

Planting New Seeds:

How Help Me Grow Maine Supports Children and Their Families

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Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs|
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Disclosure

The presenter has nothing to disclose regarding commercial relationships.

Objectives

- ➡ Describe the Help Me Grow model of developmental screening and referral and linkage to community resources.
- ➡ Explain the concrete ways that Help Me Grow Maine supports families in meeting their young children's developmental, behavioral, and other basic needs.

What is Help Me Grow?



Stand-alone program

✓ Systems model

✓ Existing resources

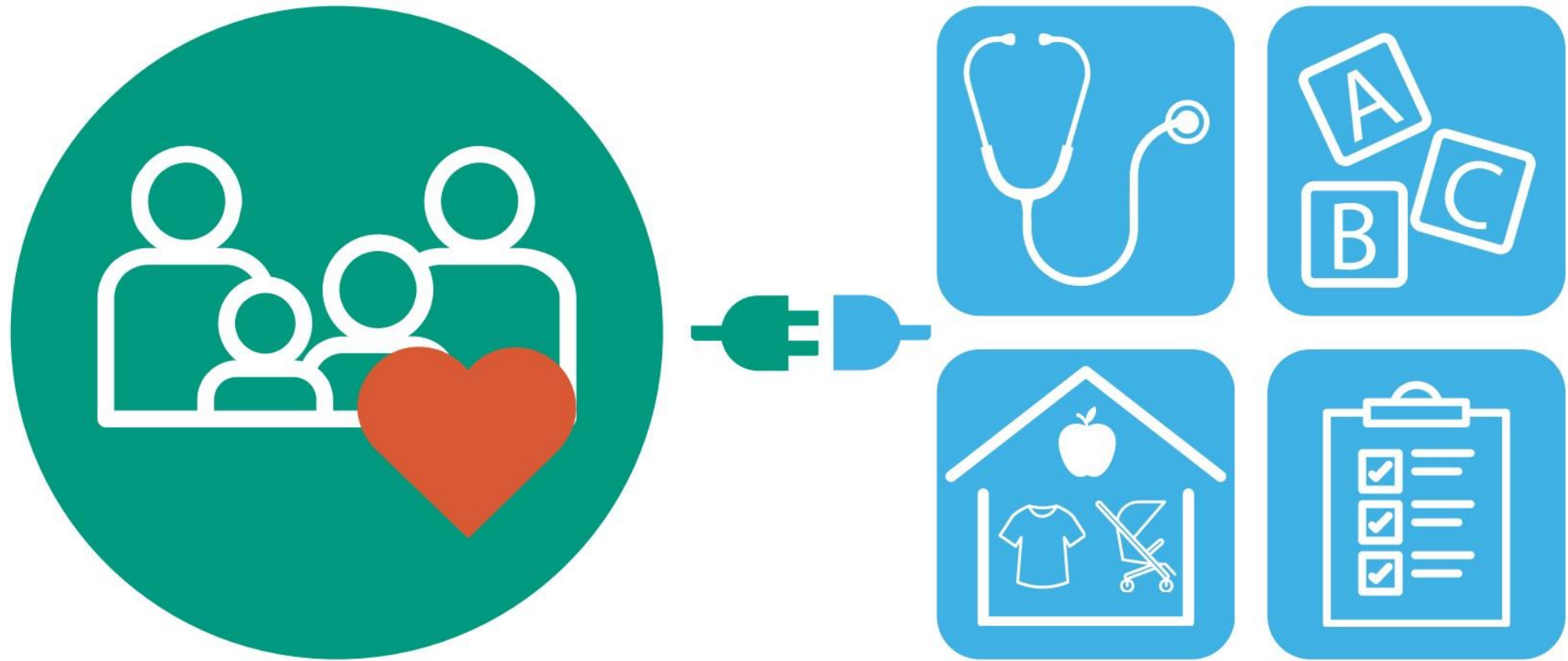
✓ Work collaboratively

From HMG National: What We Know

- Children with developmental/behavioral concerns are **eluding early detection**.
- Many **initiatives exist** to provide services to young children, their families.
- A **gap exists** between child health, child development, and early childhood education programs.
- Children and their families would benefit from a **coordinated, region-wide system** of early detection, and intervention for children at developmental risk.



What is Help Me Grow?





A Solution to Help Young Children Shine

Help Me Grow is a central access point designed to connect families to information and services.

In partnership with 211 Maine caregivers and providers can contact Help Me Grow for additional support. Help Me Grow will listen, link families to information about child development and community resources and provide follow-up both caregivers and referral sources.

HMG Maine is an affiliate of the National Help Me Grow Network



HOW IT WORKS

Centralized Access Point

We assist caregivers and child health providers in connecting children to the grid of existing community and State resources that can help them thrive, through a “warm hand-off” from families to resources.

