

REDUCES DEPENDENCE ON STATE RESOURCES

54%

of screenings completed by Help Me Grow identified at least one concern



79%

of children served are ages four or younger



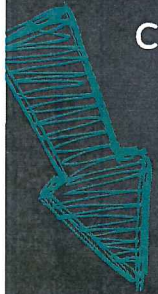
78%

of children served are Medicaid enrollees



Care coordination can cut the long-term costs of services by

50%



In 2016, HMG saved taxpayers

\$5.3M

Source: House Bill 5001, General Appropriations Act

Children who received early intervention maintained or showed improvement by an average of 98.5% in self-help and early literacy skills, pro-social behavior, and cognitive development



State funds

9 sites in 27 counties
Accessible to 50% of Florida's children



In 2016, HMG reached 1.3M individuals through 1,572 events



Source: FY 2015-16 Annual Report to the Board of County Commissioners, Miami-Dade County

Help Me Grow coordinates support for two local funded programs, Hillsborough and Miami-Dade.



Action Requested: Support for Help Me Grow Florida at \$2.5M, consistent with the Office of Early Learning request, ensures that *Help Me Grow* can provide comprehensive and coordinated services to more children in Florida by expanding to an additional six counties for a total of 35 counties.

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 of developmental and/or behavioral issues 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. Better care coordination and more cost-effective screening is provided only for those children who truly need help. *Help Me Grow* promotes healthy development for every child in Florida. Early detection and intervention are critical for optimal outcomes for children, but too often children miss this opportunity. *Help Me Grow* is addressing this gap by providing a centralized access point for information and referral, promoting surveillance and screenings, and educating and informing the community.

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 and an additional five *Help Me Grow* sites were launched 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*). Fifty-four percent of all screenings conducted by *Help Me Grow* in 2016-17 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.* *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. The Legislative appropriation for 2017-18 was decreased to \$1.8M leading to a reduction of needed resources to reach families where they are.

How Help Me Grow Florida Works: *Help Me Grow* works through partnerships with the 2-1-1 agencies in the 29 counties, *Help Me Grow* is able to leverage resources and connections to other community-based resources for families seeking information or a referral to local governmental, health and social services. Families can easily access *Help Me Grow* by dialing 2-1-1. 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. Data informs future planning with community partners to address the needs of Florida's children. ***Help Me Grow* saved taxpayers more than \$5.3 million by ensuring that children were connected to the appropriate services.** 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. 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/>.

*Citations for supporting research is available upon request.