



**Department of
Children & Youth**

Help Me Grow

State Fiscal Year

2025 Annual Report

Central Intake & Referral

July 2024-June 2025



About

Help Me Grow is a system of supports for pregnant women, caregivers with new babies, and families with young children with developmental delays and disabilities.

These services are provided through Early Intervention, newborn and ongoing Home Visiting, developmental screenings, and other family support offerings administered through the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY).

Early Intervention supports families with children birth to age 3 who have developmental delays or disabilities so that they have the best possible start in life.

Newborn Home Visiting through Family Connects Ohio offers a free, in-home nurse visit to families in participating areas within the first few weeks of a newborn's arrival.

Ongoing Home Visiting programs provide voluntary, evidence-based family support for pregnant individuals or new parents that promote healthy growth and development for babies and young children.

The Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) Developmental Screening Program provides child development screenings and tools to all Ohio families with children through age 5 using the Sparkler: Play for Parenting app.



As the statewide contractor for Help Me Grow Central Intake & Referral (CIR), Bright Beginnings and its subcontracted regional partners connect families to newborn and ongoing Home Visiting and Early Intervention; offer developmental screenings; provide community resources; conduct communications and outreach to families and professionals; and increase public awareness about the Help Me Grow system of supports.



Year in Review

Expanded services, new programs, massive growth, and exciting changes. These are some of the key phrases that powered Help Me Grow in SFY25.

- **Expanded services:** At the start of SFY25, Help Me Grow expanded the ASQ Developmental Screening Program by offering the ASQ to families with children through age 5 (previously only serving children through age 3). On September 16, 2024, the Sparkler: Play for Parenting app was made available to Ohio families. This app allows families to access the ASQ developmental screening tool on their mobile device. Sparkler also offers a dashboard for providers who serve children including early care and education, medical, and Home Visiting teams. Sparkler adoption exceeded all expectations and screenings have skyrocketed since its launch.
- **New programs:** Help Me Grow worked with DCY to launch Family Connects Ohio (FCO) in December 2024. This universal newborn home visiting program was made available to families in 11 primary counties.

Bright Beginnings is proud of the work that has been done this year to provide even more services and resources to Ohio families. In addition to these efforts, Bright Beginnings and its regional partners maintained quality and consistent CIR services.

Bright Beginnings is excited to continue to work with DCY to DO WHAT'S RIGHT FOR KIDS in Ohio.



Outreach by the Numbers



8,931

Outreach activities



2,128

Presentations and/or meetings



6,060

Locations canvassed



640

Events

Outreach staff represented Help Me Grow at various statewide events, including:

- La Mega's Tan Latina Como Tu event
- PBS CET event in Cincinnati
- The Ohio State Fair
- Ohio Early Childhood Conference
- Ohio Association of Community Health Centers Conference
- Ohio Department of Health's School Nurse Conference
- Family Medicine Workshop Conference
- Charting the Life Course Conference
- Public Children Services Association of Ohio Conference
- Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics Conference
- OCALICON
- National Association of Social Workers Conference
- Ohio School-Based Health Alliance Conference
- Regional Home Visiting Conferences in Akron, Lima, Mt. Sterling, and Athens

CIR completed the final phase of its childcare campaign, including visiting over 1,000 childcare centers and sending a mailing to 1,325 home-based providers across 31 counties. Each provider received an informational packet highlighting Early Intervention and other Help Me Grow services, along with a branded fanny pack containing a first aid kit. A follow-up email offering opportunities to schedule presentations or request additional materials was sent. This also served as an opportunity to inform childcare providers about ASQ developmental screening tools they could access by becoming a Help Me Grow Program Partner and using the Sparkler dashboard.

In September, CIR completed its campaign targeting vulnerable populations. This initiative coordinated with the childcare campaign and involved seeking out referral sources working in food insecurity, domestic violence, homelessness, drug dependencies, and other health disparities. Nearly 4,000 people in counties that were part of the phase five childcare campaign received an email newsletter with information about Early Intervention tailored to the families they serve.

Outreach cont.

