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## Table of Contents

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Introduction	04
Frameworks for a Family Engagement Continuum	08
Engaging Families in Help Me Grow Inland Empire: Goals and Strategies	10
Implementation	22
Conclusion	24

## Introduction

In the early childhood field, parent and family engagement is key in promoting the success of young children and creating high-quality systems of care to ensure their health and wellbeing. Systems are truly responsive to the needs of families when the family voice, experience, and perspective are actively pursued and incorporated at all levels of the system.<sup>1</sup> The lived experience and insights of parents and families can be leveraged to refine and strengthen the systems that are designed to support them. Engaging parents and families is critical for enhancing children's learning and family well-being.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

Help Me Grow Inland Empire (HMGIE) works to support the healthy development of nearly 370,000 children ages 0-5 across Riverside and San Bernardino counties by strengthening the region's early identification and intervention system. It promotes cross-sector collaboration to build upon resources already in place, with the goal of increasing access to developmental screenings and connecting families to resources. Centering families in HMGIE and engaging them at all levels of the system is critical to the success of HMGIE.

Partnership is the key to ensuring services are accessible and seamless for families. Building connections and strong partnerships is at the core of HMGIE's successful impact. Across its system components, HMGIE leadership placed a strong emphasis on the following goals to create a community-driven system that aligns and builds upon existing resources across both counties, identified in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan:

- Engage families in the planning and leadership of HMGIE
- Work in partnership with other family strengthening and engagement partners to engage families in the testing, design and leadership of HMGIE
- Identify and train a core network of community members to serve as community outreach champions for HMGIE
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for current and emerging HMGIE strategic partners, including operational leads, funders, service providers, and families

This report is developed on behalf of HMGIE, to help system partners and community organizations plan and develop strategies for engaging parents and families in the Inland Empire to build strong collaborative partnerships that can inform the ongoing refinement of the HMGIE system. This report provides actionable recommendations for initial engagement, and a plan to inform ongoing collaboration and engagement with parents, families, and community partners. This report identifies the goals, approach, and action steps for implementation.

*Throughout this document, the phrase parents and families is used to refer to the adult primary caregiver(s) of a child's basic needs (e.g., feeding, safety). This includes biological parents; other biological relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings; and non-biological parents such as adoptive, foster, or stepparents.*



### About Help Me Grow Inland Empire

HMGIE is part of Help Me Grow California and the national Help Me Grow movement. HMGIE is a system model. Across the country, all Help Me Grow initiatives work to:

- Provide outreach and education about available community resources
- Ensure all children with developmental delays are identified and linked to resources
- Help families and professionals navigate resources and referrals through a central system
- Collect and evaluate data to improve the system

In California, the First 5 Association leads the Help Me Grow effort, supporting statewide expansion of Help Me Grow. As of 2017, 45 of the 58 counties in California are operating or in the planning process for local Help Me Grow systems. HMGIE is the first regional Help Me Grow effort in the state, built with a long history of partnership and collaboration.

## HMGIE Family Engagement Landscape Analysis

VIVA Social Impact Partners completed the [HMGIE Family Engagement Landscape Analysis](#) in February 2021 to support the development of a strategy for engaging families as part of the ongoing governance structure of HMGIE. A literature review examined national and state family engagement and parent partnership practices across multiple disciplines, including early childhood, education, health, social, and family services. Information from these sources was summarized to identify parent and family engagement practices that demonstrate an impact on children's health and well-being. In addition, the analysis was informed by the opinions and experiences of early childhood experts and professionals, parent partner organizations, and parents and families in the Inland Empire.

In addition to the landscape analysis, VIVA Social Impact Partners facilitated parent and family focus groups in March 2021 to learn about participant experiences with family engagement strategies in the Inland Empire and understand parent perceptions about the supports and barriers that affect parent involvement. The focus groups explored best practices to engage parents of young children as well as specific approaches, strategies, and action steps for engaging parents in HMGIE. One key finding of the focus groups was that parents are interested in having multiple options for engagement and collaboration at all levels of the system. The motivating drivers for being engaged with the HMGIE system included: 1) having a role in informing and shaping programs and services in their community, 2) building their social network, and 3) being able to support and guide other families. Detailed key learnings from the family focus groups are included in the Appendix. Across both the research and focus groups, it was evident that there is significant benefit to developing a continuum of family engagement within the HMGIE system.



## Frameworks for a Family Engagement Continuum

Nationally and across the state, government and community benefit organizations incorporate and support parent and family engagement in their work at different levels. Through the landscape analysis, multiple frameworks were identified that outline distinct degrees of engagement for parents and families. The Family Engagement Inventory, a service of the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides an overview of how family engagement is defined and implemented across child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, education, and early childhood education. Strategies for enhancing parent and family partnership are described in three levels—practice, program, and system.<sup>5</sup>

### Practice-Level Engagement

Practice-level strategies focus both on behaviors for engaging families and processes for achieving positive outcomes. Parents and organizations both give and receive information that supports their needs and goals.

