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## Introduction

Children's earliest experiences impact the rest of their lives. As their first and most important advocate, parents of young children work to ensure their children have what they need to grow, learn, and be healthy. For many families across California, access to programs and services in their communities helps keep their children healthy. The service system is an essential resource for families, and they hold important knowledge about its benefits and challenges.

The lived experience and insights of parents and families can be leveraged to refine and strengthen the systems that are designed to support them. A large body of research confirms that engaging families is critical for enhancing children's learning and family well-being.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Help Me Grow Inland Empire (HMGIE) works to support the healthy development of nearly 370,000 children ages 0-5 across Riverside and San Bernardino counties by strengthening the region's early identification and intervention system. It promotes cross-sector collaboration to build upon resources already in place, with the goal of increasing access to developmental screenings and connecting families to resources. Centering families in HMGIE and engaging them at all levels of the system is critical to the success of HMGIE.

This landscape analysis was developed by VIVA Social Impact Partners, as part of their work with HMGIE. The landscape analysis aims to gain insights about the different approaches, strategies, and best practices for engaging families, and highlight examples and opportunities for developing parent partnerships. This research was conducted to support the development of a strategy for engaging families as part of the ongoing governance structure of HMGIE.

### About Help Me Grow Inland Empire

HMGIE is part of Help Me Grow California and the national Help Me Grow movement. HMGIE is a system model. Across the country, all Help Me Grow initiatives work to:

- Provide outreach and education about available community resources
- Ensure all children with developmental delays are identified and linked to resources
- Help families and professionals navigate resources and referrals through a central system
- Collect and evaluate data to improve the system

In California, the First 5 Association leads the Help Me Grow effort, supporting statewide expansion of Help Me Grow. As of 2017, 45 of the 58 counties in California are operating or in the planning process for local Help Me Grow systems. HMGIE is the first regional Help Me Grow effort in the state, built with a long history of partnership and collaboration.

Partnership is the key to ensuring services are accessible and seamless for families. Building connections and strong partnerships is at the core of HMGIE's successful impact. Across its system components, HMGIE leadership placed a strong emphasis on the following goals to create a community-driven system that aligns and builds upon existing resources across both counties, identified in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan:

- Engage families in the planning and leadership of HMGIE
- Work in partnership with other family strengthening and engagement partners to engage families in the testing, design and leadership of HMGIE
- Identifying and training a core network of community members to serve as community outreach champions for HMGIE.
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for current and emerging HMGIE strategic partners, including operational leads, funders, service providers, and families

Developing partnerships with parents and families has a long history, with frameworks, strategies, and best practices varying across disciplines. Understanding and identifying the right approach for engaging families is the first step to achieve HMGIE's desired goals.

## Methodology

This landscape analysis was developed through a literature review and series of consultations with parent partner organizations. The purpose was to gather insight at the local, state, and national level into how to best engage families to develop strong parent partnerships and design a system that is family-centered. Key activities included:

1. **Literature review to examine national and state family engagement and parent partnership practices across multiple disciplines**, including early childhood, education, health, social, and family services.

2. **Interviews with HMG systems and parent partner organizations across the state**  
From October to November 2020, five stakeholder interviews were conducted with a total of seven individuals representing four counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, and Ventura. Interviews were conducted via Zoom video conferencing.

3. **HMGIE Virtual Summit: Parent Partnership Design Session**  
On November 17, 2020, a parent partnership design session was held during the Early Intervention Virtual Summit hosted by HMGIE. Parents and parent-centered organizations were invited to learn more about HMGIE and participate in a listening session to discuss the family experience and needs related to child development and connection to services. Twenty-six individuals participated and explored strategies, opportunities, and ideas for building and sustaining parent partnership in the Inland Empire.

4. **First 5 Association Summit: Centering Families in Help Me Grow: Going Beyond Focus Groups**  
On December 9, 2020, a session was held during the First 5 Association's Virtual Summit to explore different ways that HMG systems in California have engaged families and share what they've learned along the way, learn from the experience of a parent leader involved in the HMG, and do some collective thinking about, exchanging, and discussing ideas to develop strategies to create authentic space for families as allies and decision-makers in HMG. In attendance were 110 individuals representing HMG counties.



## Summary of Findings

A summary of the literature review findings and insights gathered through consultations with parent partner organizations is presented here, including a review of family engagement; the different approaches, strategies, and best practices for engaging families; and examples and opportunities for developing parent and family partnership.

