



**Ohio Family &
Children First
Coordinators
Association**

**THE OHIO FAMILY & CHILDREN FIRST
COORDINATORS ASSOCIATION**

POSITION PAPER:

SFY 2010-2011 BUDGET/HELP ME GROW

MAY 2009

The Ohio Family and Children First Coordinators Association (OFCFCA) is comprised of local Family and Children First Council Coordinators and Directors. Members work with a wide a range of public and private organizations that serve children and families within their counties. Local Family and Children First Councils according to O.R.C. 121.37 are responsible to assure the Help Me Grow (HMG) system of care for families with children birth to three in each Ohio county. HMG is designed to identify and assist children with developmental disabilities and those at high risk for developing disabilities and their families. Research demonstrates that the earlier the intervention, the more positive the results. HMG is, by design, the “earliest intervention”. HMG is undergoing significant changes in response to the current state fiscal environment and in response to efforts to coordinate and align early childhood initiatives. Proposed budgetary and programmatic changes will have a significant and direct impact on both who can be served and what services will be available. As these changes are debated, OFCFCA urges our legislators and other state decision-makers to keep the following in mind:

1. In SFY2009, HMG funding, for counties, totaled \$75,143,832. This total includes \$54,350,549 from TANF; \$10,293,283 from General Revenue; \$10,500,000 from IDEA Part C. In the SFY10 Executive Budget, TANF funding was eliminated and the federal Part C dollars remained level. The loss of TANF was offset partially with additional State General Revenue dollars. The aggregate impact of these reductions and additions was a total loss of \$30,350,549. This represents a reduction of 40.39%. The most recent SFY10 allocation table released to counties includes IDEA Part C federal stimulus funds in the amount of \$7,629,500, but also reflects a reduction to traditional IDEA Part C funds of \$429,500. The aggregate impact of reductions and additions now stands at 30.81% **OFCFCA urges, at a minimum, that the level of funding for HMG in the Executive Budget be maintained along with the addition of the IDEA Part C federal stimulus funds.**

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2. Proposed changes in eligibility criteria and in the array of services available through HMG are expected to be released early in SFY10. The amount of funding approved in the budget will result in fewer families being served and fewer services being available. OFCFCA is particularly concerned this will negatively impact a host of factors such as school readiness and that many of these children will require subsequent publicly funded services as they move through childhood. **OCFCA encourages maintaining the most inclusive eligibility and services criteria possible based on available funding.**

 3. OFCFCA understands the potential benefits of consistent statewide eligibility criteria and consistent services portfolio for HMG. However, we also see the benefits to families when local providers are fully engaged, local discretionary dollars are invested, and local flexibility is maximized. We do not believe that these two approaches are mutually exclusive. **OCFCA encourages legislators and other state decision-makers to develop a system that supports and maximizes the benefits of both approaches and continues to use local Family and Children First Councils as "conveners" at the local level.**

 4. In the current fiscal environment, meaningful collaboration across state departments and open, on-going state-local dialogue are critical. **OCFCA encourages continued involvement of key stakeholders, both state and local, as the discussion evolves.**

We appreciate your interest in HMG and in early childhood. Please contact us if you would like additional information.

Thank you.

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