Developmental Screening

We promote working with families to recognize developmental milestones and utilize the Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)® to assess development. If concerns are identified in the screening process, we work with families to connect to early intervention professionals for further assessment.

Resources

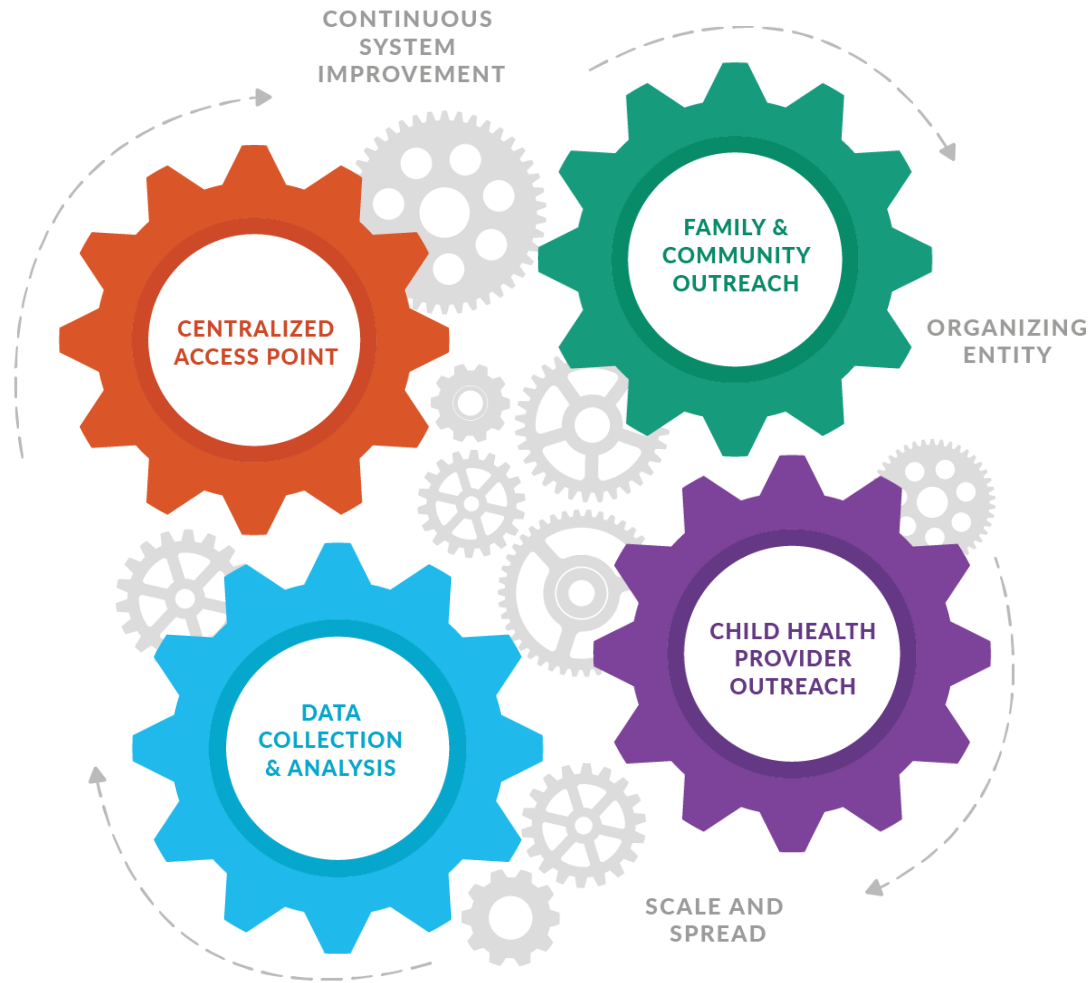
We help support a network of connected service providers, that can effectively serve families in Maine who have a variety of needs.

Eligibility

We are available at no cost to all Maine children, birth to eight and their families / caregivers. Parents can also call for assistance during pregnancy.