### An Overview of Family Engagement

Extensive research indicates that meaningful family engagement is critical to the health and success of young children and their families. A review of articles and resources provide insights about family engagement in education, early childhood, health, social and family services. The following key findings emerged:

#### Key Findings

1. Family engagement benefits both families and providers, and can improve quality of systems and overall family wellbeing
2. A multi-dimensional approach to family engagement is common across disciplines and provides opportunities for different levels of parent and family engagement
3. Family engagement is most successful when it is initiated with clear goals, strategies, and an approach to guide the efforts

Family engagement is a complex and broadly defined term often used in early learning and education systems.<sup>4</sup> Common phrases associated with family engagement are used interchangeably, including parent leadership, parent involvement, parent engagement, and parent partnership.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the word “parent” is often replaced with “family”—family involvement, family partnership, and so on. Full definitions of family engagement from national family-serving organizations can be found in the Appendix.

For the purposes of this work, parent and family partnership, a two-way relationship between equal partners (parents/families and service providers) working to build and refine together, will be used throughout this report.



### Parent and Family Partnership in Education, Early Childhood, Health, and Social Services.

The benefits of parent and family partnership in education is well documented. The role of parent and family partnerships in education has been part of our federal, state, and local policy discourse for more than 35 years.<sup>9</sup> Parent and family partnership has been a component and mandate of educational policies since 1967 through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I. However, defining the role of parents and families in education continues to be a work in progress. Title I funding is used to support parent and family partnership programs and initiatives in education. Schools that receive Title I funding are required to include “parent involvement” in their work and develop a plan for parent and school collaboration.<sup>10</sup>

In the early childhood field, like in education, parent and family partnership is key in promoting the success of young children, and creating high-quality systems of care to ensure their health and wellbeing. Parent and family partnership practices, protocols, and frameworks are plentiful across disciplines. However, implementation is inconsistent and unaligned in many systems, including early identification and intervention, requiring more strategic and systemic approaches.<sup>11</sup> Systems are truly responsive to the needs of families when family voice, experience, and perspective are actively pursued and incorporated at all levels of the system—direct care, organizational design and governance, and policymaking.<sup>12</sup>

Nationally and across the state, government and community benefit organizations incorporate and support parent and family partnership in their work. However, the level of engagement varies across systems. There are significant differences in the level of engagement, the role families play in decision-making, and the support offered to families who do participate. The Family Engagement Inventory, a service of the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides an overview of how family engagement is defined and implemented across child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, education, and early childhood education. Strategies for enhancing parent and family partnership are described in three levels—practice, program, and system.<sup>13</sup>

### Practice-Level Engagement:

Practice-level strategies focus both on behaviors for engaging families and processes for achieving positive outcomes. The following are some of the common strategies across child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, education, and early childhood education:

- Validate and value the role of families in planning and making decisions for their children
- Be consistent, reliable, respectful, and honest with families
- Provide timely resources, services, and interventions that are relevant and helpful
- Ensure two-way communication and collaboration between parents and providers
- Support parents and make families feel valued and connected
- Include parents in meetings and conferences related to the evaluation, identification, placement, and education of their children
- Honor the cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, and spiritual backgrounds of children, youth, and families and respect differences in sexual orientation
- Train providers on parent and family engagement strategies

### Program-Level Engagement:

Three common program types emerged across child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, education, and early childhood education:

- Culturally responsive programs: Professionals understand the strengths, beliefs, and practices each family's unique culture carries with it; interventions and services respect and honor the various cultures while ensuring the safety and well-being of children
- Child and youth engagement approaches: Stress the importance of engaging children and youth, throughout the process of service access and delivery
- Parent partner and parent support programs: Parent partners and mentors, who have lived experience, establish supportive, nonthreatening relationships to provide support and guidance for parents new to the system

### System-Level Engagement:

System-level strategies involve parents and families in decision-making, build better dialogue with families, create significant buy-in for further engagement, and contribute to better decisions, which in turn hold agencies more accountable to those they serve. System-level strategies common across child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, education, and early childhood education include:

- Family and parent leadership is a strengths-based approach grounded in the belief that parents are the most knowledgeable about their families and communities. Parents and staff are supported, trained, and mentored to work together as partners to make decisions about programs, policies, and practices that affect families and communities, and share responsibility, expertise, accountability, and leadership.
- Engaging families in parent and family councils, boards, and advocacy efforts to inform change in the overall system, policy development, service design, and program evaluation.

