

Strengthening Families and Help Me Grow: Tools You Can Use to Help Families

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Faculty

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Alabama Partnership for Children

Presentation Outline

- **Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) and Blueprint for Zero to Five**
- **Strengthening Families and Five Protective Factors**
- **Help Me Grow and Books, Balls, and Blocks**

Alabama Partnership for Children

- **Founded in 2001 as a result of recommendations by the Governor's Early Learning Commission**

Alabama Partnership for Children

- **Mission:**
 - **"To work in partnership with other public and private entities to maintain an effective state and local system of resources and support that enable parents, families, and others who care for young children to ensure that they are healthy, protected, nurtured, and offered every opportunity to succeed in life."**

Alabama Partnership for Children

- **Vision:**
 - **"Every Alabama child will have the opportunity to succeed."**

Blueprint for Zero to Five

- **Alabama Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative**
 - Supported by ADPH through Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant
- **Structure for planning, funding, advocacy, accountability, and policy decisions**
- **Framework upon which all APC work is based**

Blueprint Components

- **Ready Families in Ready Communities**
+
- **Ready Services: Health**
+
- **Ready Services: Early Education**
+
- **Ready Schools**
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- **Ready Children with Bright Futures**

Connecting Goals

- **Strengthening Families and Help Me Grow are two initiatives the APC helps lead that support all Blueprint components**

Overview of Strengthening Families

- **The Strengthening Families approach seeks to create a child abuse and neglect prevention framework that can help program developers, policy makers, and advocates embed effective prevention strategies into existing systems**

Goals

- **Shift the focus from family risks and deficits to family strengths and resilience**
- **Create widespread understanding of what all programs and providers can do to promote healthy development and reduce incidence of abuse and neglect**

Why Focus on Early Care and Education Programs?

- **Reach large numbers of children and families**
- **Establish intimate and trusting relationships with families**
- **Provide parents with encouragement and education**

Why Focus on Early Care and Education Programs?

- Act as an early warning and response system and intervene before abuse and neglect occurs
- Build resiliency in children
- Continue to receive increased resources and attention from the government

Protective Factors

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children

Parental Resilience / Protective Factors

- The parents' ability to maintain a positive attitude, creatively solve problems, and effectively rise to the challenges in their lives

Parental Resilience / Protective Factors

- Sample questions:
 - What coping methods do you use to relieve stress?
 - What inner strengths do you possess?
 - How do your strengths help you in parenting?

Parental Resilience / Protective Factors

- Program Recommendations:
 - Provide a warm, welcoming environment to parents as well as children
 - Provide on-site support services
 - Organize focus groups for parents

Social Connections / Protective Factors

- A parent's access to positive, trusting, reciprocal, and flexible relationships that embody pro-social, child-friendly values

**Social Connections /
Protective Factors**

- **Sample Questions:**
 - Who can you call for advice or just to talk with?
 - What challenges or barriers prevent you from developing social connections?
 - Do you have family or friends nearby who help you out?

**Social Connections /
Protective Factors**

- **Program Recommendations:**
 - Create a community space and opportunities for parents to connect with each other
 - Serve as a conduit for social activities such as holiday celebrations or sports leagues

**Knowledge of Parenting and
Child Development /
Protective Factors**

- A parent's ability to be aware of their children's needs and respond to those needs appropriately

**Knowledge of Parenting and
Child Development /
Protective Factors**

- **Sample Questions:**
 - How would you like your child's experiences to be different from your own?
 - How does it impact your child when his/her needs are not met?
 - What are some things you find challenging as a parent?

**Knowledge of Parenting and
Child Development /
Protective Factors**

- What are some things you find challenging as a parent?

**Knowledge of Parenting and
Child Development /
Protective Factors**

- **Program Recommendations:**
 - Provide ongoing opportunities for staff training
 - Connect parents to educational resources
 - Build long-term relationships between parents, caregivers, and additional supporters

Concrete Support in Times of Need / Protective Factors

- A parent's access to resources to meet their family's basic needs, especially when times are tough
- Sample Questions:
 - Do you know of any community groups or local services that might be helpful in times of needed assistance?

Concrete Support in Times of Need / Protective Factors

- Sample Questions:
 - Do you know any community groups / local services available in times of needed assistance?
 - Who can you count on?
 - What steps have you taken in past to deal with barriers preventing you from meeting basic needs?

Concrete Support in Times of Need / Protective Factors

- Program Recommendations:
 - Get to know families in such a way that enables the staff to detect the development of high-stress situations
 - Connect parents with resources when they are most needed

Social and Emotional Competence of Children / Protective Factors

- A child's ability to process, understand, and cope with such feelings as sadness, anger, happiness, and other feelings that are fundamental to the human experience

Social and Emotional Competence of Children / Protective Factors

- Sample Questions:
 - How do you know when your child is happy, sad, etc.?
 - How do you keep your child safe at home and in the community?
 - What does a healthy child look like?

