Hearing from Families

Help Me Grow Long Island supports young families by establishing a comprehensive early childhood system for children from prenatal to age 5. As Long Island faces an aging population and high living costs, creating a family-friendly environment is crucial to retaining young families. Over the past 5 years, we’ve assisted over 7,000 families in discovering available services. As part of our commitment to ongoing quality improvement efforts, annual focus groups are held with participating parents that provide valuable insights for enhancing our support based on their needs and goals.

These focus groups are part of an expanding effort to build authentic parent engagement in Help Me Grow Long Island. Other efforts include a Parent Ambassador Program, regular anonymous parent satisfaction surveys, and integration of parent leadership on our Leadership Team.

Annual Focus Groups

In 2023, two focus groups were completed, one in English and one in Spanish with a total of 10 parents. All participants had worked with Help Me Grow Long Island within 6 months of the focus group. This report summarizes what we learned from them and how we plan to change Help Me Grow Long Island to better meet their needs.

As part of our participation in Help Me Grow National’s Goal Concordant Care project, in addition to our standard protocol of asking about experience with the Help Me Grow referral process, we asked questions about how parents thought about needs and goals for themselves and their children.
Fast Facts about Successes

Family Resource Specialists follow up with families 2 times on average, with a range of 1 time to 12 times.

Bright by Text is reaching over 2000 subscribers on Long Island. Send email to info@hmgli.org with upcoming family events from your organization and we can send announcements out to families!

Key Findings on What Worked for Parents

Family Resource Specialist: Parents felt listened to and appreciated the ongoing follow-up of the resource specialist to make sure connections were made.

Building Resilience: Families believed that interactions with Help Me Grow Long Island gave them confidence; they were empowered by their experience.

Bright by Text:
For the 3rd consecutive year, Bright by Text was mentioned by focus group participants without prompting. Parents continue to tell us that this service is beneficial to them and they want to learn more about child development! To learn more about Bright by Text visit: https://docsfortots.org/bright-by-text/

"You give us tools to be able to climb and to be able to move forward....so many things, the truth is that I am delighted!"

- Spanish Focus Group Parent

Key Findings on What Needs Improvement

Online Developmental Screening:
Parents are not sure what the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) is. They have difficulty accessing it on their phones and completing the questions.

Quote: “Yes, the first time I spoke to them they sent it (ASQ link) to me by message, anyway, I did go in to see what it is like, but I started doing something and then I disconnected and didn’t continue.”

Differentiation between services:
Parents voiced confusion about the services of Help Me Grow Long Island. This appears to be related to the actual services they receive, as they sometimes fail to differentiate between the referrals they receive from HMGLI and the services they receive after contacting a referred agency.

Quote: “I was so confused as to who was who in terms of the people, I really thought that the people coming (to my house) were you guys.”

Connectivity:
It is sometimes hard to connect to a Family Resource Specialist – for the first time families reported not receiving calls back in a timely manner; the text messaging was appreciated but the time on the phone was highlighted as being critical to communication.

Fast Facts about Improvements:

In 2023, a third of families that completed an Ages and Stages Questionnaire originally contacted Help Me Grow Long Island for basic needs. This meets our goal of targeted universalism to promote developmental health in families struggling to make ends meet.

In 2023, Help Me Grow Long Island saw increased volume of over 50% some months with an average increase of 20% - this roller coaster of demand made it difficult to triage, engage, and maintain quality month to month.
Parents Perspectives on Needs & Goals

In 2022, Help Me Grow Long Island joined the Help Me Grow National Center’s Goal Concordant Care initiative. Throughout 2023, our Family Resource Specialists trained in Motivational Interviewing and explored eliciting families’ goals alongside addressing their needs during interactions. During the 2023 focus groups, we asked parents what they thought of the concepts of Goal Concordant Care.

Parents contacted HMGLI for various reasons, from basic needs like diapers to assistance with developmental issues in children. All focus group participants characterized the reason for initial contact as a need which fell into the category of either basic need or developmental need. When asked about goals, the two groups – basic need and developmental concerns parents differed in how they saw goals for their children.

Families whose initial contact was for basic needs identified long-term abstract goals for their children. (see sidebar) These parents had shorter-term goals for themselves which they identify as needs (employment, financial stability, housing).

Parents of children with developmental concerns had child specific goals. (see side bar) For these parents, they have had practice thinking about goals as they have worked through the process of being evaluated and goal setting as part of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This could be the reason that they were able to state concrete child specific process during the focus group.
Help Me Grow Long Island’s Commitment to Continuous Quality Improvement

Help Me Grow Long Island remains committed to elevating parent voice in early childhood systems building. Focus groups are one way that we do this. Additionally, we now have 8 parent ambassadors trained on Learn the Signs. Act Early, and actively promoting developmental screening in their communities.

As a result of the findings in this report Help Me Grow Long Island will:

- Continue to train and support high quality Family Resource Specialists
- Encourage further enrollment and use of the Bright by Text service that families repeatedly report positive experiences with
- Review the end user experience with ASQ online to identify changes that can make the process of completing a developmental screen online and via phone easier for parents
- Emphasize with families the role of Help Me Grow Long Island and our relationship to referral partners
- Initiate quality improvement project around ensuring that the convenience of texting does not limit the opportunity for phone interactions

Family Goals: After participation in the Goal Concordant Care initiative, including motivational interviewing training for Family Resource Specialists, the information that the focus groups provided validated our experiences.

- Families with children experiencing developmental challenges were more likely to have “goals” for their children that were concrete and short term
- Families wanted their needs discussed first and foremost
- Parents had needs in addition to needs of the family or children
- Aspirational goals were common with families that came to Help Me Grow Long Island with basic needs

Given this information, as Help Me Grow Long Island moves forward, we will continue to elicit goals and priorities for families that have developmental concerns. For families that call with basic needs the capacity of Help Me Grow Long Island to assist in the achievement of these goals is limited but provides consideration for how to evaluate parent voice and align with additional community organizations that do support these goals.

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