**Creating multiple avenues of engagement benefits both families and systems, allowing for flexibility for the different levels of commitment and readiness for engagement from parents and families.<sup>15</sup>**

This multi-dimensional approach to engaging families is described as a continuum of engagement offering a variety of partnership opportunities for parents and families. The three levels of engagement have also been described as consultation, involvement, and partnership or shared leadership. The multi-level approach is common in early childhood and family serving organizations. The Early Childhood Comprehensive System Framework describes this continuum of engagement as transactional, transitional, and transformational.<sup>16</sup>

#### Transactional (Ask):

- Complete surveys
- Attend meetings
- Use toolkits
- Attend trainings

#### Transitional (Incorporate):

- Contribute to Advisory Boards
- Give feedback on process
- Facilitate gatherings

#### Transformational (Integrate):

- Co-develop services
- Employed in "system"
- Collaborate on grants
- Participate in workgroups
- Collaborative decision making



The Help Me Grow National model is designed around four components. The Family & Community Outreach component aims to build parent and provider understanding of healthy child development, supportive services available to families in the community, and how both are important to improving children's outcomes. The strategies promote the HMG system and early childhood development to increase family, provider, and community awareness about the healthy development of children and the importance of early screening, provider networking opportunities, and the services provided by HMG.

HMG National outlines family and community engagement practices to include participation in community meetings, forums, public events, fairs, and facilitating sessions that help families learn about child development and the role of HMG.<sup>17</sup> These practices align with the practice-level of engagement, in which families are consulted to inform their work. In his keynote address at the First 5 Association Help Me Grow Statewide Convening in 2019, founding director Dr. Paul Dworkin, emphasizes the importance of parent and family partnership in HMG.<sup>18</sup> Dr.

Dworkin suggests that highly functioning, comprehensive early childhood system must:

- Ensure that providers consistently elicit parents' priorities, opinions, and concerns through open-ended, parent-led discussions as part of effective developmental surveillance and screening;
- Engage a larger cadre of parents as full partners in our work and our products. In particular, we must engage more fathers in our work

Through the Help Me Grow National Center, HMG affiliates have access to resources, tools, and technical support to help the development of their HMG systems and implement effective, universal, early childhood systems, ensuring developmental promotion for all children, and early detection, referral, and connection to services when needed.<sup>19</sup> The HMG National Family & Community Outreach Manual provides guidelines and a toolkit for HMG affiliates to develop this model component.<sup>20</sup> The practices and strategies detailed in the Family & Community Outreach Manual can be helpful tools to begin developing a more expansive engagement plan that is inclusive of a multi-level approach to parent and family partnership.

## Tools for Developing Parent and Family Partnership

Existing parent and family partnership and leadership efforts in the early childhood field offer frameworks, strategies, and practices on which to build. Three resources particularly stand out as practical tools and guides for informing parent and family partnership development. These resources provide guidelines for engaging families at various levels, in alignment with the continuum of engagement previously described.

### [Manifesto for Race Equity and Parent Leadership in Early Childhood](#)

A guide for early childhood agencies and systems to help them address inequities and racism by giving parents a voice and opportunity to be engaged and lead at all levels of change. The Manifesto details 5 Commitments for Change that will create and promote equitable outcomes for all children.<sup>21</sup>

### [Ripples of Transformation: Families Leading Change in Early Childhood Systems](#)

A toolkit designed to inspire, challenge, and support leaders in early childhood to embrace a vision of families as agents of change in their children's lives, communities, and early childhood systems. Ripples of Transformation expands the concept and practice of family engagement from a separate strand of programming to an integrated, continuing stream of opportunities for parents to be leaders in their families and communities, as well as in policies and systems.<sup>22</sup>

### [Family Voices of California Project Leadership](#)

A training curriculum aimed at increasing the capacity of families to engage in public policy advocacy. The curriculum is designed to accommodate the demanding schedules of families, and also provides ongoing mentoring and support.<sup>23</sup>

## The Help Me Grow Parent and Family Partnership Landscape in California

To better understand parent and family partnership in Help Me Grow, consultations with HMG systems across California and parent partner organizations supporting that work took place between October and December of 2020. The following key findings emerged:



### Key Findings

- 1. Family engagement is limited and not consistent** across early childhood development and early intervention systems.
- 2. Early intervention systems** that are well resourced and have dedicated funding for family engagement have developed and sustained strong parent partnerships
- 3. Systems that engage, support, and invest in parents with lived experience**, as leaders to provide parent-to-parent support, have had success with developing and maintaining parent partnerships
- 4. Leveraging community partners** and existing parent networks has been critical in the success and the sustainability of parent partnership efforts
- 5. COVID-19 is acknowledged as a barrier** for meaningful family engagement in early intervention systems and early childhood development
- 6. HMG systems are continuously seeking and exploring opportunities** to engage families more intentionally and leveraging community partnerships in the process  

While there is interest in furthering parent partnerships, efforts are limited due to internal and external barriers:

  - lack of dedicated funding and resources
  - system and parent partnership efforts are designed in isolation
  - integrating parents and families as partners into system governance and operation has not been prioritized
- 7. There is interest and support for developing a statewide common agenda** and framework for meaningful family engagement
  - Opportunities for national and state Help Me Grow collaboration
  - Build off existing parent partnership efforts in early intervention systems

## Interviews with Help Me Grow Counties

From October to November 2020, five stakeholder interviews were conducted with a total of seven individuals representing four counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, and Ventura. A complete list of attendees can be found in Appendix B. Interviews were conducted via Zoom video conferencing.

In each interview, participants shared about their work to engage parents and families in their HMG system. The level of parent and family engagement and the engagement strategies used, varies across counties. Below is a snapshot of each county that participated in these interviews.

### Help Me Grow Contra Costa County

First 5 Contra Costa serves as the lead agency for the HMG system in Contra Costa, California. HMG Contra Costa has been an affiliate of HMG National since 2015. Parent and family partnership efforts leverage First 5 Contra Costa's family resource hubs and community partners. HMG Contra Costa works with existing parent networks and parent advisory committees to gather insights from families and help inform their community outreach and marketing materials. Their strategy is aligned with the Help Me Grow National's Family & Community Outreach model component—to engage families

by participating in community meetings, forums, public events, fairs, and facilitating sessions that help families learn about child development and the role of HMG. On the continuum of engagement, which includes various levels of parent involvement, the practices and strategies in HMG Contra Costa are in alignment with the practice-level or consultation.

- HMG affiliate since 2015
- Annual Budget: ~ \$800K
- Identified Opportunity: Leverage F5CC Family Resource Hubs and community partners to engage families for feedback and insight gathering
- <http://helpmegrwococo.org/>





## Help Me Grow Ventura County

In 2013, HMG was launched in Ventura County in partnership with Ventura County Public Health. Currently, First 5 Ventura County serves as the lead agency and coordinator for the HMG system in Ventura, California. With this recent shift, First 5 Ventura County is refining various components of HMG and relies on strong community partnerships to increase awareness of HMG, the importance of early screening, and reach parents and families in Ventura County. While HMG Ventura County seeks to develop more intentional parent and family partnerships, their current transitional state can be a barrier for that work to move forward. HMG Ventura County has experienced a 62% decrease in funding, creating limitations in staff capacity and resources. Currently, the system is coordinated by two staff members and seeking to fill one more full time position. HMG Ventura County's refinement phase, however, is viewed as an opportunity to determine the right approach and strategies to support their work locally and examine existing parent networks and community partners already involved in parent and family partnership efforts.

- HMG affiliate since 2013
- Annual Budget: ~ \$285K
- Opportunity: In a refinement phase; Leverage community partners and F5VC Neighborhoods of Learning
- <https://www.developmentalscreeningcollaborative.org/>
- Community Partners:
  - First 5 of Ventura County
  - Early Start
  - Gold Coast Health Plan
  - Rainbow Connection Family Resource Center
  - Tri-Counties Regional Center
  - Ventura County Public Health
  - Ventura County Health Care Agency
  - Ventura County Special Education Local Plan Area

## Help Me Grow Santa Clara County

In Santa Clara County, HMG is used as a framework that overlays other initiatives and efforts. First 5 Santa Clara County is the lead agency implementing the HMG model. For First 5 Santa Clara County, Family Resource Centers across the county are leveraged as the main source and access point for engaging parents and families. First 5 Santa Clara County initiatives, including HMG, gather insight and feedback from parents through multiple levels of engagement. Parents have the opportunity to engage as volunteers, parent leaders in parent action committees, and work with other parents—using their lived experience to guide and mentor others—as paid staff members in the Family Resource Centers. Parent partners who are engaged at these different levels, in alignment with the continuum of engagement, inform changes in practice, program, and the overall system. In this way, First 5 Santa Clara County leverages parent and family partnerships to inform and refine HMG, their early identification and intervention system.