SFY25 afforded outreach staff the opportunity to connect with both referral sources and the community through various statewide initiatives, baby showers, community events, professional conferences, and presentations.

Staff worked to contract with health centers, hospitals, WIC offices, public libraries, and other sites across Ohio in order to host standalone kiosks in high-traffic community spaces. By the end of SFY25, **62 kiosks** had been installed and used in the communities a total of **5,797 times**. These kiosks provide families with access to the helpmegrow.org website which includes information on all Help Me Grow programs, direct links to the online referral form, the Community Resource Directory, and job postings.

To deepen community engagement, outreach staff hosted community resource fairs in Allen, Carroll, Defiance, Geauga, Henry, Lake, Morgan, Paulding, and Williams counties. These events were held in partnership with local agencies and Medicaid/managed care plans. Formally known as baby showers, rebranding these events as “community resource fairs” expanded the audience and encouraged increased participation from both service providers and community members.

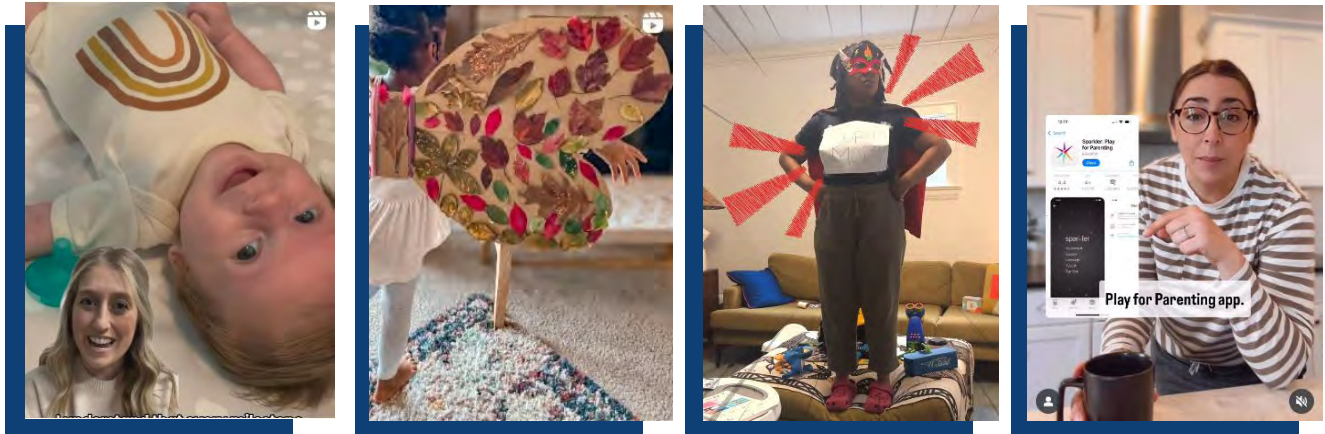
Family Connects Ohio Outreach

CIR spent the first half of SFY25 planning for the launch of FCO, which included learning about the model, researching birthing data, enhancing the community resource directories to meet model fidelity, leveraging existing relationships and creating new ones with potential referral sources, and developing outreach strategies and marketing plans.

The second half of SFY25 was spent supporting each FCO provider, sharing success stories, and meeting with birthing hospitals, obstetrician offices, and managed care plan providers to share ideas on how to connect their patients to this new program, such as bedside recruitment, FCO information included in discharge workflows or paperwork, and referral submissions via the online form at helpmegrow.org.



ASQ Developmental Screening Program Outreach



With the help of an outside marketing agency, CIR partnered with social media influencers to increase awareness of the ASQ and Sparkler. Ohio parents with significant Instagram followers were identified, provided guidance, and created content for the program. These influencers' posts reached **97,816 unique accounts** and achieved **137,073 impressions**. In addition, these posts generated a number of positive comments about Help Me Grow services.

Families with young children often frequent baby and toddler story times and other free resources and events at their local public library. In an effort to connect with both families and library staff about the availability of the Sparkler app, Help Me Grow developed library kits with items that could help families complete an ASQ, primarily for 12-18 month olds.

