



Help Me Grow[®]

Florida



FY 2023–2024 Annual Report Summary

Community. Collaboration. Connections.

OUR MISSION

To promote healthy development for every child in our state
and for every child to receive routine developmental screenings

OUR VISION

For Florida to have a comprehensive system to support the optimal health,
development, and well-being of all children in Florida

OUR VALUES

Building collaboration among community programs
Providing a centralized access point for information and referral
Promoting surveillance and screenings
Educating and informing the community

www.helpmegrowfl.org 850-487-6300
1650 Summit Lake Drive, Suite 210
Tallahassee, FL 32317





WHAT IS HELP ME GROW?

Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) is a coordinated system of supports that connects children and families to:

- Child developmental and health services
- Virtual resources for children birth to 8
- Parenting tips and information

HMGF is designed to empower families and support their children's healthy development through the implementation of four

Core Components:

-  **Centralized Access Point** – assists families with questions and information on their child's development through care coordination
-  **Family & Community Outreach** - promotes awareness of HMGF to families and community partners
-  **Child Healthcare Provider Outreach** - motivates and encourages medical providers to collaborate with HMGF to provide more comprehensive services to their patients
-  **Data Collection and Analysis** - supports evaluation and guides the system to ensure continuous quality improvement



AUTHORITY & FUNDING



The Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) system is administered by the Children's Forum, Inc. and funded under contract #C1032 by the State of Florida, Division of Early Learning. For fiscal year 2023-2024, the Florida Legislature allocated \$1,808,957 recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund and \$2,691,043 nonrecurring funds from the Child Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund to support HMGF network. During this period, the HMGF State Coordinating Office contracted with twelve affiliate sites and had a memorandum of understanding with one additional affiliate site that sourced their own funding to implement HMGF in their service area.

STATE COORDINATING OFFICE

The HMGF State Coordinating Office (SCO), located at the Children's Forum, Inc. in Tallahassee, FL is responsible for oversight of the administrative, programmatic, and fiscal activities of the Help Me Grow system at the state level.

The SCO provides technical assistance and other resources to its affiliates to ensure successful implementation of Help Me Grow in their respective counties and areas.

MEET THE HELP ME GROW® FLORIDA SCO TEAM



(From left to right) Liz Randall, Denise Bishop, Aly Avila, Brenda Romuald, and Ashley Houk



HELP ME GROW® FLORIDA ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Erin Smeltzer
President and CEO
Children's Forum



Denise Bishop
Chief Operations Officer
Children's Forum



Liz Randall
Senior Director
Help Me Grow® Florida
Children's Forum



Ashley Houk
Data Coordinator
Help Me Grow® Florida
Children's Forum



Brenda Romuald
Program Coordinator
Help Me Grow® Florida
Children's Forum



Aly Avila
Outreach Specialist
Help Me Grow® Florida
Children's Forum



Lauren Wofford
Chief Financial Officer
Children's Forum



Wioleta Gaddy
Contracts and Grants Manager
Children's Forum



Randee Gabriel
Contracts Compliance Coordinator
Children's Forum

Not pictured: Cathy Hall, Contracts and Senior Director, and Matt Damron, Help Me Grow® Florida Contract Compliance Coordinator

HELP ME GROW *in action*

A HMGF care coordinator was contacted by a mother she assisted six years ago. The mother recalled the valuable guidance she received from Help Me Grow for her eldest daughter and sought assistance again upon noticing developmental delays in her two-year-old son. The care coordinator supported the mother in completing both developmental and behavioral screenings, identifying two areas requiring further assessment and evaluation.

After discussing the results and the mother's concerns, a referral was made to Easterseals Florida Treasure Coast Early Steps. The child was deemed eligible for Early Steps and is now benefiting from their services. Despite the time gap, the parent remembered the help offered by Help Me Grow for her daughter and sought assistance once more for her son.



— 2-1-1 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast

OUR IMPACT

The early detection and intervention services provided through the Help Me Grow system are critical for optimal outcomes for children.