From HMG National: Core Components



HMG Maine

- Bipartisan legislation passed in 2021
- Launched November 2022
- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
 - Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS)





Goals of Help Me Grow

- Helping families effectively utilize already-existing programs and services
 - **Increasing access to the early periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment services**
 - **Increasing access and connections to services**
- Facilitating long-range planning by identifying gaps in services
- Collaboration with community partners in early childhood and child health fields

Examples of HMG Maine Partners

Community

- 211 Maine/ Opportunity Alliance
- Community Action Programs (CAPs)
- Networking groups
- Prevention councils
- Caregiver support organizations (e.g., Maine Parent Federation)

State

- Maine CDC
 - Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) initiative
 - Community Care Team/Office of Public Health Equity (OPHE)
 - Maine Families
- Maine DOE
 - Preschool Development Grant (PDG)
 - Child Development Services (CDS)/Early Intervention for ME

National

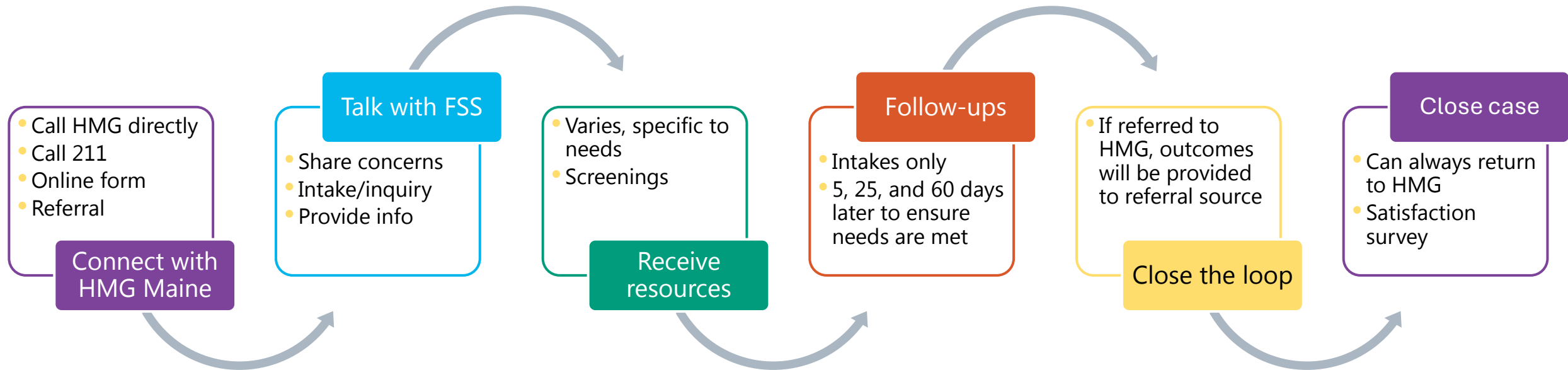
- HMG National
 - System Leadership Learning Community
 - Affiliate Advisory Board
 - Resources/peer learning

HMG Maine Team



- Program Manager
- Four Family Support Specialists (including a Cultural Broker)
- Program Specialist
- Outreach Specialist
- Screening Specialist
- Part-time administrative assistant
- Early Intervention Contract Specialist
- Evaluator

HMG Maine Experience



When to Refer

Consider referring a family when:

- You are unsure what services a family might be eligible for but know they need additional support.
- Want to connect families with additional support outside of your program.
- Want a family to receive information and resources while on a waitlist.
- Want a child to have a developmental screening and/or car seat check

Ways to Refer

By email:

HelpMeGrow@maine.gov

By phone:

(207) 624-7969

By fax (download form on the website):

(207) 624-7994

The easiest way to refer is via online referral:

[Help Me Grow Maine Website](https://www.helpmegrowmaine.org/)

You can also access helpful resources!

Refer a Family

If you know a family who may need support, please refer with their permission by using our online referral form, dialing (207) 624-7969 or completing a [referral form](#) and faxing to (207) 624-7994.

[Click here to Complete a Confidential Referral](#)



Resources and Information Sheets

Post Cards

[\[English\]](#) [\[Arabic\]](#) [\[French\]](#) [\[Haitian Creole\]](#) [\[Khmer\]](#) [\[Lingala\]](#) [\[Portuguese\]](#) [\[Somali\]](#) [\[Spanish\]](#) [\[Vietnamese\]](#)

A Family's Journey: A resource that will guide anyone through the process of Help Me Grow Maine.

[\[English\]](#) [\[Arabic\]](#) [\[French\]](#) [\[Haitian Creole\]](#) [\[Khmer\]](#) [\[Lingala\]](#) [\[Portuguese\]](#) [\[Somali\]](#) [\[Spanish\]](#) [\[Vietnamese\]](#)

HMG Maine Data (11/1/22 – 3/1/2025)