Outreach staff delivered one kit to each of Ohio's 700+ public library branches. This delivery allowed connection with youth services librarians, resulted in increased awareness of Help Me Grow, and led to additional invitations for outreach staff to participate in infant and toddler programs across Ohio.



Paid Advertising

SFY25 advertising efforts for the Help Me Grow system of supports included:

- Display and digital advertising
- Parent magazines
- Social media
- Billboards
- Grocery carts and hand sanitizer units
- PBS TV and NPR radio advertising
- Door hangers
- Convenience store and beauty salon posters
- Pharmacy bags
- Public bench ads
- La Mega radio, print, and social media



VISITA DOMICILIARIA

Menos estrés.
Mas apoyo para
un embarazo
saludable.



Department of
Children & Youth

Help Me Grow

www.helpmegrow.org
(800) 755-GROW
(4769)

INTERVENCIÓN TEMPRANA

¿PREOCUPADOS por el
desarrollo de
sus hijos?
¡Actuen ahora!



Bank Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45227; Delaney Campus: 2726 Adelstein Pl., Cincinnati, OH 45206; Phone: (513) 728-2400, Thills.org

The Summit Country Day School Founded in 1890, The Summit serves students from 18 months to Grade 12. Full- and half-day Montessori programs for ages 18 months-age 6 begin the academic journey followed by a college-preparatory program (Grades 1-12). The Summit educates students spiritually, academically, physically, socially and artistically while offering the academic excellence and one-on-one guidance of a top-tier Catholic independent school. 2163 Grandon Road (Hyde Park), Cincinnati, OH 45208, Phone: 513-871-4200, ext. 261, Email: pearl@summitcids.org, summitcids.org

PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATION
CCM Prep offers a wide variety of programs in music, dance and theatre arts for people of all ages and abilities — including classes for adults, young children, teens and pre-professional students preparing for a future in the performing arts. Questions: call 513-556-2595 or email CCMPrep@ucmail.uc.edu, ucmail.uc.edu, University of Cincinnati College – Conservatory of Music, 290 CCM Blvd., Contact Person: Spring Starr Pflanz, Email: CCMPrep@ucmail.uc.edu, ccm.uc.edu/artists/kellyprep.html

PUBLI Green Canal develops student campus Diamo Milford high school careers training new CA career 777-884

Free in-home nurse visit for families with newborns.

helpmegrow.org

Contact: Katie@ohiofaent.com



Ohio Department of Children & Youth
Help Me Grow

Will your child be ready to learn in kindergarten?

Track your child's developmental skills through age 5 by completing the Ages & Stages Questionnaire with the FREE Sparkler: Play for Parenting app.

Scan the QR to download the app.
Access code: OH

helpmegrow.org/ASQ Screen today. Shape tomorrow.



Free in-home nurse visit
for families with newborns.



Advertising cont.



Department of Children & Youth
Help Me Grow Home Visiting

Count on our **support** from a **healthy pregnancy** to a **healthy toddler** and everything in between.

[Learn more](#)



Free in-home nurse visit for families with newborns.

FAMILY CONNECTS OHIO | **Department of Children & Youth**
Help Me Grow

VISITA DOMICILIARIA
Menos estres. Mas apoyo para un embarazo saludable.

INTERVENCIÓN TEMPRANA
¿PREOCUPADOS por el desarrollo de sus hijos? ¡Actuen ahora!

Department of Children & Youth
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www.helpmegrow.org • (800) 755-GROW (4769)

Department of Children & Youth
Help Me Grow

What developmental milestones should your child be reaching?

Find out for FREE with the Ages & Stages Questionnaire.

[Learn More](#)

CONCERNED about your child's development?

ACT EARLY!

The first three years of a child's life are the most important.

There's no need to "wait and see."

[Learn more](#)

Department of Children & Youth
Help Me Grow Early Intervention

sparkler | **ASQ** Ages & Stages Questionnaire | **Department of Children & Youth**
Help Me Grow

Become a Sparkler Program Partner

Educate and encourage families to check their child's developmental progress.

