



To: Commissioners, First 5 Ventura County

From: Sharon Elmensdorp, Program Manager

Date: May 21, 2020

Re: Recommendation to Adopt a Revised Help Me Grow Implementation Model

Background

Help Me Grow (HMG) is a national model designed to set forth a comprehensive system that promotes early identification and linkage to services related to the development, learning, and behavior of children ages 0-5. Help Me Grow consists of four core components (a centralized access point, family and community outreach, child health provider outreach, and data collection and analysis). It is a systems change model that aims to improve the coordination of local early childhood services by leveraging existing resources in the community, maximizing opportunities within public agencies, and promoting cross-sector collaboration toward a shared agenda. This is accomplished through oversight by an organizing entity and a network of partner agencies and programs that focus on young children and their families.

First 5 Ventura County (F5VC) has invested in early identification and linkage for over 10 years. In 2013, Ventura County was the 4th county in the state to receive the designation of a HMG Affiliate. During the first three years of the Commission's FY 2015-20 Strategic Plan, F5VC invested \$693,000 annually in Ventura County's HMG model through contracts with Ventura County Public Health and Landon Pediatric Foundation. For FYs 2019-21, the Commission approved a \$285,000 annual allocation to support early identification and linkage to intervention through the Help Me Grow model, nearly a 60% reduction from prior year funding levels. First 5 Ventura County retained \$85,000 to serve as the Help Me Grow organizing entity and contracted with VCPH for the remaining \$200,000 to provide family navigation and support, community outreach, and capacity building for local early learning providers.

In this first year of the scaled back investment, staff examined the effectiveness of dividing the roles and responsibilities associated with the core components of the HMG model. Additionally, as the landscape for the national and state HMG model has shifted, so has the need to adjust the local approach. Recognizing the strong foundation and history that exists with VCPH, staff from both agencies reviewed current implementation strengths and opportunities in order to develop the most efficient and effective HMG strategy. F5VC and VCPH mutually concluded that it would be beneficial for HMG to be housed under one entity in order to maximize the ability to leverage and coordinate resources. This includes the ability to centralize family support, effectively coordinate across agencies, and pursue funding opportunities. Additionally, it was mutually agreed that it was imperative that we continue the long standing partnership in order to best serve families and children in Ventura County.

The recommended HMG implementation model beginning with FY 2020-2021 is as follows: in addition to retaining the role of organizing entity for HMG Ventura County, F5VC will assume responsibility for all components of HMG, including implementing a centralized access point, family and community outreach, child health provider outreach, and data collection and analysis. F5VC is well-positioned to serve in this capacity and it is aligned with the organizational emphasis on systems change efforts. To ensure a successful transition by July 1, 2020, F5VC would begin the process to changeover and utilize existing internal resources to support HMG transition activities with VCPH between now and June 30, 2020.

Recommendation

Recommended action would adopt a revised implementation model for Help Me Grow, beginning with FY 2020-21. Under the new model, First 5 Ventura County would retain the role of organizing entity and assume responsibility for implementing all components of Help Me Grow.