



Help Me Grow MN and MN Act Early Project Partnership



Project Overview

This project was the result of a collaborative partnership between Help Me Grow MN and the MN Act Early Project. A primary focus of the project is to promote early developmental monitoring and early developmental screening through promotion of Help Me Grow MN resources in our local culturally- and linguistically-diverse communities. Our goal is to improve connection and access to Help Me Grow for all families. Our goal is to improve connection and access to Help Me Grow for all families.

Background

Minnesota is a state with changing demographics. In the last decade, the number of families from culturally- and linguistically-diverse communities has increased significantly, accounting for over 30% of Minnesota's new population growth. Many of these communities are young and building families with young children (birth to 5). These families need education and access to culturally-competent early developmental care and early intervention services.

Our state has a great need for coordinated outreach around early developmental screening within culturally-diverse communities. Each community is unique in their culture, values, and needs around child development, early screening,

and identification of developmental delays. Feedback from the community tells us that the message needs to come from trusted community members, local allies, and other parents in the community. For this reason, we have chosen Parent Connectors and Outreach Navigators who are trusted in their communities to provide information and materials on early childhood development.

Our project recognizes that to improve child well-being and developmental health outcomes, we must engage families and the broader community in meaningful and innovative ways. The knowledge and expertise to address community needs around parent developmental monitoring and early identification of developmental delays exist within the communities. Thus, a strong focus was placed on building parent leaders from diverse cultural communities to conduct outreach within those communities to promote developmental monitoring and early developmental screening. Parents and leaders were trained and then connected with other families in the community to share knowledge and provide resources on developmental milestones, early developmental screening, the importance of early intervention if there are developmental concerns, and connection to an early intervention referral system (Help Me Grow).

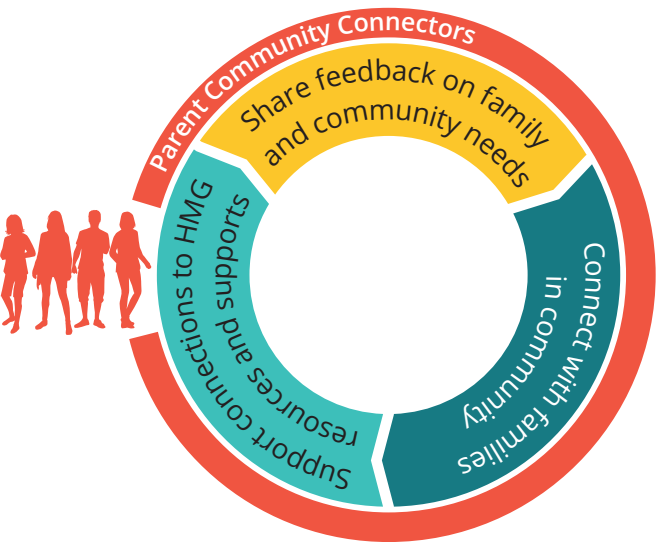
Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, our usual community outreach could not be completed as planned. Our team mobilized via Zoom meetings and developed creative ways to continue to reach at-risk communities. Through a virtual webinar series featuring early childhood specialists and parents of young children, we were able to provide a platform for information and discussion. Our social media presence was also a vital tool in reaching the public and continuing to offer support to our community.

MN Act Early Project and Help Me Grow MN contributed knowledge on developmental milestones, developmental monitoring, materials from Help Me Grow MN/MN Act Early, and ongoing resources to support parent leader outreach in Minnesota. The project leadership team consisted of Marty Smith (Help Me Grow MN), Kathy McKay (Help Me Grow MN), Beth Dorsey (Help Me Grow) and Courtney Higginbotham (University of Minnesota), and Jennifer Hall-Lande (University of Minnesota). The project was also able to pull in resources and support from the Minnesota Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (MN LEND) program.

Some key components of our outreach project:

- Recruitment of Parent Connectors and Outreach Navigators from diverse cultural communities
- Training of Parent Community Leaders to serve as parent educators and connectors
- Parent-to-parent outreach within the community
- Ongoing training and support from MN Act Early and Help Me Grow MN
- Promotion of understanding of developmental milestones
- Promotion of early developmental screening
- Promotion of awareness of MN Early Referral System (HMG)
- Relationship-building with communities
- Social media promotion and presence

Parent Connectors



Description of Community Outreach

MN Act Early and Help Me Grow MN collaborated to support this important outreach. We have Help Me Grow MN and MN Act Early delegates from the Hmong, Somali, and Latinx communities conducting outreach on the importance of developmental monitoring, developmental screening, and acting early if there are concerns. We have conducted outreach at both very large community cultural events (attendance in the tens of thousands) to very small family events in churches, mosques, community centers, etc. Examples of outreach in specific communities are illustrated in the following table.

