

Executive Summary

A follow up to Help Me Grow Long Island's [May 2021 report](#), this [October 2021 report](#) explores families' experiences with Help Me Grow - Long Island through qualitative analysis. Importantly, feedback from families led to further exploration of existing quantitative data to identify an under-recognized issue for families: how barriers in registering for the local school district discouraged and delayed families seeking special education evaluation for their young children with suspected developmental delays. Help Me Grow – Long Island's Family Resources Specialists are there to help one family at a time, but this report demonstrates Help Me Grow's potential for systems change: elevating parents' voices paired with examination of population-level data can drive more equitable access to services for all families.

Key Findings

Key findings from the Help Me Grow – Long Island (HMG-LI) family experience qualitative analysis:

1. HMG-LI promotes protective factors and helps caregivers build social connections.
2. Families found HMG-LI valuable and are satisfied with the level of support provided.
3. All families faced obstacles in obtaining services and were assisted by HMG-LI to successfully connect.

These learnings fueled a data driven conclusion: children that would benefit from preschool special education are being lost to the process.

1. **HMG-LI families represent the most vulnerable and “get lost” in the process:** Only 36% of HMG-LI families ($n=26$) made it all the way through to evaluation; 100% qualified for services and we are confident those that did dropout would have qualified.
2. **51% of families dropped off the process after receiving the extensive registration paperwork:** This is in addition to the 23% that dropped off after having the lengthy process explained to them.
3. **It took 107 days on average to receive an evaluation for the families in HMG-LI's analysis:** The requirement to have parents complete school registration before requesting an evaluation is a particular issue.
4. **The process leads to inequities:** Barriers to the school registration process disproportionately effect Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income families.



Centering the Family Experience: Implications for Long Island's Early Childhood System

Recommendations

Our suggestion to The New York State Department of Education to help address these inequities is to issue guidance to school districts that:

- Promotes simultaneous enrollment and evaluation as best practice.
- Clarifies what would constitute an acceptable delay in registration prior to the initiation of evaluation process (for example, for children in grades K-12, 2 days is acceptable to delay school enrollment due to missing documentation).

School districts can:

- Allow for simultaneous evaluation requests and school district registration.
- Improve language access during the registration process.
- Notify all families that a Notary is available at the school district to complete paperwork.
- Establish a quality improvement process that includes tracking the number of parents who ask for an evaluation, are told to register, and how many of those parents complete registration as instructed and proceed with the CPSE process.
- Hire care coordinators to support families that are seeking CPSE evaluations.
- Adopt basic, similar requirements for registration, creating a "common app" to enroll children in school.

Interested stakeholders can help by:

- Detecting and referring for developmental concerns before age 3 to ensure timely receipt of services.
- Creating user friendly guidance for families on Long Island to address the CPSE process.
- Partnering with existing efforts to address the school district registration issue across Long Island that not only affect CPSE evaluation requests, but all families attempting to register their children K-12.