#### *Example activities to get & share information:*

- Complete surveys
- Attend meetings, events, or trainings
- Attend focus groups
- Use toolkits
- Do interviews

### Program-Level Engagement

In this second level, parents have an active role to inform the effort of an organization and require more of their time and work. Participants have the opportunity to influence and inform changes, and their ideas are incorporated into the program design and service delivery.

#### *Example activities for a more active role to inform the work:*

- Contribute to Advisory Boards
- Give feedback on process
- Facilitate gatherings
- Give testimonials, presentations

### System-Level Engagement:

In the third level, parents are involved more deeply in the work of an organization or system. Parents in this level of involvement are typically supported, trained, and mentored as partners to help make decisions about practices, programs, and policies that affect families and communities. These require more time commitment and shared responsibility, expertise, accountability, and leadership.

#### *Example activities for deep involvement to influence, guide, and lead changes at the system level:*

- Participate in workgroups, councils
- Co-develop services
- Collaborate on grants
- Collaborate on decision making
- Employed in "system"

A continuum of engagement is also foundational in [Ripples of Transformation: Families Leading Change in Early Childhood Systems](#), another framework which serves as a toolkit to inspire, challenge, and support leaders in early childhood to embrace a vision of families as agents of change in their children's lives, communities, and early childhood systems. Ripples of Transformation expands the concept and practice of family engagement from a separate strand of programming to an integrated, continuing stream of opportunities for parents to be leaders in their families and communities, as well as in policies and systems.<sup>6</sup>

All families have a unique journey and experience in navigating early childhood systems. Interest and capacity to be involved will vary in families across communities, as well as the type of engagement they are interested in, yet their intention and hope for being involved is consistent. **Creating multiple avenues and degrees of engagement benefits both families and systems, allowing for flexibility for the different levels of commitment and readiness for engagement that families, as well as system partners and community members, bring.** A continuum of engagement that builds upon the ideas in Ripples of Transformation and the Family Engagement Inventory can provide opportunities for families in the Inland Empire to obtain and share information, to inform the services offered by HMGIE, and to help advocate, guide, and make decisions about different aspects of the early identification and intervention system.



# Engaging Families in Help Me Grow Inland Empire

In order to have strong collaborative partnerships and sustainable family engagement, as outlined in the 2018-2022 strategic plan, HMGIE must be committed and ready to genuinely engage parents and families. This requires that meaningful family engagement be a core value interwoven throughout system components and the infrastructure of HMGIE. System partners will need to determine what level(s) of parent and family engagement HMGIE wants to achieve, and the degree to which HMGIE has the capacity and readiness to authentically and sustainably engage families.

Based on a deep understanding of authentic family engagement and the long-term strategic goals of HMGIE, the following family engagement vision, goals, strategies and action steps are proposed for HMGIE's consideration over the next two years (2021 - 2023).

## Two-Year Family Engagement Vision

By 2023, HMGIE has developed the capacity and infrastructure to engage families across its programming and strategies, communications and outreach, and governance as outlined below.

**STRATEGY AND PROGRAM** - Parents are engaged to share insights, ideas, and opinions about early childhood development, parenting matters, and serve as sounding boards for HMGIE's strategic planning and program development.

**COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH** - Parents who are experienced in navigating the early intervention system are engaged to serve as champions of early childhood development and early screening to 1) help increase awareness about HMGIE amongst the broader community of parents and stakeholders, and 2) guide and mentor other parents who are starting a journey in the early intervention system.

**GOVERNANCE** - Parents interested in being more deeply engaged serve in an advisory capacity to make recommendations that inform the work of HMGIE related to the testing, design, and leadership components of the system.

## Strategic Goals for Family Engagement

Parent and family partnership and collaboration is most successful when it is initiated with clear goals, strategies, and an approach to guide the efforts. To achieve the proposed two-year vision for HMGIE, there are four core strategic goals that are proposed:

**Goal 1:** Establish a firm foundation and infrastructure that enables capacity and resources to support Family Engagement (FE) as a key component of HMGIE.

**Goal 2:** Initiate and build an avenue for connecting with parents to ensure ongoing, authentic engagement that meets families where they are.

**Goal 3:** Create a process for incorporating family voice into ongoing program design and service delivery, including regular reflection and assessment of the success and challenges of parent and family engagement, in order to continually refine organizational culture and behaviors to better engage families.

**Goal 4:** Develop a process for embedding family voice into policy and system change efforts for the Inland Empire's early identification and intervention system.