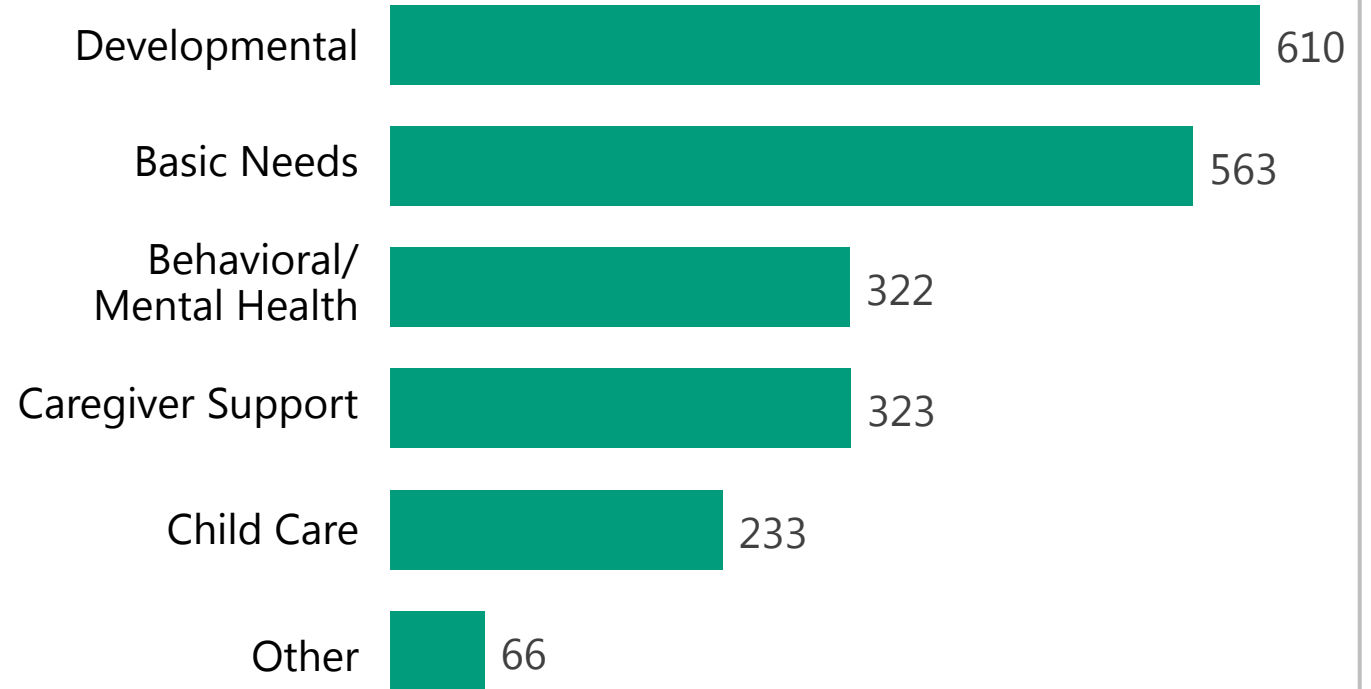


1,598 children
served



421 developmental
screenings

Reasons* for Contacting HMG Maine



*Categories are not mutually exclusive

Screening Events

- Completed screening events at 15 sites to date in Hancock, Penobscot, Aroostook, Androscoggin, and York counties
- One screening event took place at a site predominantly serving families whose primary language was not English.

Benefits of screening events:

- Caregiver has opportunity to think about child strengths/needs and ask questions.
- Provider has opportunity to learn about screening and supports for their program.





Gaps, Barriers, and Initiatives

Most Common Needs/Concerns (2024):

- Basic needs (diapers, strollers, clothing, etc.)
- Developmental and behavioral delays
- Caregiver Support

Most Common Barriers (2024):

- Cultural and/or Language Accessibility
- Eligibility barriers
- Provider unable or unwilling