Latinx Community Outreach

Early Childhood Development
Milestones to age 5

Every child is unique. No two children develop, grow and learn at exactly the same pace. And yet, children develop in predictable ways. The milestones indicated here are just some of the indicators that a child is developing typically. **For parents of young children:** Babies and toddlers are growing, learning and changing all the time. It's fun to watch! We suggest you keep track of the new things they do and the milestones they reach. If you are concerned about your child's growth, development or learning, we encourage you to contact us at HelpMeGrowMN.org or 1-866-693-4769.

Track These Milestones

NEWBORN

- Follows movement by turning head
- Lifts head and chest when lying on stomach
- Moves arms and legs easily
- Startles at loud noises
- Cries, smiles, coos
- Quiets to familiar voice or touch

3 MONTHS

- Rolls over in both directions
- Begins to sit with a little help
- Coo, babble, squeals, laughs
- Knows familiar faces & begins to know if someone is a stranger
- Uses hands and mouth to explore the world
- Transfers objects from hand to hand

6 MONTHS

- Sits well without support
- Creeps or crawls
- Holds 2 objects at the same time
- Responds to own name
- Makes sounds like "dada", "mama", "baba"
- Shows feelings by smiling, crying, pointing

9 MONTHS

- Pulls to stand, walks holding onto furniture
- Uses simple gestures, like shaking head "no" or waving "bye-bye"
- Says "mama" and "dada"
- Shows preference for certain people and toys
- Imitates gestures, sounds and actions
- Puts objects in and out of containers

12 MONTHS

- Walks alone, begins to run
- Says three or more single words
- Tries new things with familiar adults nearby
- Points to one body part
- Scribbles with a crayon or pencil
- Shows interest in other children

18 MONTHS

- Defer to toddler (at 18 months): If he or she isn't saying single words like "mama"
- Kicks a ball forward
- Walks up and down stairs holding on
- Points to things or pictures in a book when named
- Uses 2 or 3 words together
- Plays briefly beside other children
- Builds towers of 4 or more blocks

2 YEARS

- Climbs and runs well
- Builds with blocks, a tower of 4 blocks
- Tries new things with familiar adults nearby
- Shows concern and affection for others
- Plays make-believe with dolls, animals, and people
- Does puzzles with 3 to 4 pieces

3 YEARS

- Catches a bounced ball most of the time
- Tells stories and recalls parts of stories
- Plays cooperatively with other children
- Copies simple shapes
- Understands the concept of "same" & "different"
- Follows instructions with 2 or 3 steps

4 YEARS

- Hops, may be able to skip
- Speaks clearly in sentences of five or more words
- Counts to or more objects
- Draws a person with at least 6 body parts
- Wants to please friends & wants to be like friends

5 YEARS

We recommend immediate referral: If your little one seems to be losing language skills or social skills

This information is made possible through an interagency agreement between the Minnesota Department of Education and the Hennepin County Health Services Department for Children and Families with Disabilities.

Refer a child for screening or evaluation at HelpMeGrowMN.org or by calling 1-866-693-4769

Number of Families Reached	Location	Collaborative Community Partner(s)
25	Mexican Consulate	Consulado de Mexico
10	My First Steps Daycare	
15	Mexican Consulate	Consulado de Mexico
10	Ecuadorian Consulate	Ecuadorian Consulate
20	NAMI Minnesota	
133	Fiesta Latina Clues	
57	Philips Health Fair	
15	Mujeres Latinas Network	
48	Mexican Consulate	Consulado de Mexico
16	Mexican Consulate	Consulado de Mexico
19	Ecuadorian Consulate	Ecuadorian Consulate
40	Food Basket (Clues)	
33	Risen Christ Catholic	
70	Assumption Church	Church of the Assumption
10	Ecuadorian Consulate	Ecuadorian Consulate
15	Mexican Consulate	Consulado de Mexico
80	Guadalupe Church	
20	YMCA of the North	
15	YMCA of the North	
65	Risen Savior Church	
70	Holy Rosary Church	Holy Rosary Church
17	Ecuadorian Consulate	Ecuadorian Consulate
33	Incarnation Church	
17	Saint Cyril Church	
2	Ecuadorian Consulate	Ecuadorian Consulate
25	Hennepin County Fair	
10	Mexican Consulate Fair	Consulado de Mexico
6	Ecuadorian Consulate	Ecuadorian Consulate
60	Mexican Consulate	Consulado de Mexico
20	Mexican Consulate Health Fair	Consulado de Mexico
31	Mexican Consulate	Consulado de Mexico
33	Mexican Consulate Health Fair	Consulado de Mexico
5	Mexican Consulate	Consulado de Mexico
8	Ecuadorian Consulate	Ecuadorian Consulate
8	Ecuadorian Consulate	Ecuadorian Consulate
1	Holy Rosary Church	Holy Rosary Church
2	Assumption Church	Church of the Assumption
13	Assumption Church	Church of the Assumption
30	Park Avenue Methodist Church	
Total: 1,107		