Learn more at helpmegrow.org/ASQProviders

Department of Children & Youth
Help Me Grow Home Visiting

The parenting answers you need, from professionals you can trust. Home visitors are dedicated to healthy moms and healthy babies.

(800) 755-GROW (4769) • www.helpmegrow.org



Department of Children & Youth
Help Me Grow Home Visiting

Are you pregnant or do you have a new baby at home?

Our experts provide the information and support needed for healthy babies and healthy moms.

Learn more about Home Visiting
(216) 930-3322 • (440) 389-3322
www.helpmegrow.org



FAMILY CONNECTS OHIO | **Department of Children & Youth**
Help Me Grow

Free in-home nurse visit for families with newborns.

[Learn more](#)

Department of Children & Youth
Help Me Grow

HOME VISITING | **EARLY INTERVENTION**

Pregnancy and Parenting Support

CONCERNED about a child's development? **ACT EARLY!**

Download the **Sparkler: Play for Parenting app!** FREE for Ohio families.

The app has a **built-in Ages & Stages Questionnaire** that lets you screen your child's developmental milestones quickly and easily. You'll get personalized results and supportive resources from a developmental screening specialist.

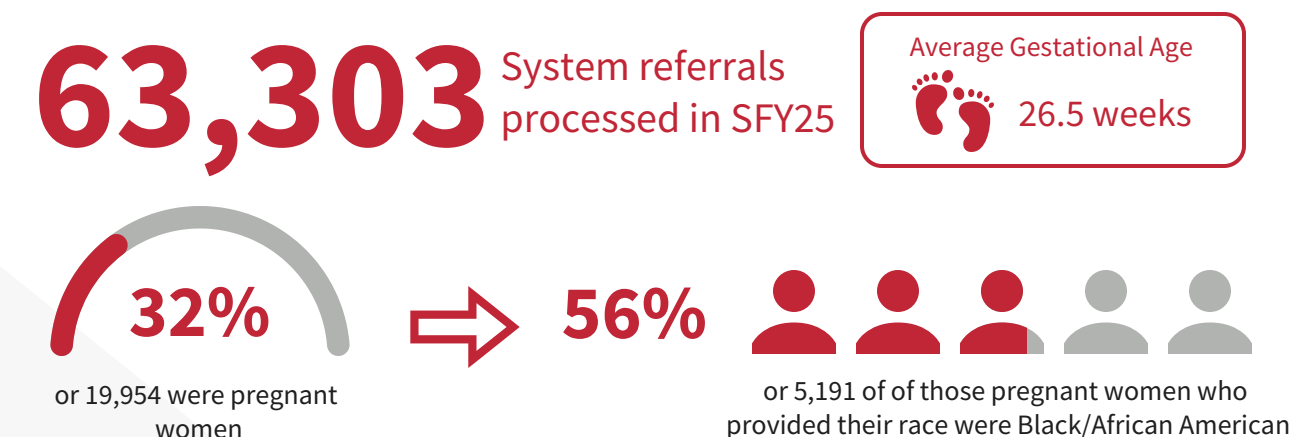
Learn more about Help Me Grow programs and resources today!
www.helpmegrow.org
(800) 755-GROW (4769)



