



2024 Annual Report

 Help Me Grow Maine

A Year of Growth & Impact

January 1 – December 31, 2024



Overview of Help Me Grow Maine



The Maine Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) launched Help Me Grow Maine in November 2022. Help Me Grow Maine is a free resource that connects children up to 8 years of age and their families, as well as expecting parents, with information and services related to child development and other family needs. In its first two years, Help Me Grow Maine served 1,558 children. In 2024, the service achieved full implementation status of the Help Me Grow model.

Help Me Grow Maine aims to:

- ▶ Offer ongoing support for families to successfully navigate systems so they can access services they need to support their child's development
- ▶ Make developmental screening universally available across Maine
- ▶ Promote families' knowledge of child development, resilience in times of need, and ability to be their child's best advocate



Throughout the State of Maine, there is an existing grid of resources that works to keep children healthy.

Help Me Grow Maine is a way for all families of children birth to eight, as well as expecting parents, to reach out and be linked with information, resources, and connections to the already-existing services that are a part of the grid here in Maine.



Key Achievements in 2024

- ★ Improved access to basic needs through the Child Passenger Safety Initiative
- ★ Convened Community Leaders Taskforce
- ★ Enhanced language and communication accessibility
- ★ Increased developmental screenings by leveraging partnerships with early childhood providers & educators
- ★ Continued community engagement & partnership through Build and Bloom and many other outreach efforts

Who is Help Me Grow Maine reaching?



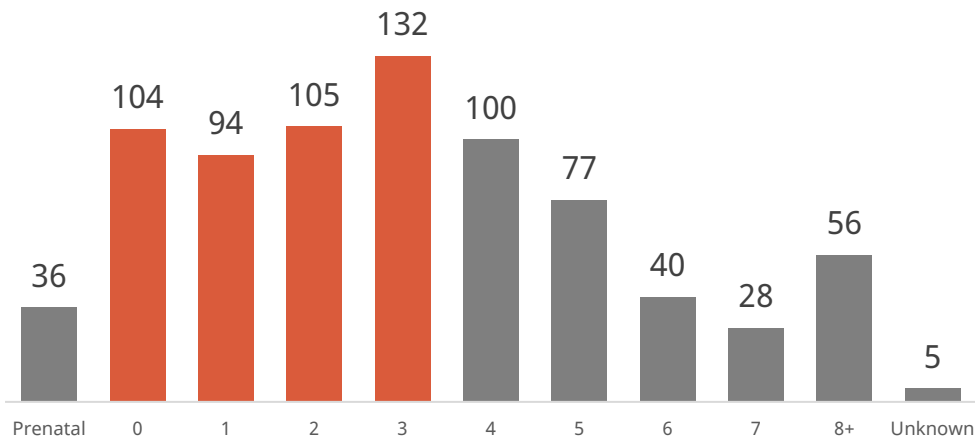
In 2024, 777 children connected with Help Me Grow Maine, a 6.6% increase from 2023.



In 2024, 16% of all cases (n=777) included a child with an existing disability prior to calling Help Me Grow Maine. Speech/language disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and ADHD were the most commonly reported.



In 2024, the age distribution of children served by Help Me Grow Maine (n=777) was similar to the 2023 distribution; 56% of children were between ages 0-3.