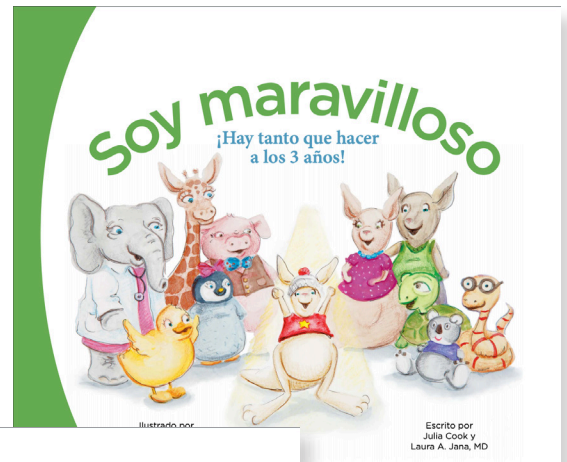
The Parent Connectors and Outreach Navigators at St. Mary's Health Clinics conducted outreach in primarily Hispanic/Latinx communities and reached over 1,000 families (primarily in the Latinx community) from June 2019 to June 2020. They collaborated with various community and systems-level organizations, such as the Mexican Consulate, the Ecuadorian Consulate, La Red, Holy Rosary Church, and Assumption Church. They hosted meetings and table events at the Mexican Consulate and many Hispanic/Latinx churches around the Twin Cities. Their outreach was mostly in the form of resource tables at events and health fairs with some one-on-one and group discussions. They used many materials such as the Help Me Grow Developmental Wheel, Track Your Child's Developmental Milestones, the **Amazing Me** book, Early Childhood Screening bookmarks, and posters and bags. Their audience was mostly Spanish-speaking, Hispanic women and families. The St. Mary's Clinics read the child development wheel to many of their groups, and the audience was very receptive to it and expressed how they appreciated they were not alone when encountering or suspecting a child's developmental problems or delays. They received valuable feedback from families while tabling at the Latino Family Health Fairs, such as:

- This information is new to people who just arrived from Mexico or Central America and they appreciate the books and information on early childhood development
- Families enjoy the colors in the books and other developmental materials

The families are grateful for Help Me Grow MN and what it offers children

Some parents had questions about payment plans and immigration charge

Overall, Help Me Grow MN is a new program to many of the families the parent community leaders came in contact within the Latino community. It appears that most connections were with families for whom Help Me Grow was new, so we are reaching new families. Families enjoyed the materials and are now aware of the Help Me Grow program, and have tools to engage with their child in a developmentally-appropriate way and can monitor their child's ongoing development. We will do further outreach at health care fairs, Latino churches, neighborhood community events, and through partnerships with La Red.



Somali Community Outreach

Asli Ashkir is our new Community Public Health Advisor for Help Me Grow MN and MN Act Early in the Somali community. Asli brings expertise in public health and family well-being.

She is providing us with invaluable knowledge and experience working in this community, as well as possible collaborative partners for the future. Because of COVID-19, we did not get a chance to get out into the community this year, but here are some key points for our direction with Somali community outreach in the future.

Successful outreach in the Somali Community:

“We need to identify/recruit active community-respected outreach workers (at least two) who are willing to get trained and work with us. I would suggest to recruit two because in case we lose one, the other will be available. We may recruit a male and a female. We need to begin reaching out to fathers since they are the head of the family in our culture.” — Asli Ashkir

Potential places and events with the largest impact in the Somali Community:

Post-COVID era

1. Friday prayers at the mosques
2. The two special holidays (Eid)
3. Somali Independence Day
4. Tabling at the Somali malls
5. Health fairs organized by community-based organizations such as the Brian Coyle Community Center
6. Tabling at the high-rise buildings

COVID era

1. Somali radio channels (live talks or recorded)
2. Somali TV
3. Somali newspapers
4. Facebook
5. YouTube

Key points for having successful relationships with the Somali Community

- Visibility in the community is important. Recruitment of community-connected/respected outreach workers representing HMG is key to success.
- Working closely with one or two community-based organizations, such as faith centers, may boost visibility and outreach.
- Establish close working relationships with Somali healthcare providers (pediatricians and nurse practitioners) who provide care to many Somali families.