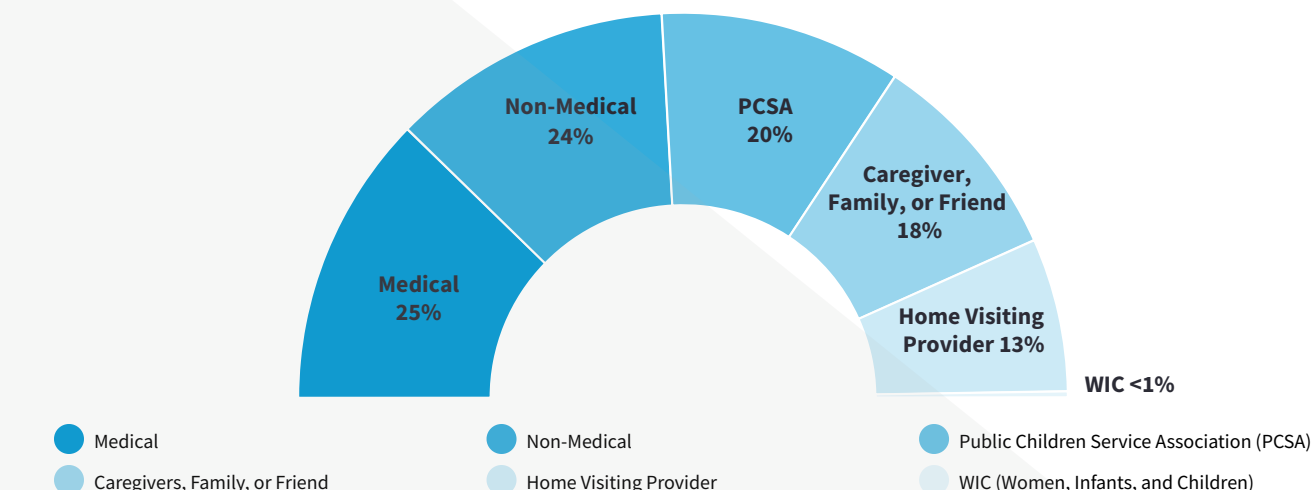
Home Visiting

System Referrals

CIR processed a total of 63,303 system referrals in SFY25, which is **up 23.2% from SFY24**. Of those referrals, 32% were for pregnant individuals, and of those pregnant, 56% identified as Black/African American. The average gestational age in weeks for pregnant individuals at the time of referral was 26.5 weeks.



The chart below provides a proportional breakdown of **27,036 system referrals** by referral source, which excludes the 36,267 system referrals referred via Medicaid (electronic Pregnancy Risk Assessment Form/Report of Pregnancy [ePRAF/ROP]).

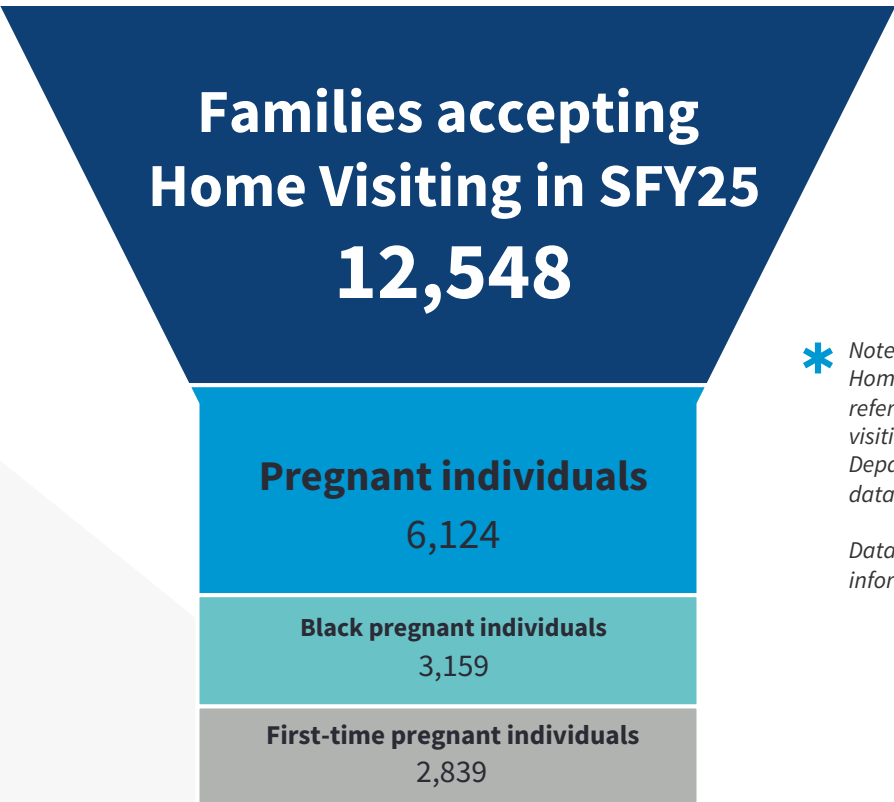


* Notes: Data represents those with known information at the time of referral. Families can receive multiple system referrals.