- HMG affiliate since 2015
- Annual Budget: ~ 27.7M (including Proposition 10 and other leveraged funding through community partnerships)
- F5SCC Family Resource Centers are the main source for engaging parents and families in their work.

## Help Me Grow Alameda County

First 5 Alameda County is the lead agency implementing and coordinating HMG in Alameda County. In addition to implementing HMG in alignment with the national model since 2011, local enhancements help to support parent and family partnerships more intentionally to build and sustain strong collaboration with parent leaders. In Alameda County, Family Resource Navigators (FRN) is a key partner of HMG and serves as the lead agency for engaging parent leaders. Through this collaboration between HMG Alameda County and FRN, committed funding and an aligned approach, including strategies and practices for engaging and compensating families, are set up to support parent and family partnership and leadership. Community partnership that is built on trust and shared core values are key to the success of parent and family partnerships in Alameda County. Multiple funding sources are leveraged to support FRN efforts to ensure the engagement of parents and families extends beyond HMG, to ensure it is aligned with other efforts in the community, and to provide a pathway for family leadership and engagement at various levels. The HMG Alameda County framework for parent and family partnership is well aligned with the continuum of engagement, giving parents and families the opportunity to inform and be involved at the practice, program and system level.

- HMG affiliate since 2011
- Annual Budget: ~ \$3.5M
- <http://www.first5alameda.org/help-me-grow>
- Partnership and aligned commitment to parent and family partnership and leadership is the strength of the system in Alameda County.





## Help Me Grow Inland Empire Virtual Summit

### Parent Partnership Design Session

On November 17, 2020, a parent partnership design session was held during the HMGIE's Virtual Summit. Parents and parent-centered organizations were invited to learn more about HMGIE, and participate in a listening session to understand the family experience and needs related to child development and connection to services. Twenty-six individuals participated and explored strategies, opportunities, and ideas for building and sustaining parent partnership in the Inland Empire.

#### The session had two goals:

1. Learn and understand the family experience with early childhood development, identifying needs, and connection to services
2. Gather insight for how to best design a system that is family-centered with a solid approach to parent partnership

Session participants engaged in a group discussion about barriers and opportunities to build and strengthen parent partnerships in their work and across the Inland Empire.

#### Discussion Notes

Participants shared ideas and strategies for engaging families in the Inland Empire.

- Conduct monthly parent workshops with key actions and learnings for parents
- Inclusive and culturally responsive communications and marketing materials
- Careful consideration of language and visuals to engage fathers and make engagement welcoming
- Home-based services to families can facilitate parent partnerships
- Scaffolding on the family's interests can help maintain parent engagement
- Providing incentives to show appreciation and value of parents' time
- Capacity building for parents to learn how to share their stories can be impactful for parents and systems change

Participants identified parent partners in the Inland Empire that are implementing parent and family partnership efforts.

- Early Start Family Resource Network - Parent to Parent Support to families of children with special needs
- Child Care Resource Center, San Bernardino - Parent Cafes
- First 5 Riverside Family Resource Centers
- Riverside Child Care Consortium
- Nurturing Parenting Program - Parent Partners
- Tribal Family Partners with Riverside - San Bernardino County Indian Health Inc.
- Parent Family Engagement Centers - located in School Districts
- San Bernardino Behavioral Health - Promotoras de Salud
- Blindness Support Services - Riverside
- Children and Family Services - San Bernardino
- California Association of Health and Education Learning Professionals, Desert/Mountain SELPA for Special Education Support
- San Bernardino Parent Teacher Association
- San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
- Head Start Programs

**“Even as a district employee, you can’t keep track of all the acronyms. I can only imagine parents trying to understand the message or meeting when all they hear is acronyms without explanation of meaning.”**  
 — Session Participant

# First 5 Association Summit

## Centering Families in Help Me Grow: Going Beyond Focus Groups

On December 9, 2020, a session was held during the First 5 Association's Virtual Summit to explore different ways that HMG systems in California have engaged families and share what they've learned along the way, learn from the experience of a parent leader involved in the HMG, and do collective thinking about ideas to create authentic space for families as allies and decision-makers in HMG. In attendance were 110 individuals representing HMG counties in California and parent partner organizations.