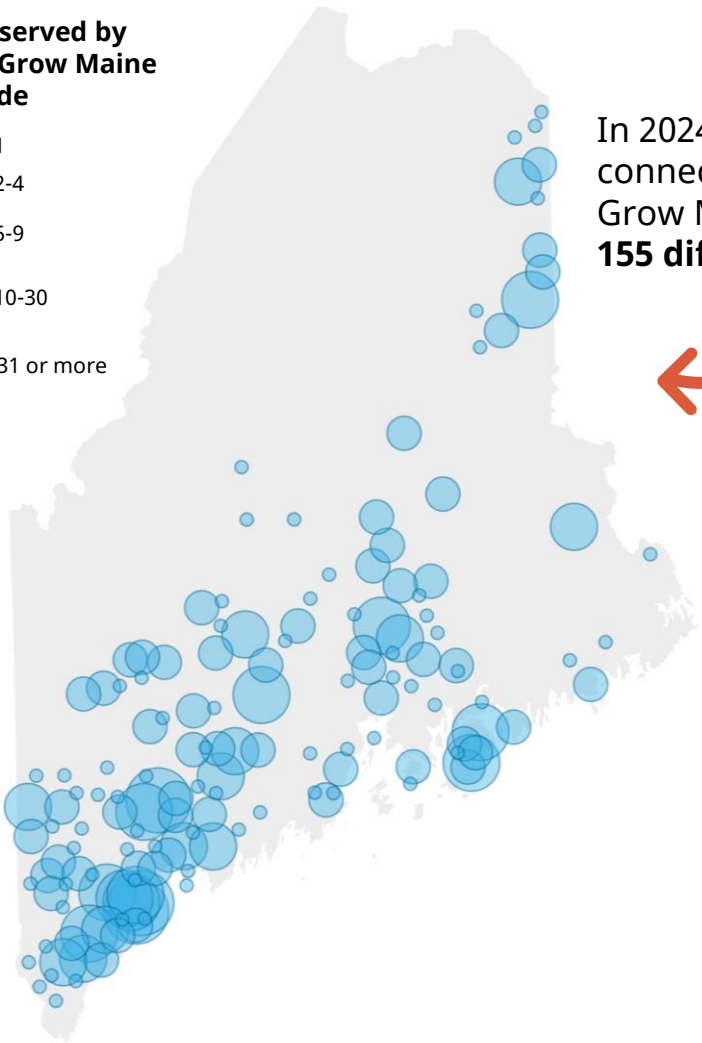
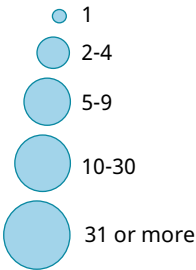


Top 3 Ways Families Heard About Help Me Grow Maine in 2024 (n=357):



Who is Help Me Grow Maine reaching?

Number served by
Help Me Grow Maine
by zip code



In 2024, families
connected with Help Me
Grow Maine from
155 different zip codes.

**Over half (9 of 16) of the
counties in Maine saw
increases** in the number
of children ages 0-9
served by Help Me Grow
Maine in 2024 (n=777).

County	# Children 0-9 Served by HMG in 2024	Change from 2023	Total Population of Children 0-9*	Rate Served by HMG per 1,000 Children
Androscoggin	97	▲	12,479	7.7
Aroostook	43	▲	6,535	6.6
Cumberland	225	▲	29,279	7.7
Franklin	11	▲	2,862	3.8
Hancock	55	▲	5,167	10.6
Kennebec	46	▼	12,353	3.7
Knox	<10	▲	3,545	n/a
Lincoln	<10	▼	3,217	n/a
Oxford	21	▼	5,333	3.9
Penobscot	60	▼	14,819	4.0
Piscataquis	<10	▼	1,611	n/a
Sagadahoc	15	▲	3,265	4.6
Somerset	17	▼	5,084	3.3
Waldo	<10	▼	3,496	n/a
Washington	12	▲	3,006	4.0
York	88	▲	20,111	4.4
Unknown	62	n/a	n/a	n/a

*2022 5-year estimates from American Community Survey

How does Help Me Grow Maine benefit families?

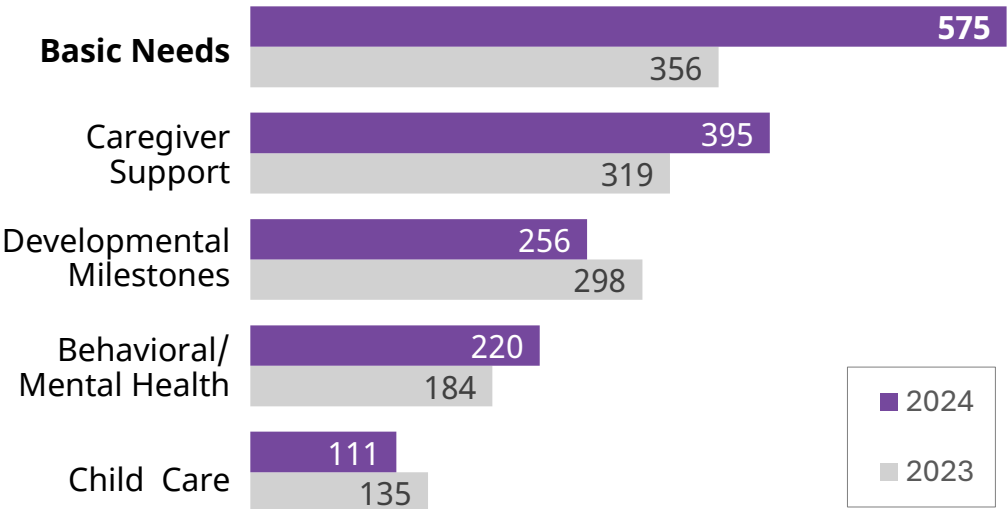
“ [Our Family Support Specialist] has been phenomenal. She has filled a huge need for us. It wasn't until working with [our Family Support Specialist] that I felt that finding support for my daughter would actually happen. Thanks for all you do.