5,136

new children served

52%

of children served did not attend an early learning program and might not have otherwise received supports



4,689

referrals to community services and programs made



5,117

new families served

4

average number of care coordination follow-ups per family

73%

of children reached were Medicaid enrollees helping to reduce future dependency

30

physician champions advocated for HMG across the state



126

community-based screening events to bring our services to families and community partners

94%

of children were successfully connected to at least one service



9,221

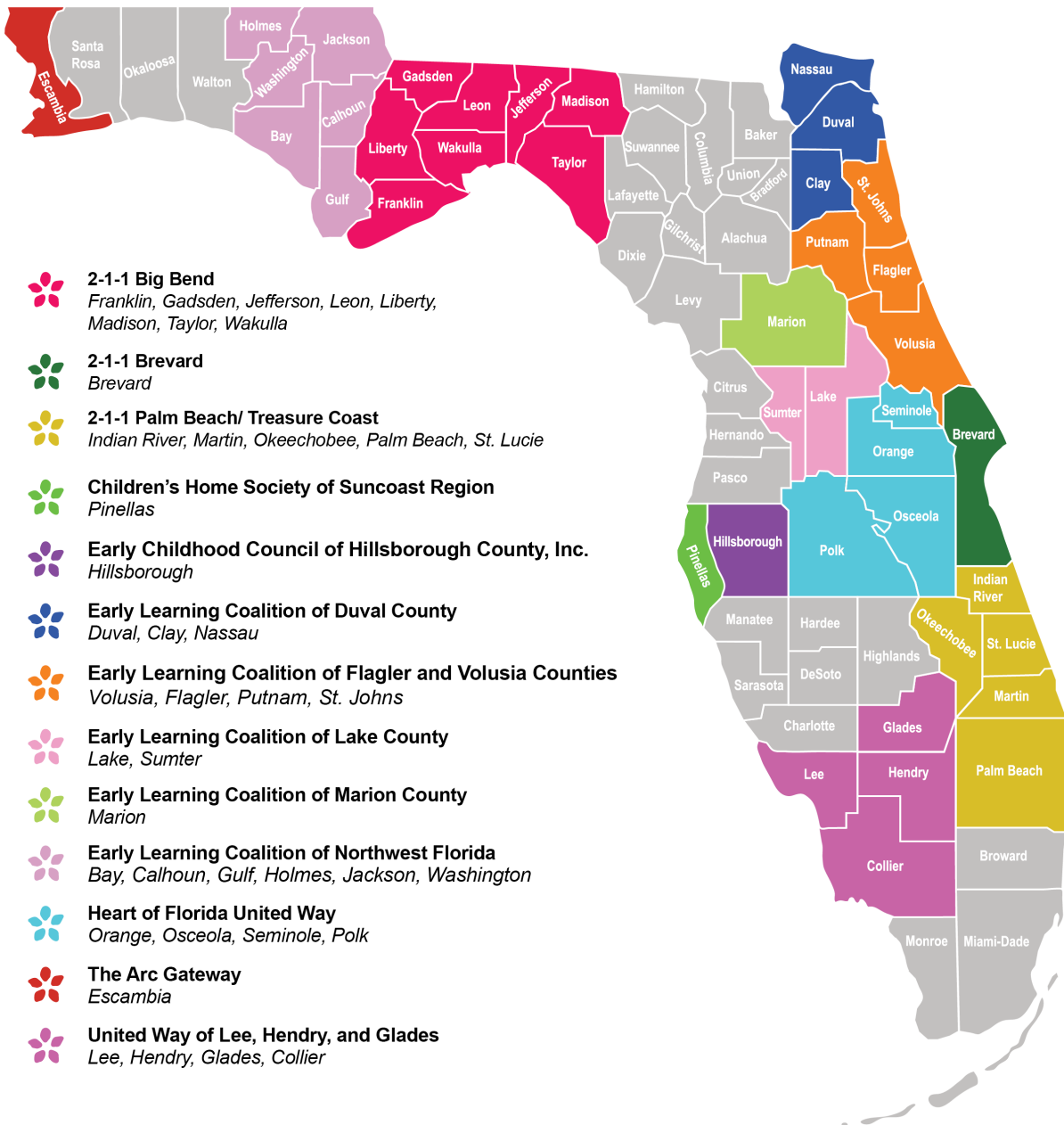
developmental and behavioral screenings completed