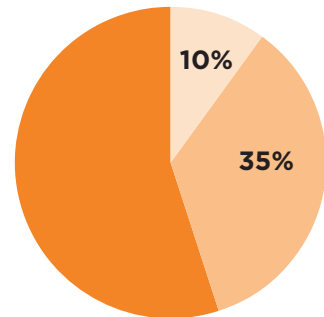
### The session had three goals:

- Explore different ways that Help Me Grow in California have engaged families and share what they've learned along the way
- Learn from the experience of a parent leader involved in the HMG system
- Collective thinking, exchanging, and discussing ideas

The session was initiated with a poll of two questions to get a sense of parent and family partnership efforts amongst the attendees. All responses to poll questions are captured in Appendix C.

### Poll Questions

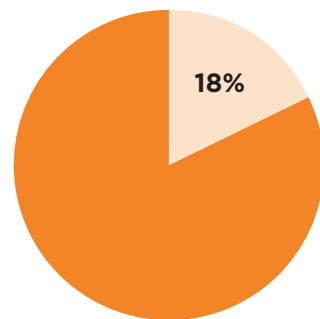
*How are you doing with family engagement? To what degree are parents involved in your work?*



Of sixty-six statewide professional respondents, less than 10% identified their organization as experienced and committed to parent partnerships and 35% were just beginning to think about and explore ways to engage parents.

*How are families currently involved in your work?*

Of thirty-eight professional respondents, 18% indicated that parents serve on leadership and decision-making bodies, and or advisory committees.



A panel of speakers on parent partnership shared about their efforts, experiences, and learning. A complete list of panel speakers can be found in Appendix B. Panelists included a parent leader and two professionals representing a parent partner organization and a HMG county lead agency. Session participants engaged in a group discussion about barriers and opportunities to build and strengthen parent partnerships in their work and a cross the state. Notes from the discussion are included below.

### Discussion Notes

#### Barriers to building and sustaining parent and family partnerships:

- Parents have a busy schedule.
- One barrier is the short-term nature of our work (if your HMG is purely linkage) and trying to engage the parent, form a trusting relationship, and make sure they are connected to a resource that can really support them.
- Lack of parent engagement.
- They may have multiple children to care for and can't make meetings or focus on following up for only one child. Especially single parents. Maybe two or more children have high needs and have non-stop appointments, but they still have to work.
- The amount of time and commitment required.
- Families are in survival mode, overwhelmed with basic needs right now - there has been an increase of homelessness, financial issues, priorities have shifted to basic needs.
- Parents may have their own mental/behavioral health challenges that make it exhausting for them to engage and affect their capacity to participate.
- Our own biases against taking the time it needs to do it authentically (timelines often feel rushed).
- System readiness - being in the early stages of development where we are not far along in the process to have meaningful stories to share and use for parent engagement.
- Some barriers at the moment due to COVID, is the lack of accessibility to internet access making it difficult to maneuver virtual portals and not feeling comfortable using it.
- Getting the parents to follow through with the ASQ-online, they don't have all the materials they need to fully complete the questions.
- Parents age out of 0 - 5 and you lose continuity and momentum with groups.
- The biggest barrier is not providing a strong relationship and mission and vision to the parents. That in turn creates a lack of engagement.
- Engaging parents virtually is challenging, picking up the phone and having a live conversation is better.

## Opportunities for strengthening parent and family partnership:

- Being sensitive to family culture. At the level of language, culture, but also individual family values and home culture.
- Partnering with Head Start/Early Head Start.
- Creating partnership with others who have a larger percentage of high risk families might be a good access point to engage families, such as WIC and Early Start Family Resource Center, parent advocacy and home visiting programs.
- Place the parents as leaders in the effort! They are the voice that matters to lead the work.
- Link and engage more families with special children, such as a minority population, but who require more supports and services.
- Joining forces with family resource centers to reach families. Use donations to create activity kits that supply families with materials to follow along with our developmental playgroups and remain engaged.
- Create opportunities for families to tell their stories to frame the work at every level.
- Use existing resources and frameworks to guide our work with set strategies, like project leadership.

## Speaker panel tips and ideas for parent and family partnership efforts:

- Investing in good old-fashioned phone calls and providing technical support and resources to families.
- Using your funding and taking the time are both types of resources needed.
- Compensate and incentivise parents for their time, beyond gift cards. Their knowledge and time is as valuable as the professionals getting paid to do this work.
- Distribute incentives via e-mail during COVID
- Strategize with your HMG team to develop a plan that works for your community to engage parents.
- Embed parent leadership throughout our strategic plan, not just "engagement."