▶ Caregiver of 5-year-old

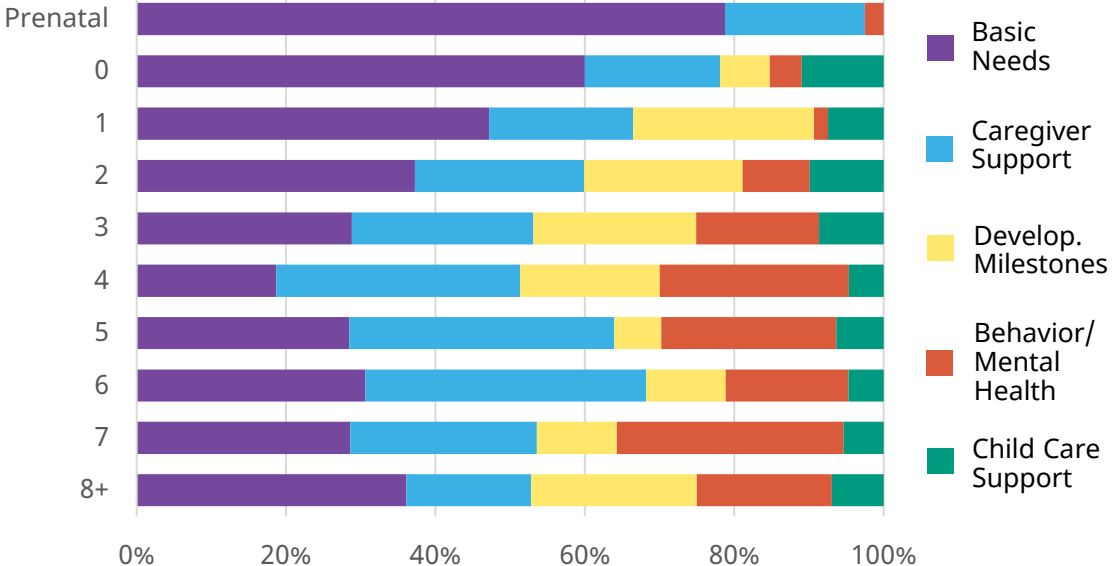
Caregivers, providers, and partners connect with Help Me Grow Maine for support with a variety of needs. The Family Support Specialist provides information about local resources that can meet these needs and/or make referrals to appropriate services. **In 2024, Help Me Grow Maine provided its callers with information/referrals to 1,574 resources from 504 different agencies and programs.** Many callers received connections to more than one resource, especially for basic needs as families often needed support obtaining multiple resource connections (e.g., car seats, food assistance, diapers).



In 2024, Help Me Grow Maine provided significantly more information/referrals regarding basic needs than other categories of support.



In 2024, families expecting a child and families with younger children received a higher percentage of basic needs information/referrals than other age groups.



How does Help Me Grow Maine benefit families?

“ I appreciated the follow up and one-on-one attention to providing me with support following the [developmental] assessment.

▶ Caregiver of 1-year-old



When a family contacts Help Me Grow Maine, they can choose the level of support that works best for them.



A case is classified as an **inquiry** if the caller receives helpful information but does not want to participate in care coordination. For inquiry cases, there are no follow-ups and no developmental screenings. In 2024, 201 inquiry cases were open and active for an average of 16 days.



If a family wants additional support, they can receive care coordination from a Family Support Specialist. These cases are classified as **intakes**. For intake cases, the family shares more information about their situation and receives follow-up from a Family Support Specialist at a minimum of 5, 25, and 60 days after the initial call. Intakes may or may not include a developmental screening. In 2024, Family Support Specialists supported 576 intake cases for an average of 66 days. Intakes increased from 54% of cases in 2023 to 74% of cases in 2024.