For each goal there is a strategy and a set of action steps to achieve that goal.



**Goal 1: Establish a firm foundation and infrastructure that enables capacity and resources to support Family Engagement (FE) as a key component of HMGIE.**

**Strategy 1: Define, Plan, and Resource Family Engagement**

**Purpose:** To set the foundation of FE, the structure and process for engaging families has to be intentional, well planned, resourced, and authentic. As system leaders and implementers, HMGIE has the ability to create opportunities for parents and families to participate in decision-making, testing, design, and leadership components of HMGIE. Including parents and families in the planning and development process is a critical first step.

**Action Steps:** Three principal steps set the foundation for effective family engagement. The first is to discuss core values and principles about family engagement and agree on a definition and purpose for HMGIE. The second step is to establish an Inland Empire team of early intervention professionals and experts to work closely with and offer guidance and support to HMGIE leadership and staff. The third is to confirm and refine the implementation plan for initial and ongoing engagement of parents and families. Each step is described in more detail.

**ACTION STEP 1**

**Developing Core Values and Principles and Defining FE**

HMGIE leadership and staff may have different values and beliefs about family engagement. It is important to create a space for discussion about their values and beliefs to ensure understanding and avoid assumptions. Values and beliefs impact the success of family engagement. Well-facilitated group discussions will help leadership and staff arrive at an aligned definition that will guide the development of other action steps.

**Key questions to consider when defining values and principles:**

- What will successful family engagement look like?
- Will this definition resonate with stakeholders (i.e., parents and families, staff members, community partners)?
- Will these values and principles be inspiring for all stakeholders?
- What do we want to learn by engaging parents and families?
- What aspects of HMGIE would benefit from parent and family engagement?

## ACTION STEP 2

### Establish an Inland Empire Family Engagement Committee

As a committee, HMGIE staff members, early intervention professionals, system partners, and parents and families can be convened to offer guidance and support with setting the foundations for family engagement. It is important to leverage existing community partnerships and parent networks to maximize and build upon their efforts, and to ensure alignment with ongoing parent and family partnership work. Equally important is to include families who reflect the diversity in the Inland Empire, to ensure that the voices of all families are reflected in the design, implementation, and evaluation of parent and family engagement activities.

#### We recommend including people in the following roles in your committee:

- Family Resource Center staff members
- Parent and family leaders from existing parent networks and parents with lived experience in navigating the early intervention system
- Community partners across the Inland Empire who are already engaging parents
- Early identification and intervention system partners

#### Key questions to consider when creating a committee:

- Have we considered all forms of diversity, such as socio-economic, racial/ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gender identity, and family definition/structure (e.g., foster families)?
- Does the final list of prospective committee members reflect the diversity of the Inland Empire?
- Are we scheduling meetings at a time that is convenient and realistic for all workgroup members?
- Do we need to provide transportation, childcare, or translation/interpreting services for any committee members?

## ACTION STEP 3

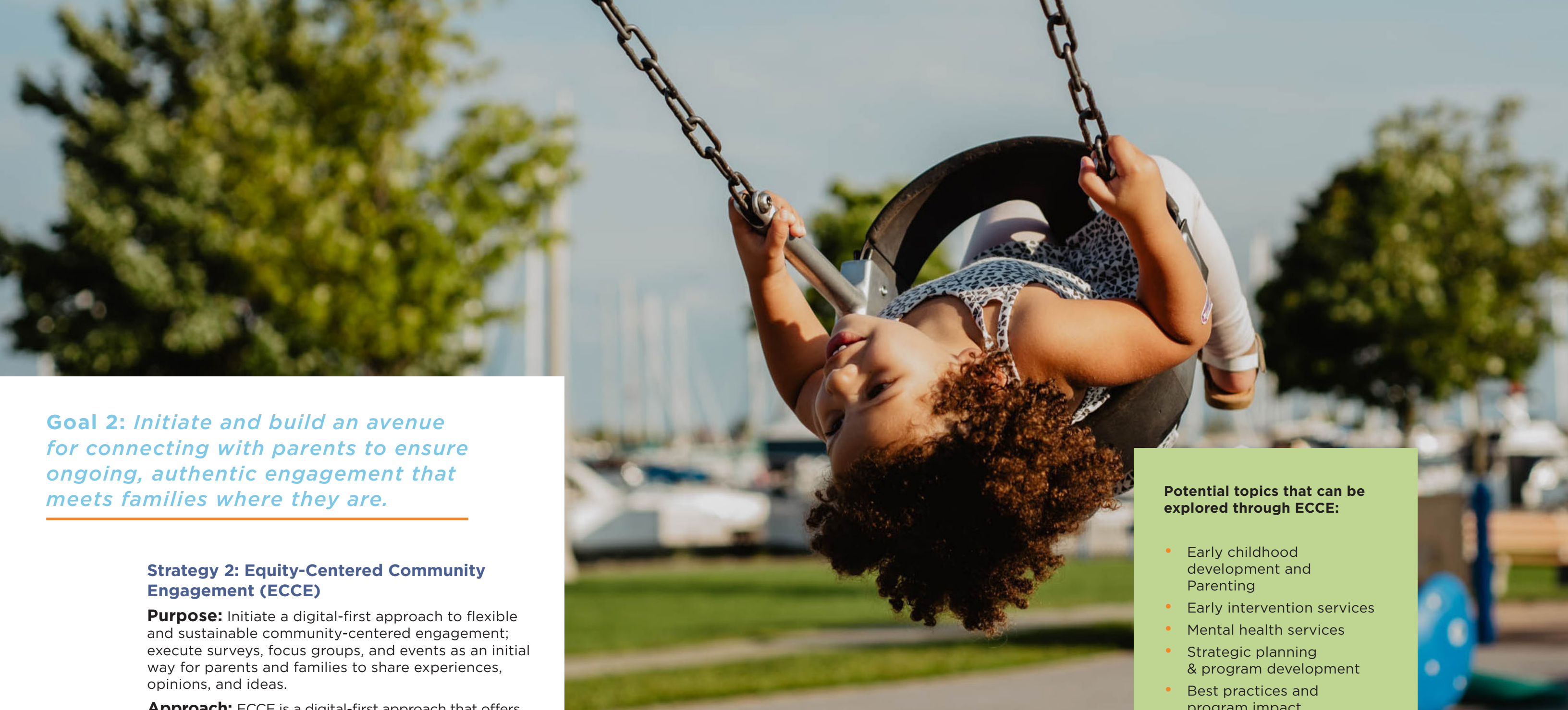
### Confirm and Refine the Implementation Plan

