Help Me Grow (HMG) assists families in supporting their young children’s healthy development and helps them easily access resources in the community during times of need. In the face of a global pandemic, the HMG National Center recently surveyed HMG affiliates to learn how COVID-19 has been impacting their efforts to support families, how they are leveraging HMG to activate community responses, and what resources are needed now to meet the current needs. Below is a brief summary of key themes that emerged from affiliate survey responses during this unprecedented health crisis.

Primary emerging trends amongst affiliate responses include:

- **Increase in calls to the HMG Centralized Access Point.** Nearly 50 percent of responses to the survey identified that the HMG Centralized Access Point has seen an increase in calls in response to the conditions of COVID-19.

- **Connecting families to resources.** As COVID-19 rapidly impacts families’ health, economic, and social well-being, HMG affiliates have reported connecting families to resources during this time.

**WHAT CONCERNS ARE FAMILIES CONTACTING THE CENTRALIZED ACCESS POINT FOR?**

- Basic needs, particularly diapers and formula
- Emergency child care
- Educational, at-home activities
- Supportive services via telehealth
- Healthcare

The pandemic has impacted workforce capacity, service utilization, and revenue among community based providers, forcing several affiliates to stay up-to-date with swiftly evolving service changes and updating the HMG resource directory accordingly.

**New Approaches in Outreach to Community Partners and Service Providers**

While some affiliates have noted that outreach has slowed, several affiliates have taken a virtual approach to conducting community meetings, partner meetings, and professional development for service providers. Additional information is needed about how partnerships have been impacted due to COVID-19.

Common Strategies Enacted to Address Family Need

Below are three common strategies affiliates reported utilizing to be able to address family need:

- Connecting with familiar families: HMG affiliates reported they have dedicated time to contacting families with whom they have worked previously in order to maintain connection with them, check-in about their current situation, and potentially offer a re-screen of their child’s development.

- Researching resources: A large amount of our calls with families have involved more problem solving and looking for support instead of concrete referrals to services. "Before the pandemic, about 30% of inquiries received by the program were for families who were looking for family support groups or resources. A large amount of our calls with families involve more problem solving and looking for support instead of concrete referrals to services."

- Utilizing technology: Through the use of mobile phone text messaging, video conferencing, social media, and more, HMG affiliates are relying on technology to stay connected with families to provide updates about connecting to services, child development, at home activities, and reliable information about COVID-19 in their communities.

**Promising Practices to Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration**

Below are two promising practices related to strengthening partnerships and promoting cross-sector collaboration.

- **Rapid Response System**
  
  As family needs related to COVID-19 are emerging and evolving swiftly, one promising practice from Onondaga County, New York has been to utilize a rapid response system approach to quickly identify family need and connect them to services through the county child welfare agency. "Priorities have not changed - responding to callers and providing care coordination and connection to services is still intact." - Help Me Grow Long Island, New York

- **Reflective Supervision**
  
  To aid programs that continue to operate during this time, Indiana is offering elements of reflective supervision to programs in order to provide and support relationship-based services, especially during times of crisis. "We are working with our ‘Learn the Signs. Act Early’ partner to provide virtual training opportunities and supports around infant/toddler mental health." - Help Me Grow Indiana

- **Researching Resources**
  
  The information forwarded includes: steps to getting tested in our state, DPH COVID-19 health help line, and access to the CDC for families. "We have continued to support our stakeholders by providing updates about connecting to services, child development, at home activities, and reliable information about COVID-19 in our communities."

- **Connecting with Familiar Families**
  
  "Priorities have not changed - responding to callers and providing care coordination and connection to services is still intact." - Help Me Grow Long Island, New York

- **Utilizing Technology**
  
  "Current and relevant information released by the GA Department of Public Health has been forwarded to our Centralized Access Point. The information includes webinars, resources for providing care coordination and connection to services, child development, at home activities, and reliable information about COVID-19 in our communities."

For Questions or Additional Information

To learn more about the Help Me Grow National Center and the National Affiliate Network’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit: https://helpmegrownational.org/resources/affiliate-resources-for-reponding-to-covid-19/