HMG Maine Data: 3 Examples



Language
Access



Basic
Needs



Behavioral/
Mental Health

Example #1



Language
Access



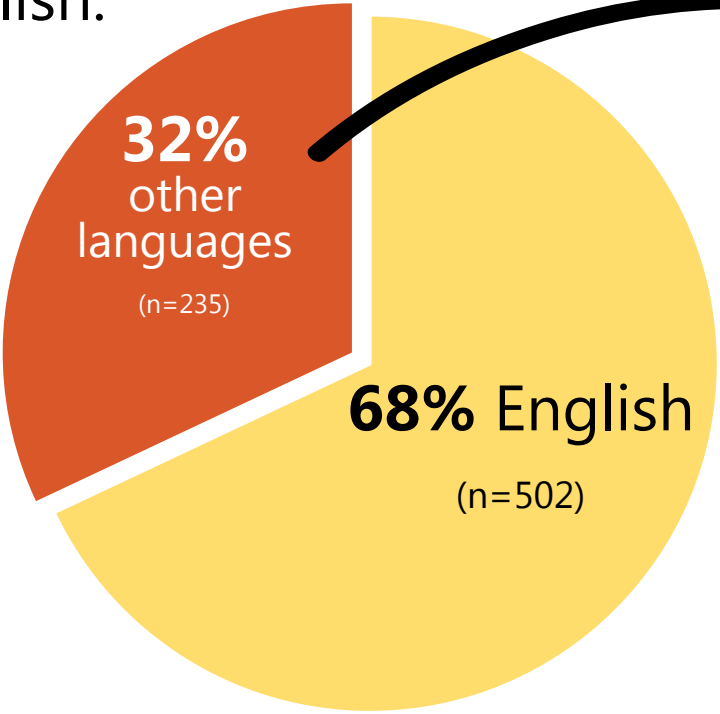
Basic
Needs



Behavioral/
Mental Health

Language Differences: Data (1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024)

In 1 in 3 HMG Maine cases*, the primary home language is not English.

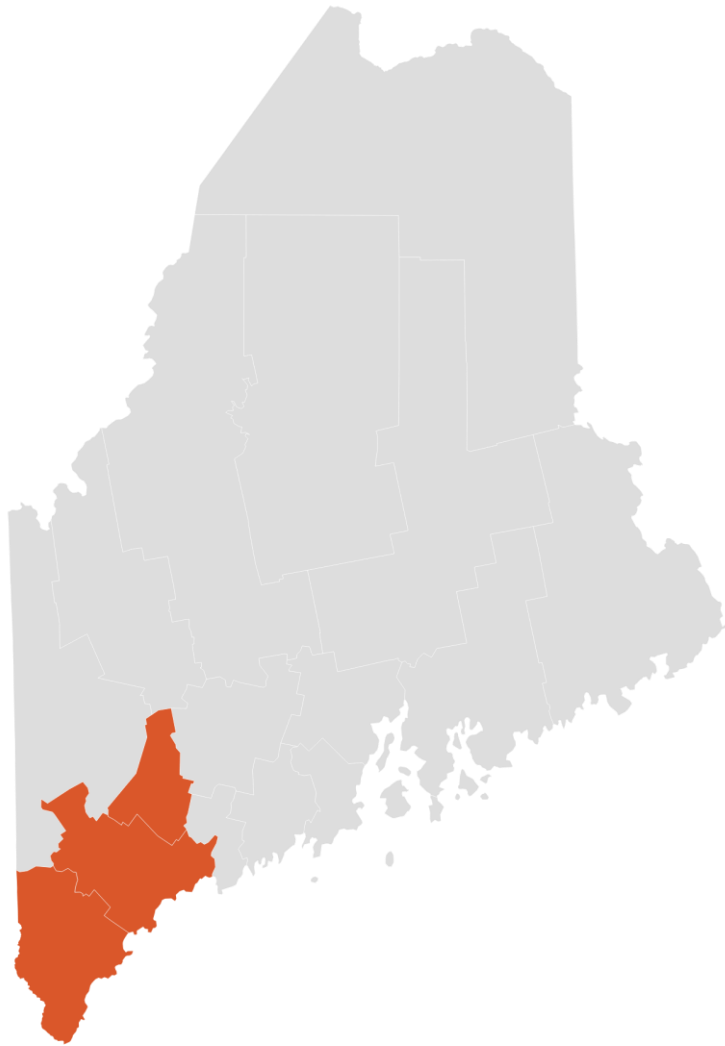


*Cases with unknown primary home language have been excluded.

Most common non-English languages reported as the **primary home language**:

Lingala	115
French	32
Portuguese	30
Spanish	16
Kinyarwanda	12

Language Differences: Data (1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024)