Parent and family engagement is most successful when they are initiated with clear goals, strategies, and an approach to guide the efforts. This family engagement plan is intended to serve as that guide. However, it is important to co-create goals and strategies for engagement in community—alongside partners, parents, and families. The committee can use this document as a guide for the planning and development of initial engagement and confirm and build on the goals and strategies in this plan for ongoing partnerships with parents and families.

Families can first be engaged to make connections with HMGIE, system partners, and providers to boost their role as parents by exchanging information about early childhood development, parenting, and building a network of support in their community. With values and principles in place, the committee can be facilitated to prepare for the launch of an initial engagement strategy to reach parents and families of young children across the Inland Empire. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is recommended that the strategy for initial engagement be a digital-first approach.

The Family Engagement Committee will support the planning and development of initial engagement.





**Goal 2:** *Initiate and build an avenue for connecting with parents to ensure ongoing, authentic engagement that meets families where they are.*

**Strategy 2: Equity-Centered Community Engagement (ECCE)**

**Purpose:** Initiate a digital-first approach to flexible and sustainable community-centered engagement; execute surveys, focus groups, and events as an initial way for parents and families to share experiences, opinions, and ideas.

**Approach:** ECCE is a digital-first approach that offers multiple pathways and opportunities for community members to participate. It creates a pool of community participants who are ready and willing to share insights on an ongoing basis and then provides a channel to inform those community members of opportunities to share their insights. Building a community of parent participants will begin with broad outreach to all parents and families of young children across the Inland Empire. Parents and families who opt-in to join will have the opportunity to share their experiences, opinions, and ideas related to early childhood development, parenting in the Inland Empire, and the early identification and intervention system. For additional insight gathering and partnership building, this initial level of engagement can expand to interviews, focus groups, and ad hoc groups.

**Potential topics that can be explored through ECCE:**

- Early childhood development and Parenting
- Early intervention services
- Mental health services
- Strategic planning & program development
- Best practices and program impact

**Action Steps:** The Family Engagement Committee proposed in goal 1 can support the implementation of this strategy through this set of action steps:

1. Launch a recruitment campaign to engage parents and families as part of HMGIE’s online parent community
2. Identify topics and survey questions to help inform the work of HMGIE
3. Execute a series of surveys to gather insights from parents and families
4. Use data to determine gaps/needs for additional insights
5. Plan for additional insight gathering

**Goal 3: Create a process for incorporating family voice into ongoing program design and service delivery, including regular reflection and assessment of the success and challenges of parent and family engagement, in order to continually refine organizational culture and behaviors to better engage families.**

**Strategy 3A: Parent and Family Ad Hoc Advisory Groups**

**Purpose:** Form parent and family ad hoc groups or a taskforce to inform specific projects, programs, emerging needs and issues, or service and system processes.

**Approach:** Ad hoc advisory groups can be convened as needed to support the development of new projects or to inform specific initiatives and areas of work. Ad hoc advisory groups meet and work together for a limited time to accomplish a certain task, usually over a period of two to three months, and conclude when the task is accomplished.