One important indicator tracked by Help Me Grow Maine is barriers to services/resources. In 2024, 32 cases (4% of all cases) experienced at least one barrier. When barriers were present, Family Support Specialists worked to connect families to alternate services to address their needs, coordinated language support, and/or found support services for caregivers to help facilitate connections to programs.

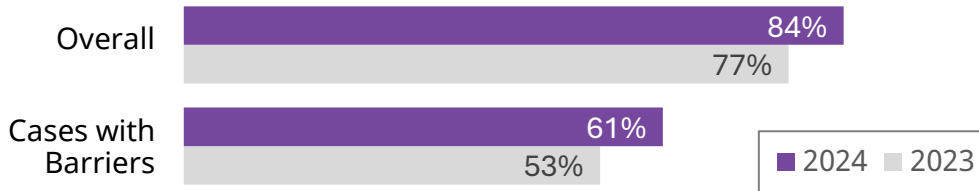
Most Common Barriers

- Language/cultural accessibility
- Waitlists
- Eligibility



In 2024, outcome data were available for 328 children who received care coordination support through Help Me Grow Maine. Among these 328 children, **84% were connected to at least one service/resource**.

Compared to 2023, connection rates improved overall in 2024, as well as for cases with barriers:

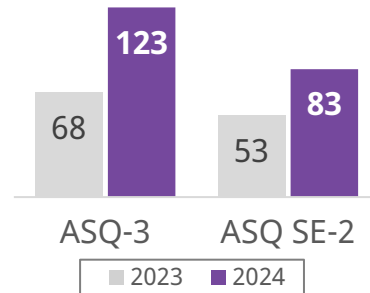


How does Help Me Grow Maine benefit families?



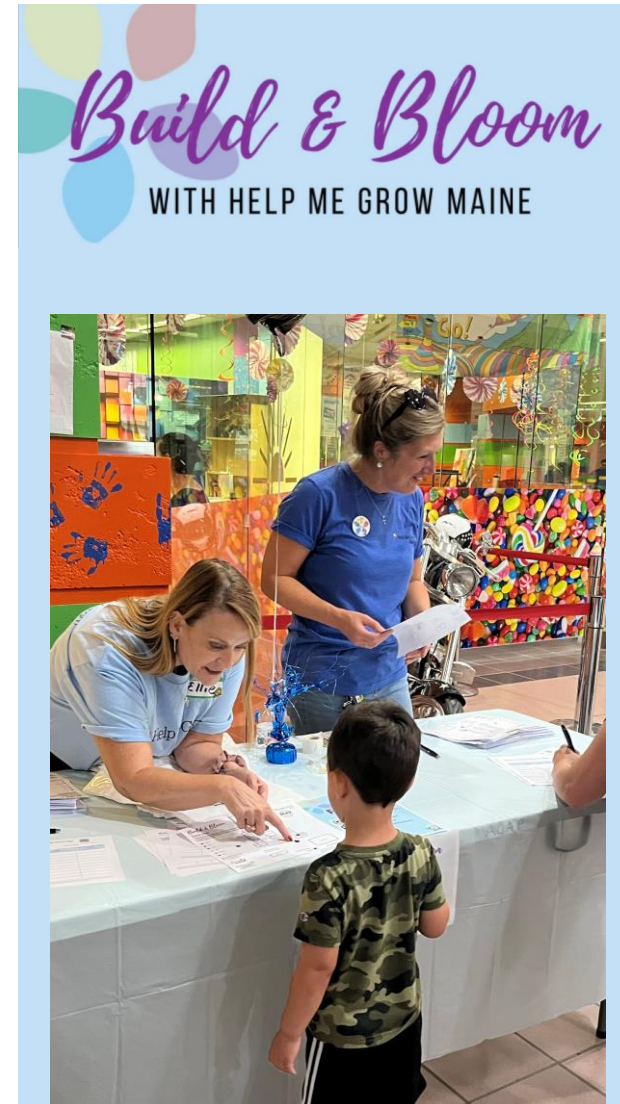
Help Me Grow Maine uses the Ages & Stages Questionnaire® (ASQ-3) and the Ages & Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional® (ASQ SE-2) for developmental screenings. These are simple questionnaires that focus on a child's development. They look at language, movement, thinking, behavior, and emotions. These screenings can be done starting from the time a child is two months old and ending when they are five years old.