Home Visiting

Program Referrals Accepted

More than 12,500 distinct families accepted Home Visiting services in SFY25. Of those who accepted, 49% were pregnant individuals. Of those pregnant individuals who provided their race, 57% identified as Black/African American, which is **up 5% from SFY24**.



* Note: The number of families accepting Home Visiting does not include those referred or connected to other home visiting programs outside the Ohio Department of Children and Youth's data system.

Data represents those with known information at the time of referral.

Similar to system referrals, CIR monitors the gestational ages of pregnant individuals who accept program referrals to Home Visiting. In SFY25, the average gestational age at the time of a pregnant individual's program referral acceptance was 22.7 weeks.

Average Gestational Age



22.7 weeks

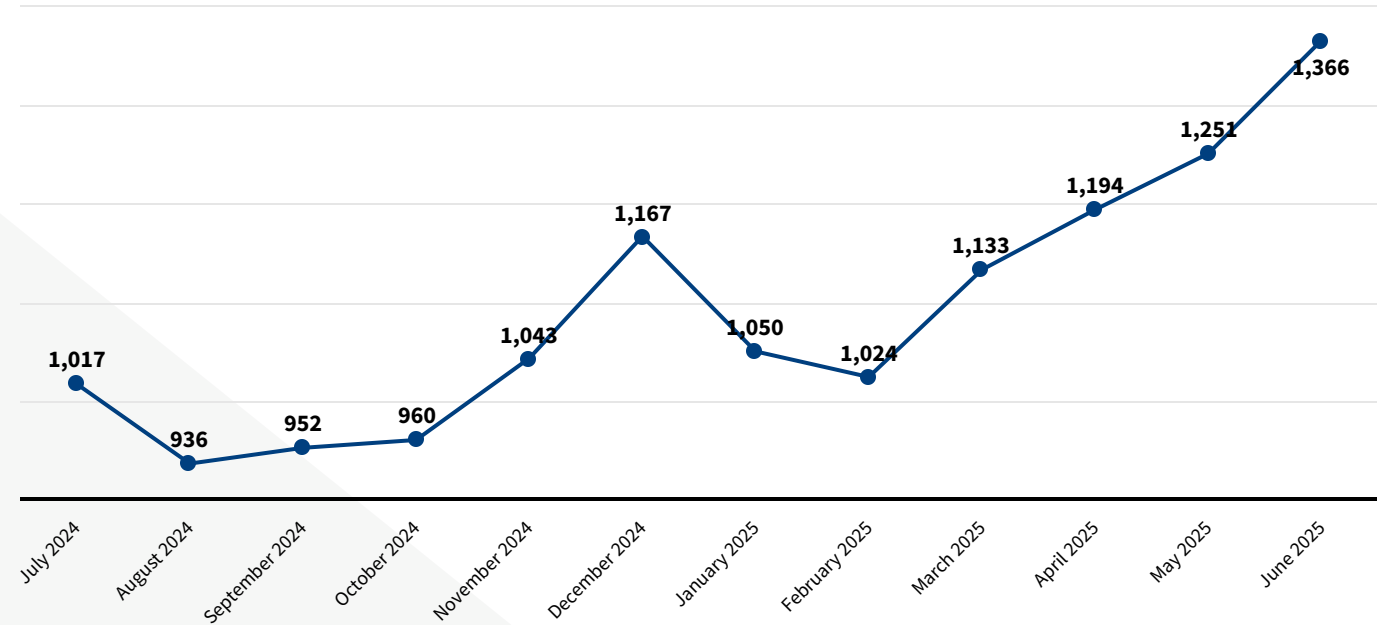


down 3% from SFY24

Home Visiting

Waitlists

Some families who accept a program referral cannot be assigned to a program immediately due to capacity limitations. These families are placed on a Home Visiting waitlist and contact is maintained to provide status updates, confirm the family is still interested in Home Visiting services, and offer other community resources as needed. The monthly average number of families on the waitlist went from 1,127 in SFY24 to 1,091 in SFY25.