**Action Steps:** As the need arises for convening a Parent and Family Ad Hoc Advisory Group, develop a written work plan to include:

1. An ad hoc name that clearly identifies the focus (for example: Parent and Family Ad Hoc Advisory Group for Advancing Child Mental Health Services)
2. A description of the purpose of the ad hoc that links the proposed work to the vision and goals of the parent and family engagement plan
3. The number of proposed members for the ad hoc group, how members will be supported to participate, and what resources will be available to the the ad hoc group
4. A description of how the ad hoc group will accomplish its purpose and tasks (identify people to meet with, documents to review, etc.)
5. An approximate schedule of tasks and target date of completion



**Strategy 3B: Parent and Family Champions**

**Purpose:** Promote HMGIE and system efforts, provide parent-to-parent support and mentoring, facilitate gatherings of other parents, provide testimonials about the impact of HMGIE

**Approach:** Engaging parents as champions of HMGIE will benefit both parents and the early intervention system in the Inland Empire. Empower parents to be a voice for HMGIE by giving them the tools and knowledge to do community outreach that will increase community awareness about the system, increase awareness of early childhood development, and the importance of developmental screenings.

As family champions become more experienced in their role, they can be leveraged to provide parent to parent support and mentoring, facilitate gatherings with other parents who may be new to the system, and provide testimonials about the impact of HMGIE. These opportunities can take the form of playgroups, online communities with parent moderators, or parent navigators. Parent and family champions would be trained, supported, and compensated to serve in this role.

The initial levels of engagement, in Goals 1 and 2, can provide leads for prospective parent and family champions who have lived experience and can serve as mentors to others. With time, parent and family champions can venture into a deeper level of engagement to help shape policies and systems.

**Action steps:**

1. Explore successful strategies for engaging parents and families as champions of HMGIE
2. Identify curriculum and training to implement a parent and family champions program in the Inland Empire (such models include parent-to-parent programs, parents as mentors, or family navigators)
3. Develop the structure, process, and provide resources to support the implementation of a parent and family champions program

## Goal 4: Develop a process for embedding family voice into policy and system change efforts for the Inland Empire's early identification and intervention system.

### Strategy 4: Create Parent Leadership Pathways

**Purpose:** Parent opportunities to collaborate in decision-making, grant development, participate in workgroup/councils, and advocacy

**Approach:** Create pathways for parents and families to hold leadership roles in HMGIE to inform the ongoing refinement of the system. Family voices, experiences, and advocacy can be leveraged for creating improved, family-centered, equity-driven systems, programs and services. HMGIE can provide opportunities for including parent and family voices in the process and participate in decision-making to help strengthen and refine HMGIE at all levels of the system.

Parents in this level of involvement are typically supported, trained, and mentored as partners to help make decisions about practices, co-create programs, and shape policies that affect families and communities. These require more time commitment and shared responsibility, expertise, accountability, and leadership. Reconsider the structures and protocols in place to ensure they are equitable for parent and family engagement.

#### Valuable components of parent leadership programs are:

- Coaching and support from skilled staff, mentors, and other parents in the group.
- Access to public officials and other decision-makers in their community and state.
- Knowledge of how the government works and how to make it work for their children.

#### Action steps

1. Explore successful strategies for engaging parents as leaders and identify the appropriate program model for communities across the Inland Empire
2. Identify parent leadership curriculum and training to implement in the Inland Empire
3. Develop the structure, process, and provide resources to support the implementation of a leadership program to help create parent leadership pathways



#### Example of Project Leadership:

At Family Resource Navigators (FRN) in Alameda County, families get support to design and implement projects to address issues in their neighborhoods, often focusing on a specific language or cultural groups. FRN is a key partner of HMG Alameda County and serves as the lead agency for engaging parent leaders. Through this collaboration, committed funding and an aligned approach, including strategies and practices for engaging and compensating families, are set up to support parent and family partnership and leadership. Community partnership that is built on trust and shared core values are key to the success of parent and family partnerships in Alameda County. Multiple funding sources are leveraged to support FRN efforts to ensure the engagement of parents and families extends beyond HMG, to ensure it is aligned with other efforts in the community, and to provide a pathway for family leadership and engagement at various levels. The HMG Alameda County framework for parent and family partnership is well aligned with the continuum of engagement, giving parents and families the opportunity to inform and be involved at the practice, program and system level.

To implement the proposed strategies and action steps above, a phased approach is suggested. Recommendations are outlined in four phases of development over two years.