Social and Emotional Competence of Children / Protective Factors

- Program Recommendations:
 - Implement social and emotional activities in the classroom
 - Work with parents to help build positive relationships with their children

Program Strategies

- Facilitate friendships and mutual support
- Strengthen parenting
- Respond to family crises
- Link families to services and opportunities
- Facilitate children's social and emotional development

Program Strategies

- Observe and respond to early warning signs of child abuse or neglect
- Value and support parents

State Partners

- Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention (Children's Trust Fund)
- Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers
- ADPH through Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant

Funders

- Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention (Children's Trust Fund)
- PNC Bank
- ADPH through Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant

A Program of Alabama Partnership for Children and United Way of Central Alabama

- An affiliate of the National Help Me Grow Network

Help Me Grow (HMG)

- Approximately 33% of Alabama children ages 2-17 have 2 or more emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions
- Early detection of delays offers the best hope for optimal long-term outcomes

Help Me Grow (HMG)

- **HMG will aid parents in navigating Alabama's system of resources for early childhood development**

HMG Components

- **Child Health Care Provider Outreach**
 - Offer training and support for early detection and intervention
- **Community Outreach**
 - Provide service providers and families networking and awareness

HMG Components

- **Centralized Telephone Access Point**
 - Single phone number for health care providers, service providers, and families to connect to HMG

HMG Components

- **Data Collection**
 - Recording results and tracking data enables healthy growth and development for the program overall

HMG State Partners

- **Alabama Partnership for Children**
- **United Way of Central Alabama / Success By 6 / 2-1-1 Connects Alabama**
- **Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics**
- **Alabama Department of Education, Special Education**

HMG State Partners

- **Alabama Dept. of Mental Health; Developmental Disabilities**
- **Alabama Department of Public Health; Family Health Services**
- **Alabama Dept. of Rehabilitation Services; Alabama Early Intervention**
- **Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council**

HMG State Partners

- **Childcare Resource Network**
- **Parenting Assistance Line**
- **Reach Out and Read Alabama**
- **United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Birmingham**

Funders

- **AL Dept. of Public Health / Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems**
- **Alabama Power Foundation**
- **The Boeing Company**
- **Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham**
- **Help Me Grow National Center**

Who Can Use HMG?

- **Anyone will be able to call if they:**
 - **Wonder or have concerns about a child's development, behavior, or learning**
 - **Need support to access services**

Who Can Use HMG?

- **Are assisting a client, family member, or friend seeking information about developmental services**
- **Want to have an organization included in the developmental services database for referrals**

When a Call Comes In

- **Help Me Grow staff will:**
 - **Listen to concerns and help decide which referrals are right for a child and family**
 - **Find services that are appropriate and available for referrals**

When a Call Comes In

- **Connect children to services**
- **Follow-up to find out if a successful connection was made**

HMG and United Way of Central Alabama

- **Making the Connection**
 - Working within 2-1-1 Central Alabama to handle confidential calls from Jefferson, Blount, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker counties

HMG and United Way of Central Alabama

- **Educating Providers**
 - Team members in Central Alabama are educating health care professionals about the importance of developmental surveillance and screening while promoting access to developmental services

HMG and United Way of Central Alabama

- **Building the Network**
 - Developing ongoing relationships with community programs and supporting maintenance of an updated resource inventory and effective referrals

HMG and United Way of Central Alabama

- **Identifying Gaps and Barriers**
 - Data is collected and analyzed to document and identify needs to effectively connect families to community resources
- **The ultimate goal is to grow HMG to cover the whole state**

Books, Balls, and Blocks

- **Free and fun HMG event for children and families to screen children for developmental delays in the first five years of life**
- **Children engage in games and activities at different stations**

Books, Balls, and Blocks

- **Parents learn how these interactions help stimulate their child's development while screening their child using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3)**

Books, Balls, and Blocks and Help Me Grow Components

- **Child Health Care Provider Outreach**
 - ASQ-3 results are shared with child’s health care provider with parental consent

Books, Balls, and Blocks and Help Me Grow Components

- **Community Outreach**
 - Event requires community volunteers and also gives parents access to community resources

Books, Balls, and Blocks and Help Me Grow Components

- **Centralized Telephone Access Point**
 - Families within the five-county footprint are referred to HMG as needed
- **Data Collection**
 - Results are quantified by HMG staff

Books, Balls, and Blocks and Protective Factors

- **Parental resilience**
 - Parents are empowered by being trusted with evaluating their own child’s development
- **Social connections**
 - Parents interact with other parents while at the event

Books, Balls, and Blocks and Protective Factors

- **Knowledge of parenting and child development**
 - ASQ-3 activities are age-appropriate examples of play
- **Concrete support in times of need**
 - Parents are made aware of existing community resources

Books, Balls, and Blocks and Protective Factors

- **Social and emotional competence of children**
 - Positive relationships and experiences with children

Conclusion

- **Strengthening Families and Help Me Grow** fit so well into the work of **Alabama Partnership for Children and Blueprint for Zero to Five** because they foster:

Conclusion

- **Ready Families in Ready Communities**
- **Ready Services: Health**
- **Ready Services: Early Education**
- **Ready Schools**
- **Ready Children with Bright Futures**

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