OUR AFFILIATE PARTNERS

The local affiliates ensure that the HMGF system builds collaboration across sectors, including early care and education, healthcare, and family support. Families can contact Help Me Grow by dialing 2-1-1 and asking for Help Me Grow or connecting to a care coordinator through the HMGF website. The Help Me Grow care coordinators remain in contact with families they serve until they are successfully connected to a service.

AFFILIATE MAP



BOOKS, BALLS, AND BLOCKS EVENTS

HELP ME GROW® FLORIDA CONNECTS FAMILIES TO RESOURCES TO GIVE CHILDREN THEIR BEST START

Books, Balls, & Blocks (BBB) events are free, fun, family community-screening events for families and children. These events are comprised of various activity stations in which children engage in developmentally appropriate play while their parents complete a valid and reliable developmental questionnaire to pinpoint their child's developmental progress. A trained professional will then review the screening results with the caregiver and provide information and referrals to any supports or services needed.



Viola Esquivel, HMG Care Coordinator from Healthy Start Coalition of Southwest Florida, assisting a parent during a Books, Balls, and Blocks event



Books, Balls, and Blocks event held at the Marion County Public Library Headquarters



The Early Learning Coalition of Flagler and Volusia Counties hosted a Books, Balls, and Blocks event in partnership with Advent

**Books, Balls,
& Blocks!**

1,701

**SCREENINGS COMPLETED
THROUGH BBB EVENTS**

99

**BOOKS, BALLS, AND BLOCKS
EVENTS HELD
THROUGHOUT FLORIDA**

OUR ACTIVITIES

HELP ME GROW ANNUAL MEETING

The Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) Annual Meeting took place on April 17-18th in Orlando, Florida. This gathering offered HMGF affiliates from all over the state a chance to connect, engage in professional growth, and exchange ideas. The event was brimming with valuable insights, allowing affiliates to acknowledge achievements and explore upcoming ventures. Erin Smeltzer, CEO & President of the Children's Forum, delivered an inspiring keynote speech. Following this, a panel on early childhood advocacy featured Cari Miller, Chancellor for Early Learning at the Division of Early Learning, Rachel Tease Ludwig, Vice President of Talent Development for the Future of Work at the Florida Chamber Foundation, and State Representative Dana Trabulsy. Sallie Payne and Patricia Adams from the FDLRS Administration Project delved into Individualized Education Plans and highlighted ways to support families through the process. Maria Avila, the Statewide Early Childhood Coordinator for the Florida Department of Children and Families, along with Heather Pemberton, Program Coordinator for Early Childhood Court, shared insights on Early Childhood Courts and the objectives of the pilot project with HMGF. Michael Winn from RB Oppenheim Associates discussed leveraging the digital marketing, and the meeting concluded with breakout sessions that enabled affiliates to connect with peers in similar roles. Overall, the Annual Meeting was a triumph, igniting innovative ideas and inspiring all attendees.



HMGF Annual Meeting attendees



Erin Smeltzer delivering the keynote

HELP ME GROW NATIONAL FORUM

The Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) State Coordinating Office (SCO) attended the Help Me Grow National Forum in Fort Worth Texas on October 11-13, 2023. This forum showcased HMG affiliate-led content sessions, national partner-led intensive sessions, two keynote speeches, and networking opportunities. The SCO team found the sessions on targeted universalism, value proposition, and sustainability particularly valuable and engaging.