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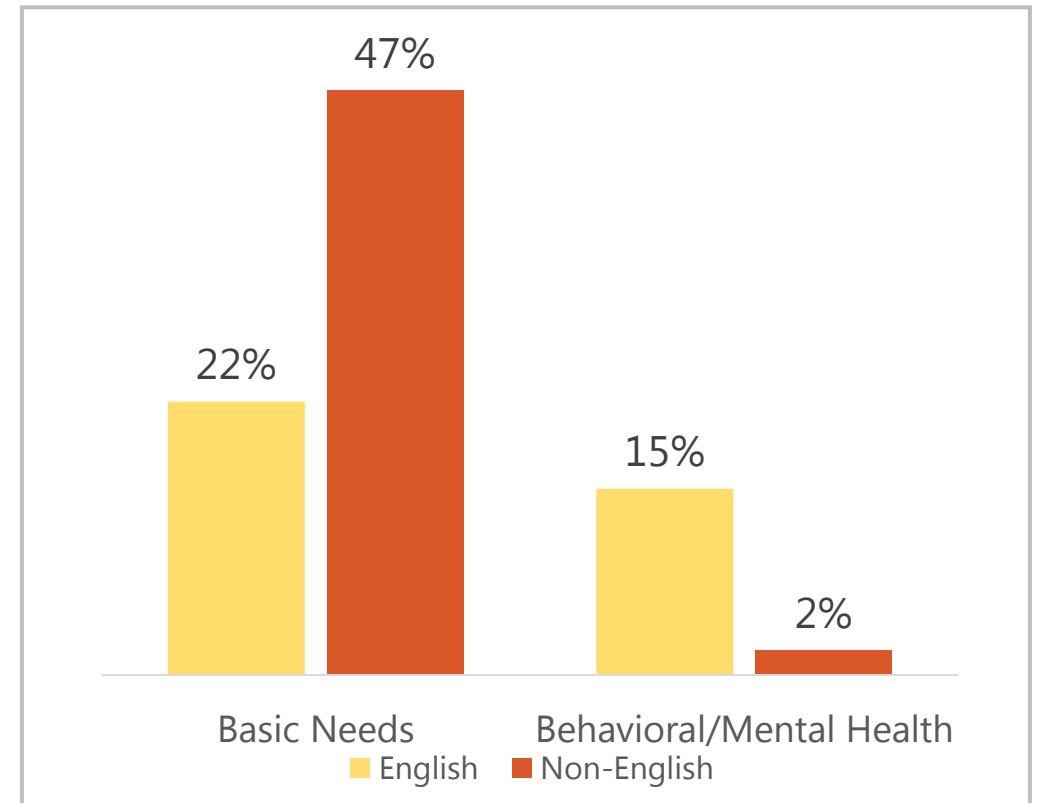
94%
of children from
non-English-speaking
families served
by HMG Maine
were from
**Cumberland, York,
or Androscoggin
counties**

Language Differences: Data (1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024)



Non-English-speaking families had higher rates of needing support for **basic needs**, while **English-speaking families** had higher rates of needing support for their child's **behavioral/mental health**.

Reasons for Contacting HMG by Language



Language Differences: Actions



Hired two family support specialists/cultural brokers

▶ Works directly with New Mainer families

▶ Convenes Cultural Brokering Taskforce

- Consulting
- Videos, brochures
- Education
- Advocacy



Cultural Brokering Taskforce – Pilot Project

✓ **Over the past six months:**

Task Force has produced short videos on prenatal care, postnatal care, and child development.

Videos In 10 Languages : *Arabic, English, French, Kinyarwanda, Lingala, Pashto, Portuguese, Spanish, Somali, and Ukrainian*

✓ **For the Next six months:**

Task Force will produce short videos on mental health, domestic violence and car seat safety.

Language Differences: Actions



Found technology to support communication

How ReachMyTeach Works

- ▶ **Educators write in English.**
- ▶ Guardians read and respond in their preferred language. Attached PDFs automatically translated.
- ▶ Educators receive messages in English.
- ▶ School culture becomes more inclusive.
- ▶ On-demand live video interpretation.



From ReachMyTeach's website: <https://info.reachmyteach.com/>

Language Differences: Actions



Developing a companion document for Ages and Stages developmental screenings



Initial efforts: How organizations/programs adapt and clarify questions while maintaining validity



Goal: Create a universally applicable resource that fosters ongoing discussions and learning opportunities around cultural inclusivity



Working with multiple partners and plan to roll out document in 2025

Example #2



Language
Access

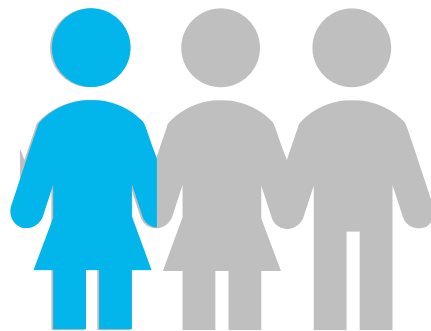


Basic
Needs



Behavioral/
Mental Health

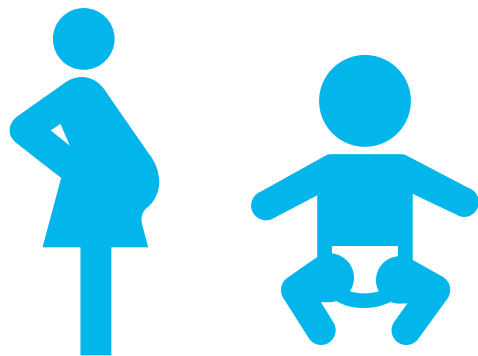
Basic Needs: Data (1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024)



