESSONS LEARNED & OUTCOMES

The biggest concerns reported by caregivers are general developmental concerns, followed by communication delays and behavioral needs. The top four referrals are to Baby Net (Part C), Child Find (Medicaid Part B), speech therapy and behavioral/mental health services.

Common barriers include lack of follow-through on the part of caregivers due to the child's placement changing before service connection, as well lack of communication from the caseworker when a child's placement changes.

HMG SC has successfully connected 90% of our foster children with services that meet their needs.

Top Four Referrals for Foster Children and Children from Child Protective Services, 2013-2017



NEXT STEPS

Our hope is to be able to serve all families of eligible children who are involved in the child welfare system. HMG SC plans to replicate this HMG/DSS partnership in other counties and advocate for a state DSS policy change to require the use of validated developmental screening tools when assessing the developmental needs of children.

