



Legislative Link

A legislative update provided by the United Way of Florida

Help Me Grow – Phenomenal!

On Tuesday, the House Education Appropriations Subcommittee recommended that [Help Me Grow](#) receive \$2 million to support its work.

Help Me Grow (HMG) is a landmark initiative that will create a system of care in Florida that will link parents of young children with local resources, including developmental screening, I&R, care coordination and an online resource inventory; it will create a community of caregivers that will be able to help a child realize his or her full potential.

HMG will be an integral and invaluable asset to Florida's early learning and child health systems. It informs parents of quality childcare, preschools and VPK programs in their community and helps them register. It has designed a comprehensive statewide system of developmental screenings for children ages birth to five that will arm families with knowledge about special needs to match with early learning programs. HMG also directs parents to necessary health insurance and primary and developmental care, which in turn helps children arrive ready to learn.

Among others, the \$2 million allocation - if included in the final budget - will be used to:

- staff a statewide HMG coordinating office within the DD Council agency;
- develop a database system for statewide coordination of developmental screening, community-based resources for parents and young children, and care coordination plans and outcomes;
- conduct statewide workforce training to build the capacity of counties through 2-1-1 agencies to offer the four components of a Help Me Grow service system;
- organize physician and early childhood professional outreach and education statewide;
- launch a statewide HMG public awareness campaign to promote parent and community knowledge of issues and resources to support the optimal health and development of young children; and
- develop, with consultation from other states, the infrastructure for a web-based portal for parents to directly access an inventory of locally available information and services.

In addition, full-service Help Me Grow programs will be launched in several counties that do not currently have Children's Services Councils. The existing programs that currently operate in Miami-Dade and Hillsborough Counties will serve as models and mentors.

We applaud the House Education Appropriations Subcommittee and strongly urge the House and Senate to recognize the extraordinary benefits HMG will bring to Florida's children, families, communities, and schools by including \$2 million for HMG in the 2014-2015 state budget they will pass by session's end.

For additional information, please contact
the United Way of Florida at: (850) 488-8276.

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