1 in 3 cases

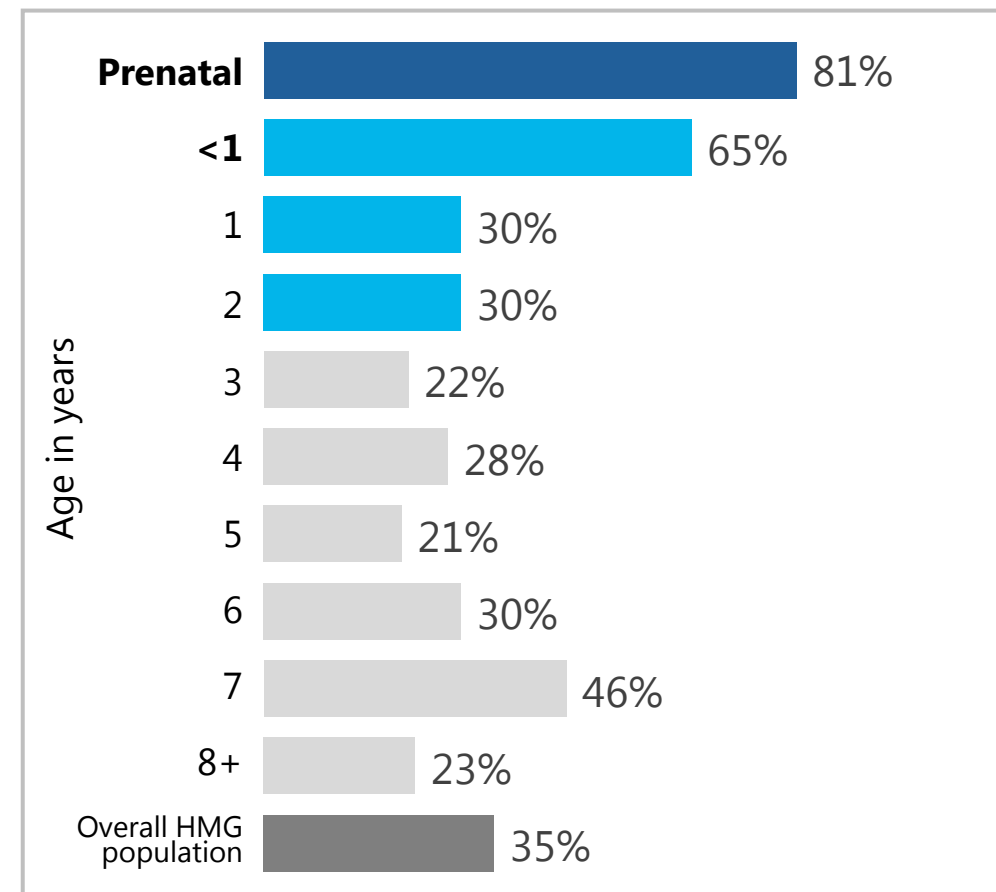
have reported needing help with **basic needs** as the reason for contacting Help Me Grow Maine.

Basic Needs: Data (1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024)



Cases involving **pregnant people and infants** are seeking help for **basic needs** at a much higher proportion than the overall HMG population.

% of Cases Calling HMG Maine about Basic Needs – by Age



Basic Needs: Actions



Connected with MeCAP
to advocate for solutions
to diaper needs



Awarded **\$1 million federal grant** for diaper distribution

Basic Needs: Actions



Partnering with Maine's Child Passenger Safety Program to ensure families have access to car seats



- ▶ Training and certification of five HMG Maine staff
- ▶ Able to distribute seats to income-eligible families
- ▶ Goal to combine with developmental screenings

Example #3



Language
Access



Basic
Needs



Behavioral/
Mental Health

Behavioral/Mental Health: Data (11/1/22 – 8/31/24)



271 cases
included a
**behavior/mental
health** need



Nearly 20%
of cases with a
**behavior/mental
health** need
encountered
barriers when trying
to access the
provided resources