Hmong Community Outreach

Number of Families Reached	Location	Collaborative Community Partner(s)
200	Hmong Freedom Festival – Como Park	
30	Conway Safe Summer Nights – Conway Rec Center	Southeast St. Paul Early Learning Coalition
100	Dragon Festival – Phalen Regional Park	Hmong Early Childhood Coalition
150	Hmong New Year – River Center	Hmong Early Childhood Co.
25	Washington Tech Magnet School – St. Paul	Washington Tech Magnet School
Total: 505		

Parent Connectors Zang Vang-Lee and Nee Xiong led Help Me Grow and Act Early outreach in the Hmong community. Their community outreach reached approximately 230 people from June 2019 to June 2020, with many of their community events being cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both Zang and Nee collaborated with community and systems-level organizations such as the Hmong Early Childhood Coalition, Southeast St. Paul Early Learning Coalition, and Washington Technical Magnet School. Zang hosted a table at the Hmong Freedom Festival, a large-impact weekend event. At the festival, Zang introduced 200 families to Help Me Grow’s services, and engaged families through popsicle stick puzzles, coloring, hula hoops, and a dice movement game. Overall, she said all families were excited about **Where is Bear?** and **Amazing Me**—the books they received from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Nee tabled events at the Dragon Festival, Hmong New Year, and the Washington Tech Magnet school, where she spoke with families about the benefits of Help Me Grow and passed out developmental tools and books. Parents asked her questions specific to their child as well as general developmental questions. Overall, Zang and Nee reached over 500 families in the Hmong community, spreading awareness about early childhood development and Help Me Grow.



Help Me Grow Webinar Series

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak and quarantine, Help Me Grow partnered with Minnesota Act Early, Nancy Lee with Ramsey County – Early Childhood Initiative (RC-ECI), and Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) to create an educational webinar series for parents in our community. RC-ECI supports parents with young children who live in Ramsey County and connects them to resources. CLUES is a linguistically- and culturally-relevant resource and service nonprofit organization that connects families to resources, and their partnership was invaluable for the webinar series.

This series, entitled, “Parenting Tips for Challenging Times,” covered topics and answered questions related to parenting during a pandemic. It was important for us to still reach communities in need while in-person outreach was at a standstill. The webinars were conducted in English, but also had a live Spanish translator. The series consisted of four sessions with a different topic for each session:

1. Supporting Your Child Through Difficult Times
2. Outside to Play Every Day
3. Well-Child Checkups: Are They Safe During the Pandemic?
4. Challenging Behaviors During Challenging Times

Each session was 45 minutes long, and had early childhood experts covering the topics, as well as a Question and Answer portion for parents. Parents could ask questions through the chat feature, and experts as well as community members could answer or share resources appropriate for the question. Our experts are listed at right.

Participant Profile

Through all four sessions, we reached approximately 240 families from various backgrounds. Our participants were both parents and professionals, and were of different races/ethnicities, such as Caucasian, Hispanic, Hmong, and African American.

In the post survey sent out after each episode, our participants offered valuable feedback for us moving forward. Other early childhood topics that interested parents and professionals included:

Session One



Dr. Nakita Natala,
Child Psychiatrist



Brandon Jones, MA,
Psychotherapist

Session Two



Sheila Williams Ridge,
MA, Director of Shirley
Moore Lab Preschool,
UMN



Anna Sharratt, Executive
Director, Free Forest
School

Session Three

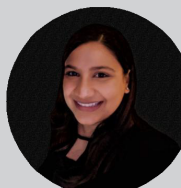


Sylvia Sekhon, MD,
Developmental
Pediatrician (retired)



Leann West, MD,
Pediatrician

Session Four



Kiran Sheikh, PsyS,
Specialist in School
Psychology



Kim Yang Bailey,
PhD, Early Childhood
Education

1. Parenting styles/tips
2. Immunizations
3. Building social skills in young children when face-to-face interactions are limited due to COVID-19
4. Building resiliency in children
5. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
6. Scheduling/routines during COVID-19



Social Media Impact

After COVID-19 shut down all face-to-face outreach, both Help Me Grow-MN and MN Act Early ramped up our social media presence in an effort to reach as many families as possible. The Facebook pages of both organizations shared developmental tips and promoted the CDC's free materials. Through these additional posts, our pages reached more people in the community and got more "engagements" from the community. We covered various "Early Childhood Developmental Tips" related to navigating life during a quarantine. The posts included: Cooking, Art, Play, Talk/Chat, Emotions, Self, Relationships, Gratitude, and Managing Anxiety/Stress. With over 27,000 followers on Facebook, this is a large impact tool that is very valuable in disseminating information to our communities.