## Participant ideas for parent and family partnership statewide efforts and alignment:

- More centralized training and support around parent and family partnership.
- A statewide awareness campaign for HMG.
- A focus group with parents of how to engage them.
- Engage families by developing a statewide common approach and goals for families.
- Exploring the best ways to support connection to existing parent networks.
- Revisit our language and move away from 'professionals' to refer to staff only. Parents are also 'professionals' with their lived experiences so using it to refer to both parents and staff or eliminating 'professional' from our vocabulary altogether.
- Statewide, explore the possibility of a study of family engagement in HMG by the First 5 Center for Children's Policy so we have a shared tool on the need and opportunities to embed parent engagement.
- Making it a priority.

## Recommendations



Using insights and themes from the literature review and consultations with parent partner organizations, this landscape offers five recommendations for consideration for developing a parent and family partnership approach for HMGIE. Several recommendations are aligned with the multi-dimensional parent and family engagement framework. The recommendations provided are designed to complement and build upon existing practices, protocols, and frameworks.

### Key Recommendations

1. Meaningful family engagement must be a core value of the leadership and staff team in early intervention systems. As system leaders and implementors, define and create opportunities for families to participate in decision making, testing, design, and leadership components.
2. Parent and family partnership must be intentional. Plan for and resource this work as a key component of the system, including the development of strategies and protocols for engaging families, family compensation and capacity building, mentoring, and ongoing support to enable families to participate meaningfully.
3. Leverage existing frameworks, community partnerships, and parent networks to maximize and build upon their efforts, and to ensure alignment with ongoing parent and family partnership work.
4. Invest in professional development to increase knowledge about the value of parent and family partnership.
5. Prioritize regular reflection and assessment of the success and challenges of parent and family partnership, in order to continually refine organizational culture and behaviors to better engage families.



## Conclusion

Families are involved in many aspects of the system of care and they hold important knowledge about the benefits and challenges in navigating services. Their lived experience should be leveraged to refine and strengthen the systems that are designed to support them to boost children’s learning and family well-being. Engaging families, however, has to be intentional, well planned, resourced, and authentic.

Parent and family partnerships should be seen as an integral part of the work, interwoven throughout system components to ensure early childhood and early identification and intervention systems are effective. Increasing awareness of the important role parents and families play in the system of care, as well as building

capacity to create and sustain strong parent and family partnerships requires commitment and support in the development, implementation, oversight, and evaluation of engagement efforts.

Existing efforts in early childhood and early identification and intervention systems offer frameworks, strategies, and practices on which to build. Meaningful family engagement at the system level, where program decision-making, evaluation, and service development takes place, help to reduce system fragmentation, remove barriers to services, and improve family health and wellbeing. Centering families in HMGIE and engaging them at all levels of the system is critical to HMGIE successfully fulfilling its vision and goals.

## Appendix A

The literature review identified the following definitions of family engagement across disciplines.

<p><b>US Department of Education &amp; US Department of Health and Human Services</b>  <a href="https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/families.html">https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/families.html</a></p>	<p>The US Department of Education, and Health and Human Services refer to “family engagement” as the systematic inclusion of families as partners in children’s development, learning, and wellness. Engagement is enabled by positive relationships between families and staff in the institutions where children learn. The goal of family engagement is to support family wellness and children’s learning and development.</p>
<p><b>Early Head Start/Head Start</b>  <a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement</a></p>	<p>In Head Start and Early Head Start programs, parent, family, and community engagement means building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong parent-child relationships and ongoing learning and development of parents and children alike. It refers to the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and activities of families that support their children’s positive development from early childhood through young adulthood.</p>
<p><b>Center for Disease Control and Prevention</b>  <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/factsheets/parentengagement_overview.htm">https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/factsheets/parentengagement_overview.htm</a></p>	<p>The Center for Disease Control and Prevention defines parent engagement in schools as parents and schools working together to support and improve students’ learning, development, and health of children and adolescents.</p>
<p><b>National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement</b>  <a href="https://nafsce.org/page/definition">https://nafsce.org/page/definition</a></p>	<p>The National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement defines family engagement as a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and in which families are committed to actively supporting their children’s learning and development.</p>
<p><b>U.S. Maternal and Child Health Bureau</b>  <a href="https://www.lpfch.org/sites/default/files/field/publications/family_engagement_in_state_title_v_mch_and_cshcn_programs.pdf">https://www.lpfch.org/sites/default/files/field/publications/family_engagement_in_state_title_v_mch_and_cshcn_programs.pdf</a></p>	<p>The U.S. Maternal and Child Health Bureau defines family partnership as the intentional practice of working with families for the ultimate goal of positive outcomes in all areas through the life course. Family engagement reflects a belief in the value of the family leadership at all levels from an individual, community, and policy level.</p>
<p><b>Family Voices</b>  <a href="https://familyvoices.org/familyengagement/">https://familyvoices.org/familyengagement/</a></p>	<p>Family engagement is an authentic partnership between professionals and family leaders who reflect the diversity of the communities they represent, working together at the systems level to develop and implement better policies and practices</p>