## **PHASE I (3-6 Months)**

*Goal 1: Establish a firm foundation and infrastructure that enables capacity and resources to support Family Engagement (FE) as a key component of HMGIE.*

### **Strategy 1: Define, Plan, and Resource Family Engagement**

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Develop Core Values and Principles
2. Establish an Inland Empire Family Engagement Committee
3. Confirm and Refine the Implementation Plan
4. Invest in capacity building to ensure staff are trained and equipped to support parents in their new roles

## **PHASE II (6 Months)**

*Continue previous strategies as needed*

*Goal 2: Initiate and build an avenue for connecting with parents to ensure ongoing, authentic engagement that meets families where they are.*

### **Strategy 2: Equity-Centered Community Engagement (ECCE)**

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Launch a recruitment campaign to engage parents and families as part of HMGIE's online parent community
2. Identify topics and survey questions to help inform the work of HMGIE
3. Execute a series of surveys to gather insights from parents and families
4. Use data to determine gaps/needs for additional insights
5. Plan for additional insight gathering

### PHASE III (6 - 12 Months)

Continue previous strategies

**Goal 3:** Create a process for incorporating family voice into ongoing program design and service delivery, including regular reflection and assessment of the success and challenges of parent and family engagement, in order to continually refine organizational culture and behaviors to better engage families.

#### Strategy 3A: Parent and Family Ad Hoc Advisory Groups

##### Action Steps:

As the need arises for convening a Parent and Family Ad Hoc Advisory Group, develop a written work plan to include:

1. An ad hoc name that clearly identifies the focus (for example: Parent and Family Ad Hoc Advisory Group for Advancing Child Mental Health Services)
2. A description of the purpose of the ad hoc that links the proposed work to the vision and goals of the parent and family engagement plan
3. The number of proposed members for the ad hoc group, how members will be supported to participate, and what resources will be available to the ad hoc group
4. A description of how the ad hoc group will accomplish its purpose and tasks (identify people to meet with, documents to review, etc.)
5. An approximate schedule of tasks and target date of completion

#### Strategy 3B: Parent and Family Champions

##### Action steps:

1. Explore successful strategies for engaging parents and families as champions of HMGIE
2. Identify curriculum and training to implement a parent and family champions program in the Inland Empire (such models include parent to parent programs, parents as mentors, or family navigators)
3. Develop the structure, process, and provide resources to support the implementation of a parent and family champions program

### PHASE IV (6-12 Months)

Continue previous strategies

**Goal 4:** Develop a process for embedding family voice into policy and system change efforts for the Inland Empire's early identification and intervention system.

#### Strategy 4: Create Parent Leadership Pathways

##### Action steps:

1. Explore successful strategies for engaging parents in advisory and leadership opportunities to inform the appropriate direction for communities across the Inland Empire
2. Identify parent leadership curriculum and training to implement in the Inland Empire
3. Develop the structure, process, and provide resources to support the implementation of a leadership program to help create parent leadership pathways



**“  
Doing to us, not with us, is a recipe for failure.  
- Dr. Howard Fuller  
”**

## Conclusion

Meaningful engagement of parents and families at the system level, where program decision-making, evaluation, and service development takes place, helps to reduce system fragmentation, remove barriers to services, and improve family health and wellbeing. Centering families in HMGIE and engaging them at all levels of the system is critical to HMGIE successfully fulfilling its vision and strategic goals. Though authentic family engagement can at times be messy and complex, its potential for achieving impact for children and families is substantial. Through the phased approach outlined in this report, HMGIE has the opportunity to meet parents and caregivers where they are, amplify family voice within the region's early identification and intervention system, and ultimately ensure that HMGIE is having the very impact it seeks to make for the Inland Empire.

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### FOCUS GROUP KEY FINDINGS

To inform family engagement efforts, HMGIE commissioned focus groups with parents and families across the Inland Empire to hear their experiences and opinions about family engagement and parent involvement; explore approaches and ideas for how to best engage parents of young children in the Inland Empire, and how to encourage and support their ongoing involvement. Two focus groups were facilitated in March 2021 via Zoom. One focus group gleaned insights from English-speaking families, and the other from Spanish-speaking families. Key findings from both focus groups are presented in this document.

### Family Focus Group Goals

1. Learn about participant experiences with parent involvement strategies in the Inland Empire; understand parent perceptions about the supports and barriers that affect parent involvement
2. Explore ways to best engage parents of young children; identify approaches, strategies, and the action steps needed for engaging parents in HMGIE and support their ongoing involvement

### Participants

- 11 parent and family participants, pregnant or parent/custodian of a child under the age of 6, recipient of or likely to be in need of services in the early identification and intervention system and/or HMGIE, participated in the focus groups
- As compensation for their participation, each participant received a \$40 Visa or Amazon card after the focus group

### Parent and Family Experiences with Parent Involvement

Facilitators explored participants' experiences with parent involvement activities at different levels of engagement to better understand the supports and barriers that affect parent involvement. Three levels of parent involvement were introduced as well as examples of the types of activities within each level. The participants were given several prompts to help guide the discussion

### 1 | Practice Level Engagement

In this first level, parent involvement usually includes activities like attending meetings, events, training, completing surveys, and participating in focus groups. These are activities you attend to GET and SHARE information.