LEND – Help Me Grow Partnership

We've grown our partnership with the University of Minnesota's Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program, with seven fellows participating in Act Early/Help Me Grow outreach in their respective fields.

- Kimberly Baker in Birth-3 Home-Based Services
- Daijah Frazier and Amal Mohamed at We Care Autism Center
- Courtney Higginbotham in Hennepin-University Partnership
- Pascal Kabamba at Center for Africans Now in America (CANAA) and Brookdale Christian Center Daycare
- Alyssa Mason in "Having Challenging Conversations," meeting the community where they are
- Erin Van Dyke in Pediatric Primary Care at Community-University Health Care Center (CUHCC) clinic and Children's Hospital– St. Paul

Fellows distributed materials such as handouts, milestone wheels, and books; introduced the milestone tracker app to parents; and spoke with parents about early childhood development and developmental delays. Some LEND fellows incorporated Act Early/Help Me Grow into their daily work as a special education leader, a daycare teacher, a pediatric nurse, and a public health professional. Others went to trusted places in their community, such as places of worship and barbershops, to have conversations with parents in a more informal setting.

Hennepin–University Partnership

The Hennepin–University Partnership was a one- year project focused on ‘Building Healthy Children and Strong Families’. Alongside Hennepin County Public Health, we utilized Parent Connectors from two diverse communities—African American (Sierra Williams) and American Indian/Native American (Allicia Waukau-Butler)—to meet families where they are and provide information on early childhood development. They both have extensive outreach experience and are extremely well-connected in their respective communities. We provided them with a training session in promoting early childhood screening as well as Hennepin County Public Health services.

Our primary goals for the Parent Connectors were to:

- Create relationships, build trust and connect people with resources
- Connect parents who are in need of support and resources through outreach and relationships
- Go out in the community and meet people where they are
- Connect families and provide a warm handoff to services

These goals helped to meet an overall goal of increasing rates of engagement with Hennepin County services such as WIC, Home Visiting Services, Screen at 3, and Hennepin County libraries. Another important aspect of utilizing Parent Connectors was to create a feedback loop between Hennepin County and communities, to ultimately learn about barriers and better ways to support families. Parent Connectors help to make the process of accessing services less challenging and intimidating for families in need.

Along with educating parents on what services Hennepin County Public Health has to offer, Parent Connectors brought Early Childhood Development materials such as “Developmental Milestone” books for 2 and 3-year-olds and pamphlets on the importance of early childhood development. These books are developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and provide parents with the knowledge of what developmental milestones their child should be meeting at certain ages. They also provide parents with tools of who to contact if their child is not meeting such milestones. This is in conjunction with the “Learn the Signs, Act Early” public health project to empower and enable parents to ‘Act Early’ on their child’s development.

During the course of this project, our Parent Connector’s reached approximately 400 families and helped 50 of those families to sign up for services in Hennepin County. They handed out about 160 bags with developmental materials i.e. the Developmental Milestone books and pamphlets. This pilot project utilizing the use of Parent Connectors has proven to be a promising practice that Hennepin County Public Health can use for their other programs.





Parent Connectors completed outreach at over 30 different events throughout Hennepin County. Of those events, some stood out as promising practices that provided to be most effective:

- North Point Food Distribution
- National Night Out
- Child & Teen Checkups Health Fairs
- Toys for Tots
- Cultural Events/Festivals

The LEND fellows added a lot of value to our Act Early MN and MN Help Me Grow outreach this year. Through this partnership, we were able create relationships with clinics such as CUHCC, immigrant centers such as CANA, and systems-level government entities such as Hennepin County Public Health. In both professional and personal settings, they distributed materials and knowledge to over 550 families in culturally- and linguistically-diverse communities. We will continue to partner with LEND to expand our network of health providers, community outreach workers, and advocates.

Project Conclusion

The current outreach project and partnership between the Minnesota Act Early Project and Help Me Grow MN resulted in many successful outcomes and a significant positive impact within diverse cultural communities. Project outcomes included significantly increased outreach and awareness around early developmental monitoring, early developmental screening, and connections to Help Me Grow resources and supports with parents and families in local diverse communities. Overall, this project reached over 2,400 families in local diverse communities and helped to connect them to resources. For many families, this was their first introduction to Help Me Grow resources.

More broadly, our pivot to a larger online presence and the creation of a webinar series due to COVID-19 reached many families throughout Minnesota. The partnership will continue to adapt to changing times and continue outreach in new and creative ways.