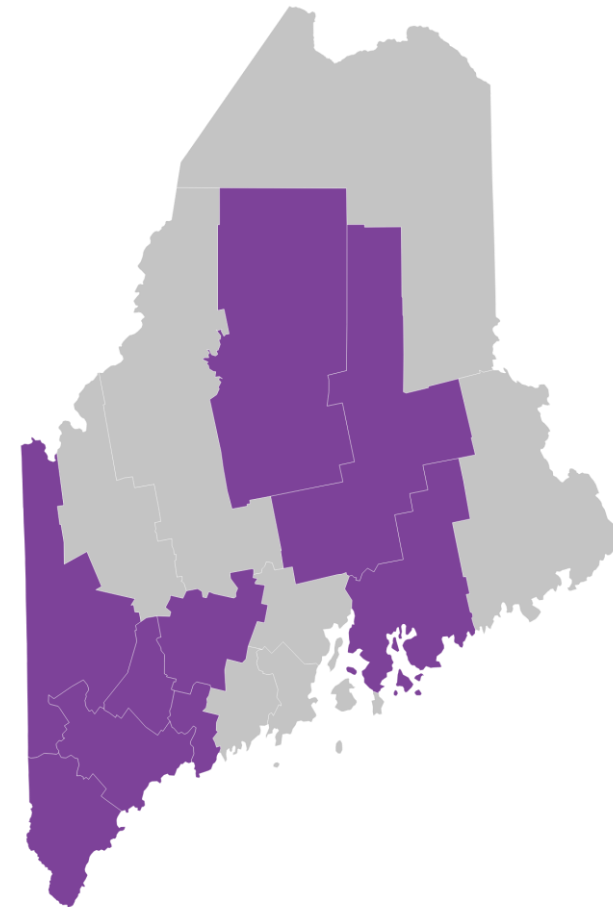


Of these **behavioral/
mental health**
cases with barriers,
**40% experienced
waitlists for
needed care**

Behavioral/Mental Health: Data (11/1/22 – 8/31/24)

Demographics of Barriers:

- ▶ 4 year olds most impacted
- ▶ More boys (71%) than girls
- ▶ Rural and urban areas



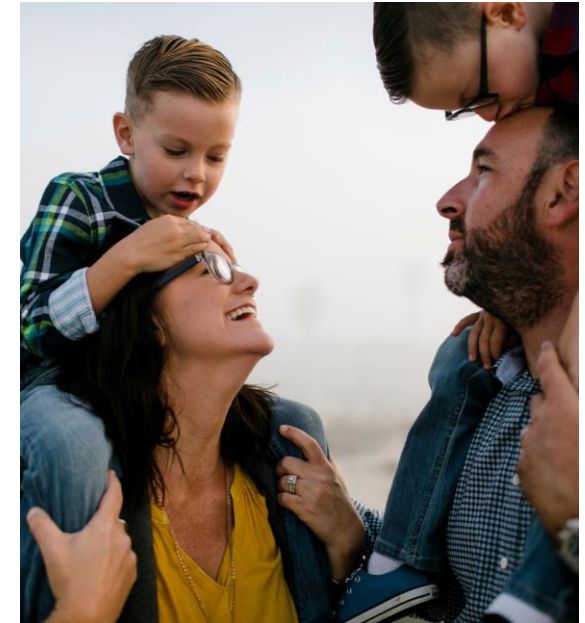
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Behavioral/Mental Health: Actions



Advocated for additional training to support families at home while they wait for service

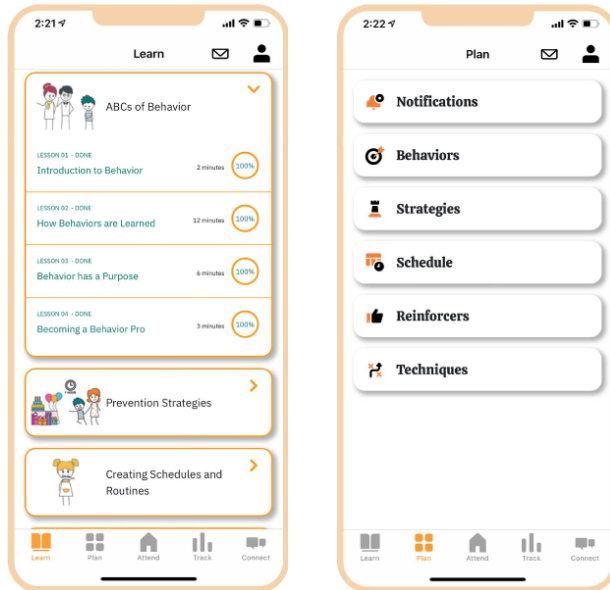
- ▶ Research Units in Behavioral Intervention (RUBI) evidence-based tools for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)
- ▶ “Train the trainer” approach
- ▶ >315 providers have completed Level 1 training



Behavioral/Mental Health: Actions



Offering Attend Behavior app to families as a resource for behavioral concerns



- ▶ Based in RUBI training
- ▶ Includes learning modules for specific behaviors
- ▶ Provides tools for creating support plans

Wrap Up – Review Objectives

- ➡ Describe the Help Me Grow model of developmental screening and referral and linkage to community resources.
- ➡ Explain the concrete ways that Help Me Grow Maine supports families in meeting their young children's developmental, behavioral, and other basic needs.

Thank you!

Contact Information:

www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/support-for-families/child-development

<https://www.facebook.com/HelpMeGrowMaine/>

Toll-Free: 1-833-714-7969

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