1. Have you participated in any of these types of activities?
  - All parents reported participating in this level of involvement
  - Complete surveys given to them from their children's school.

- Participate in breast feeding classes
  - Attend community events where they give away school supplies to their children (came up twice)
  - CCRC has story time sessions and kaleidoscope sessions. The mother completed surveys to share what she learned and share how the programs can improve.
  - Participate in the the Nurse Family Partnership program, utilize the toolkits provided and speak at Programs Benefits Graduations (Advocacy Day NFP)
  - Participate in volunteer opportunities within their children's classrooms, in the community and in salons
  - Complete surveys from IEHP, medical offices, schools, UCR Breast Milk Bank, and the UCR COVID19 Vaccine Access initiative
  - Attend their child's school meetings and events
  - Attend video conferences and watch videos with content related to their child's age and needs video of the topic related to the child's age
  - Complete the ASQ and ASQ-SE questionnaires
  - Speak with Representatives and Senators in Sacramento to advocate for programs that support parents and young children in California
  - Participate in ongoing advocacy
2. What practices have been most helpful to you? Why?
    - The ability to interact with others who participate in focus groups (other parents and professionals)
    - Guidance from teachers and mentors (came up twice)
    - Being able to related to others
    - Speaking with experts who can provide needed information
  3. Why did you become involved?
    - The opportunity to be a part of parent activities and speak with those experiencing similar parenting challenges and successes
    - Gain further knowledge of child development
    - Ability to give back to the community and provide mentorship to others.
  4. What made it easy/difficult?
    - Considerations/Barriers to participation
      - Cost to participate which include the cost of child care and/or transportation
      - The amount of time involved and the time of day that the activities occur
  5. Did you feel that your involvement made a difference?
    - Overall, the parent participants agreed there that involvement made a difference in their lives and possibly in the lives of others.

## 2 | Program Level Engagement

In this second level, parent involvement usually includes activities like contributing to advisory boards, giving feedback on the process, facilitating gatherings or meetings. In these activities you have an active role and require more of your time and work, you have the opportunity to influence/inform changes, and your ideas are incorporated into the program.

1. Have you participated in these types of activities?
  - Nurse Family Partnership
    - One participant shared that he is working with NFP to widen their reach and actively include fathers in their work. The participant provides testimonials for the organization and expressed immense value and joy in contributing time and effort to the organizations' board
  - Early Head Start Policy Council
    - One participant shared that she participates in group discussions, reviews reports and participates in a monthly meeting with other parents. The participant shared that she helps identify discussion topics such as self care or behavior management and then presents information to other parents
  - Presenting at First 5 Riverside about the Sacramento experience (Advocacy Day)
  - IEP Meetings
  - IEHP - Give feedback on which course would be beneficial to parents
  - Some of the focus group participants reported that they have not participated at this level of involvement
2. Why did you become involved?
  - Participants shared their appreciation for the ability to advocate for others and create positive change
  - It's an opportunity to connect and reflect with other parents in the community
3. What made it easy/difficult?
  - At this level it is easy to share your personal story and experiences as a parent.
  - It is difficult when parents feel a lack of knowledge in a particular content area and as a result are learning as they participate in activities at this level.
  - It is also difficult when the parent is unaware of resources in the community and opportunities to participate meaningfully.
  - Slack of childcare and time makes participation at this level difficult.
  - It would be easier to participate in a virtual setting such as Zoom.
  - Language and terminology used in meetings can be difficult to understand if parents are not already familiar with them. Parents noted that some of the language used in IEP meetings is not always clear.
  - A participant shared that they sought counseling with several programs and groups. The participant reached out to the California Diagnostic Center for further evaluation, IEP requested a tutor for the participant's child rather than providing the specific services requested. As a result the participant reached out to legal aid and retained a lawyer to advocate on their behalf.

### 3 | System Level Engagement

In the third level, parents are involved more deeply in the work of an organization/system. Activities can include participating in ongoing workgroups, councils, or boards; collaborating on grants and decision making; co-developing services, policies or programs. Parents in this level of involvement are typically supported, trained, and mentored as partners to help make decisions about practices, programs, and policies that affect families and communities. These require more time commitment and shared responsibility, expertise, accountability, and leadership.