Compared to 2023, developmental screenings completed through Help Me Grow Maine increased in 2024. **ASQ-3 screenings increased by 81%, and ASQ SE-2 screenings increased by 57%.**

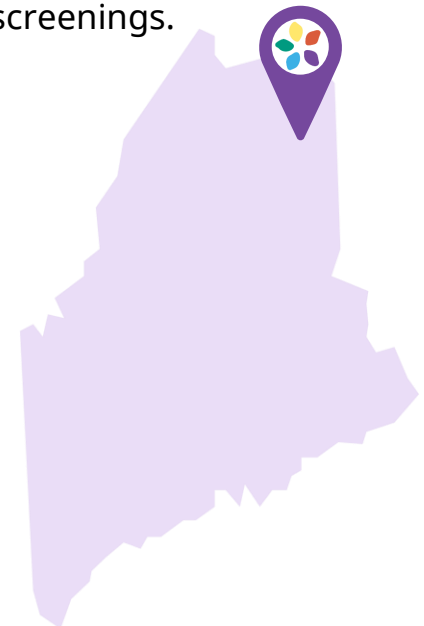


Over half (54%) of the ASQ-3s completed in 2024 indicated a concern or need for additional monitoring. Nearly a quarter (24%) of the ASQ SE-2s completed in 2024 indicated a concern or need for additional monitoring.

When a concern or need for additional monitoring is indicated, Help Me Grow Maine discusses the concerns with the parent and provides tip sheets and learning activities. Parents are also offered additional screening tools, referrals to parenting supports, and, when appropriate, referrals to the child's healthcare providers, early intervention, or behavioral health services.



In September, Help Me Grow Maine hosted its second Build & Bloom event for parents, caregivers, and their children at the Children's Museum of Aroostook County. This event included movement and creative activities, car seat safety checks, and hearing, vision, and developmental screenings.



How does Help Me Grow Maine engage partners?



Help Me Grow Maine collaborates with healthcare providers to support families. A healthcare provider can refer a family to Help Me Grow Maine to connect with a Family Support Specialist (FSS), and the FSS follows up with the provider to “close the loop” (with approval from the family).

- ▶ **3,779** outreach contacts with healthcare providers in 2024.
- ▶ **23%** of families in 2024 connected with Help Me Grow Maine through their healthcare provider.
- ▶ Family Support Specialists “closed the loop” and shared information with providers for **85%** of cases (203 cases) where families gave consent (239 cases).

Examples of partners engaged in outreach activities in 2024:

- Child Development Services
- Community Action Programs (CAP) Agencies
- Maine CDC Community Care Team
- Maine Alliance of Family Organizations
- WIC (Supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants & Children)
- Public Health Nursing

In 2024, Help Me Grow Maine convened Maine’s Community Leader Taskforce. This taskforce, led by a System Navigator/FSS for Help Me Grow Maine, aims to bridge communication gaps, minimize misunderstandings, and enhance support for New Mainers, particularly during the prenatal and birth stages. By connecting immigrant communities with service providers, the taskforce seeks to improve overall experiences and outcomes for these communities.



The taskforce identified ethnic community-based leaders with historical and emotional bonds. It has **20 representatives**, including trusted leaders, agency CEOs, presidents of communities, school cultural brokers, and medical cultural brokers.

Taskforce representatives are from various ethnic groups from Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Congo Kinshasa, Eritrea, Gabon, Iraq, Latino communities, Mauritania, Rwanda, Somalia, and South Sudan.



In 2024, the Community Leader Taskforce created [informational videos](#) explaining topics of prenatal care, postnatal care, and child development (available in **10 languages**). The taskforce also worked with providers and social services on the most effective outreach locations and channels of communication.

How does Help Me Grow Maine engage partners?



Given the increase in families seeking support for basic needs, especially families of infants and toddlers, Help Me Grow Maine embarked on a new partnership in 2024 with the Maine Child Passenger Safety Program. As a result of this partnership, five Help Me Grow Maine staff members have been trained and certified to provide car seat safety checks for any family and distribute car seats statewide to income-eligible families.

Help Me Grow Maine distributed 53 car seats in 2024.






In 2024, Help Me Grow Maine partnered with six early childhood education centers for developmental screening trainings, including one center where most families speak a language other than English. These events were important for promoting routine



screenings for young children.