## Appendix B

Consultations with HMG systems across California and parent partner organizations supporting that work took place between October and December of 2020.

### Interviews with Help Me Grow Counties

From October to November 2020, five stakeholder interviews were conducted with four counties, including Alameda County, Contra Costa County, Santa Clara County, and Ventura County. Interviews were conducted via Zoom video conferencing.

#### Interview Participants by County

##### Help Me Grow Alameda County

- Loren Farrar, Senior Program Administrator at Help Me Grow Alameda County
- Eileen Crumm, Executive Director at Family Resource Navigators

##### Help Me Grow Contra Costa County

- Liliana Gonzalez, Program Coordinator at Help Me Grow Contra Costa County
- Wanda Davis, Early Intervention Program Officer at First 5 Contra Costa County
- Camilla Rand, Deputy Director at First 5 Contra Costa County

##### Help Me Grow Santa Clara County

- Thanh Do, Deputy Chief, Community Health and Wellness at First 5 Santa Clara County
- Ashley Robinson, Program Director, Community Health and Wellness at First 5 Santa Clara County

##### Help Me Grow Ventura County

- Sharon Elmensdorp, HMG Program Manager at First 5 Ventura County

### Help Me Grow Inland Empire Virtual Summit Parent Partnership Design Session

On November 17, 2020, a parent partnership design session was held during the HMGIE's Virtual Summit. Parents and parent-centered organizations were invited

to learn more about HMGIE, and participate in a listening session to understand the family experience and needs related to child development and connection to

services. Twenty-six individuals participated and explored strategies, opportunities, and ideas for building and sustaining parent partnership in the Inland Empire.

#### Facilitators

- Juan C. Solis, Father Engagement Coordinator at Children's Network
- Elizabeth Campos, VIVA Social Impact Partners

## First 5 Association Virtual Summit Session: Centering Families in Help Me Grow: Going Beyond Focus Groups

On December 9, 2020, a session was held during the First 5 Association's Virtual Summit to explore different ways that HMG systems in California have engaged families and share what they've learned along the way, learn from the experience of a parent leader involved in the HMG, and do collective thinking about ideas to create authentic space for families as allies and decision-makers in HMG. In attendance were 110 individuals representing HMG counties in California and parent partner organizations.

#### Facilitators & Speakers

- Katy Perea-Zavallos, Parent Leader, Family Advisory Committee Member at Family Resource Navigator and HMG in Alameda County
- Elizabeth Abello, Interpreter, Family Resource Navigator
- Eileen Crumm, Executive Director, Family Resource Navigator, HMG Alameda County partner implementing parent leadership and family partnership
- Sharon Elmensdorp, Program Manager at First 5 Ventura County, Lead Coordinator of HMG Ventura County
- Jess Berthold, First 5 Association
- Elizabeth Campos, VIVA Social Impact Partners, Lead Session Facilitator
- Monica Salvador, VIVA Social Impact Partners
- Jaelyn Edwards, VIVA Social Impact Partners

## Appendix C

### First 5 Association Virtual Summit Poll Results on Parent and Family Partnership

Question 1	
Date	2020-12-09
Question	How are you doing with family engagement? To what degree are parents involved in your work?
Respondents	66
Choices	Responses
Baby Steps: thinking & exploring ways to engage parents	23
Toddlers: busy rethinking and reworking strategies	29
Preschoolers: experienced & committed to parent partnerships	14

Question 2	
Date	2020-12-09
Question	How are families involved in your work?
Respondents	38
Items	Responses
Parents inform our work by providing input, like completing surveys or participating in focus groups	31
Parents sit on advisory committees	5
Parents serve on leadership and decision-making bodies, such as a steering committee	2

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