1. Have you participated in these types of activities? What drove engagement?
  - Some parents shared that they have not participated in activities at this level
  - Only 3 participants shared that they participate at this level either currently or in the past
  - One participant shared that she attended her child's School Site Council meetings as the secretary on the Council. The meetings occur 4 times a year. The predictable meeting cadence allows the parent to secure child care well in advance of each meeting. The participant shared that she was given clear expectations and a description of her role from the outset.
  - As stated prior, one of the participants shared that he is co developing the fatherhood initiative at the Nurse Family Partnership Program. The participant shared that the opportunity is rewarding and believes he is making a difference in the community. the position is currently voluntary and would be accepting of a paid position if it were to be available in the future.
  - Another participant shared that they participate in the Maternal Child and Adolescent Health Community Advisory Board. She attends as a parent, receives information and passes it on to others in her network and community.
2. What made it easy/difficult?
  - One participant expressed an insecurity with feeling as if they do not have the proper vocabulary and academic terminology to explain their thoughts, feelings and needs effectively.
  - One participant shared that discussing meeting topics and receiving guidance from those who are knowledgeable helps them prepare effectively.
  - Child care or work obligations are a barrier for the majority of participants. They shared that in person meetings are difficult to attend without child care.

### Opinions & Ideas for Engaging Parents of Young Children

Facilitators explored ways to best engage parents of young children and identify approaches, strategies, and the action steps needed for engaging parents in HMGIE. Participants shared their ideas through a guided discussion.

### Approach to Engagement

1. What level of involvement would you be interested in participating?
  - Five participants expressed interest in level 3
    - One parent noted that they like being a "boss" and getting his hands dirty.
  - Level 1 said on mother
  - All levels to some degree said one mother
  - 2 participants said level 2

2. What level would be most difficult for you to participate in? Why?
  - Level 2 and 3 due to time and child care (these are the biggest factors, especially if parents go back to full time in person work).
  - Level 3 would be more difficult due to time, child care, local

### Engagement Strategies

1. For each level of involvement, what are the top three activities that should be made available to parents in a service like HMG?
  - Practice Level
    - Interviews (exchange of information between the parent and the community orgs; find out where there may be a lack of knowledge and where help is needed), complete surveys, attend focus groups and trainings
    - One parent noted that the initial interview is important to identify parents needs, then, form focus groups to target needs around similar topics and then provide toolkits to implement strategies and solidify learnerings.
  - Program Level
    - Facilitate gatherings, provide feedback on process
    - Testimonials and presentations - share with parents how programs/services helped them personally and how they can help other parents.
  - System Level
    - Collaborate on decision making
    - Collaborate on grants
    - Participate in work groups/councils
2. If you had to identify the top 3 across all three levels, what would they be for you?
  - Attend meetings, facilitate gatherings, testimonials, presentations, and collaborate on decision making
3. Of the supports listed, which one would make it easier for you to be involved? If you had to prioritize these, which would be the most important? Second? Third?
  - Child care is the highest priority for all parents.
    - Parents noted that compensation and child care are connected and are one in the same. Ability to pay for child care is more important than a Visa gift card noted by one mother.
    - Compensation for child care or child on site at in person events would be helpful.
      - a. Messaging: would rather be compensated for child care than be paid to share thoughts and experiences re: being a parent.
      - b. Use a gift card to pay a babysitter if needed.
  - Rankings:
    - Childcare, compensation, mentoring
    - Childcare, mentoring, training
    - Training, child care, mentoring
    - Child care, training, compensation



## Other Ideas & Opportunities

4. What actions can HMGIE take to create strong parent and family partnerships?
  - Market HMGIE to parents in the Inland Empire so that they know the service exists.
  - Close the loop on resource and service referrals. It would be helpful to follow up and determine if a resource was used by the parent it was offered to. Follow up with makes to make sure they attend appointments. Call or text a parent to follow up and ask if they received what they needed and collect feedback on their experience using HMGIE. A participant noted that sometimes he forgets about social service/medical appointments for himself and or his children and reminders help them significantly.
  - Promote HMGIE at public events such as fairs in order to reach more parents and provide information on HMGIE services.
5. What questions would you have before deciding to be involved in HMGIE?
  - One parent noted that they would like to better understand what HMGIE is and the specifics regarding how parents would be involved.
  - HMGIE would need to share clear roles and expectations for the everyday parent.
  - HMGIE should state how parents in the community will aid HMG. HMGIE should share the overall goal of involving parents in their program.
  - Share the benefits of parent involvement. Explain the activities and when they will occur.
  - Explain how parent involvement can help the whole family. Parents, caregivers and children.
6. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not talked about?
  - Virtual environments such as Zoom are helpful. Much easier to participate virtually rather than in-person. Virtual and in person opportunities should be available to all interested parents.
  - The participants suggested the HMGIE ask parents to share the benefits they have received through their participation.
  - HMGIE should be promoted as a place where one can find help.



This report was prepared by