Additionally, these events provided hands-on training for the providers and teachers at the centers so they can continue to support developmental screenings in their

communities; after training, HMG Maine provided them with screening kits at no charge. Feedback on these screening events and trainings at early childhood education centers was positive:

-  *I have a deeper understanding of why this is a helpful tool.*
-  *The training was very interactive, and the group remained engaged and interested over the two days. The trainer was very knowledgeable on the topic and was able to make the material relevant to the uniqueness of the group attending.*
-  *[The trainer] did a wonderful job covering the content while engaging with the group and allowing us to discuss what was relevant to us.*

How is the program's implementation progressing?

In 2024, Help Me Grow Maine achieved full implementation status of the Help Me Grow model. Furthermore, Help Me Grow Maine has been recognized as a leader within the Help Me Grow National Network through its selection to participate in several strategic initiatives. Maine's team serves on the Help Me Grow National Affiliate Advisory Board, as well as providing mentorship to newly emerging and changing Help Me Grow systems. Help Me Grow Maine also contributes to the Cultivating Systems Leadership Learning Community.

2024 Implementation Highlights

- ✓ Added 2 new staff to Help Me Grow Maine team, including a second cultural broker
- ✓ Achieved full implementation status with Help Me Grow National
- ✓ Initiated Community Leader Taskforce
- ✓ Implemented "Reach My Teach" to support communication in multiple languages
- ✓ Completed Child Passenger Safety Training and began distributing car seats to families around the state
- ✓ Initiated ASQ Trainings & provided ASQ kits to partners
- ✓ Increased access for families to the Attend Behavior App
- ✓ Increased trainings in Level 1 Research Units in Behavioral Intervention (RUBI)



Moving Forward

In the next year, Help Me Grow Maine will continue to focus on meeting essential needs through several key initiatives. The Child Passenger Safety Initiative will expand to include special needs safety seat training. The Help Me Grow Maine team plans to focus outreach efforts in rural and underserved areas of the state, using data to determine specific locations and populations. 2025 will have another Build and Bloom event, this time in Wiscasset with new partners and an emphasis on nature-based activities. To further promote developmental screenings, Help Me Grow Maine will finalize and rollout ASQ training options for child care providers statewide. These trainings will be available online in 2025.

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Technical Notes

Sources: Help Me Grow Maine utilizes STAR (System for Tracking Access to Referrals) for its case management data collection system. The Help Me Grow Maine team uses a custom Microsoft Form to document all outreach activities.

Timeframe: Unless otherwise noted, all data in this report are from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

Completeness of Data: While there were 777 total cases in 2024, not all cases had data available for each measure. Families are not required to answer all of the questions asked by Family Support Specialists. For example, while 715 cases identified their county of residence, only 357 cases shared how they heard about Help Me Grow Maine. Some of the variation is due to the type of case; for cases that are inquiries, families answer fewer questions about themselves.

Outreach Data: Note that some healthcare providers are counted twice in the total number of providers receiving outreach from Help Me Grow. Sometimes a provider will attend an event, conference, or presentation and also receive personalized outreach from a Help Me Grow Maine team member.

Help Me Grow Maine Terminology

Attend Behavior App – a self-paced, evidence-based caregiver education tool for parents who have children with Intellectual Disability (ID), Developmental Delay (DD) and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), powered by the RUBI Autism Network

Barrier – when a Family Support Specialist refers a family to a program or service and the family is unable to connect to that service, it is documented as a barrier

Connection – when a child or family is receiving at least one service that Help Me Grow referred them to (information only available for intake cases)

Developmental Screenings – questionnaires about your child to identify potential delays in development

Family Support Specialist – the person families talk to at Help Me Grow Maine who listens, helps link them to services, and provides ongoing care coordination when needed

Help Me Grow Model – a system model that utilizes and builds on existing resources in order to develop and enhance a comprehensive approach to early childhood system-building in any given community

Help Me Grow National – a national resource to support the implementation of Help Me Grow systems throughout the country

Implementation Status – Help Me Grow National assesses how far along each Help Me Grow system is in implementing the model; the scale includes: exploration, installation, implementation, sustainability

Known Outcome – reported status shared by family or partner on a referral to a service or program made through Help Me Grow

Outreach Activities – presentations, screening events, networking meetings, mailings, and conversations/visits with community partners and healthcare providers

Reach My Teach – a two-way communication platform that enables Family Support Specialists to connect with families through the languages they speak on the devices they use every day (including WhatsApp)

Referral – information/support from a Family Support Specialist to a parent/caregiver to help connect them to the resources and help they need

Research Units in Behavioral Intervention (RUBI) – an evidence-based, manualized parent training program to help parents who have children with ID, DD and/or ASD