(pictured from left to right) Justine Reina (ELC Lake), Aly Avila, Brenda Romuald, Alyssa Gray (ELC NWFL), Denise Bishop, and Ashley Houk



OUR ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) partnered with RB Oppenheim Associates this year to enhance the visibility of HMGF statewide in a deliberate and strategic manner. RB Oppenheim Associates created 19 videos, which are being utilized on social media platforms, streaming services, and YouTube ads. The firm has concentrated on targeting ads across social media specifically focusing on audiences that would benefit from HMGF services. Additionally, they have designed a toolkit for our affiliates to implement the insights gained from this process in their local public awareness campaigns. This toolkit comprises social media post templates, a variety of captions, the top 4 messages that have been most effective during the campaign, a sample one-month content calendar, guidance on interpreting marketing analytics, and instructions on setting up social media ads.

- 4,106,888 impressions on social media
- 1,315,318 impressions on YouTube
- 17,315 Total Visitors to HelpMeGrowFL.org



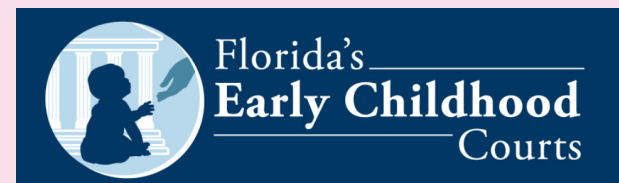
NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE FOR INFANTS & TODDLERS (NCIT)

This year, Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) joined the National Collaborative for Infants & Toddlers (NCIT), a movement dedicated to advocating for the well-being of every child and their families from prenatal to age three. NCIT introduced the Prenatal-to-Three (PN-3) Power-Sharing Initiative to emphasize the significance of investing in policies and systems for this age group in states like Florida. In June 2023, NCIT held a meeting in Arkansas where Ashley Houk, HMGF Data Coordinator, represented the organization. Together, representatives from the five states collaborated on strategies to enhance and empower political support for the specific needs of infants, toddlers, and caregivers.



EARLY CHILDHOOD COURTS PILOT PROJECT

Help Me Grow® Florida (HMGF) has recently collaborated with Early Childhood Courts, a specialized court system dedicated to addressing child welfare issues for infants and toddlers. Together, they aim to enhance family outcomes by adopting Zero to Three's Infant Toddler Court Teams strategy. This method focuses on three essential components: guidance from a trauma-informed judge, Child Parent Psychotherapy, and a diverse team overseen by a community coordinator. By joining forces with HMGF, Early Childhood Courts are initiating a pilot in two counties: Marion and Brevard. This pilot project, running from April 2023 to October 2024, aims to increase the number of children in Early Childhood Courts who receive regular developmental screenings, improve their access to services, and enhance parental and caregiver involvement in their child's growth and education.



HMGF LIST OF GOVERNING TEAM MEMBERS

Erin Smeltzer, MS - President and CEO
Children's Forum, Inc.

Denise Bishop, EdD - Chief Operations Officer
Children's Forum, Inc.

Lesha Buchbinder - Executive Director
Early Learning Coalition of Lake County

Melissa Clements, PhD - Chief Research Officer
Children's Forum, Inc.

Amanda Fraser - Lobbyist
Colodny Fass

Peter Gorski, MD, MPA - Professor
Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, Florida International University; Miller School of Medicine, University of Miami; Help Me Grow Florida Physician Champion

Lisette Levy - Early Learning Program Specialist
Division of Early Learning/ Department of Education

Sharon L'Herrou - President and CEO
2-1-1 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast; Vice President of FLAIRS

Dana Trabulsy - Public Relations and Special Projects Director
Children's Forum, Inc.

Rocio Velazquez - Vice President of Statewide Engagement
Children's Movement

Tia Walton-Walker, PhD - Research and Special Projects Director
Children's Forum, Inc.

Andrea Ward - Child Care Resource and Referral Program Manager
Division of Early Learning/ Department of Education

For more information and program data, please visit www.helpmegrowfl.org