CIR continues to monitor the Home Visiting waitlist each month to analyze significant trends and provide guidance to its staff for program assignment.

Home Visiting

Pathway HUBs

Throughout SFY25, CIR continued to partner with the Pathways HUBs across the state to expand the number of families connected to family support services. Families not eligible for Home Visiting, not interested in Home Visiting, or placed on a Home Visiting waitlist are offered a referral to a Pathways HUB (pending availability and eligibility). In SFY25, **1,114 families** received a referral to a Pathways HUB.

WIC Referrals

CIR offers referrals to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children or WIC for all families referred to Home Visiting from a Medicaid (ePRAF/ROP) referral source. In SFY25, 21% of families who accepted a program referral were also referred to WIC by CIR. An additional 73% of these families were already receiving WIC services. In total, **94%** of the families referred from Medicaid (ePRAF/ROP) who accepted a Home Visiting program referral were connected to WIC services (**up 4%** from SFY24).

Early Head Start

In SFY25, **358 families** were referred to Early Head Start by Central Intake.



1,114

Families referred to
Pathway HUBs



358

Families referred to
Early Head Start



94%

Families referred by Medicaid
(ePRAF/ROP) connected to WIC services

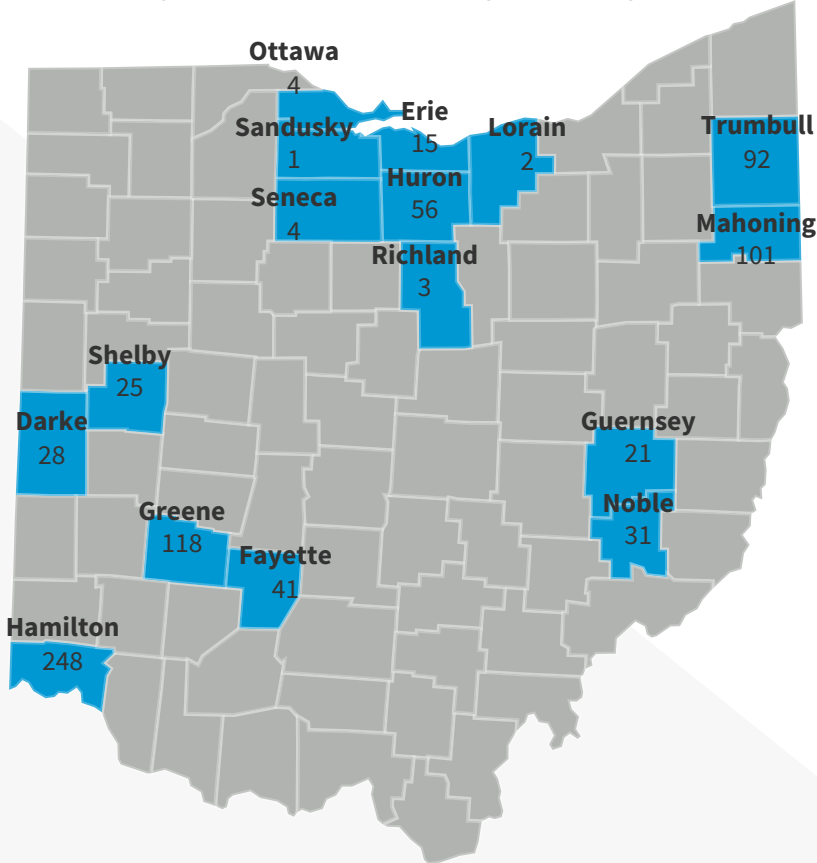
Family Connects Ohio (FCO)

Family Connects Ohio (FCO) is an evidence-based newborn home visiting model that provides support for families with newborns during a period of life-changing transition. FCO connects families to nurses who will nurture the whole family and support a newborn’s health and wellbeing. CIR processed **790 system referrals for FCO**, and of those, **384 or 49% were either waitlisted or assigned** to the FCO program. These system referrals spanned 16 counties* across 10 providers.

* Note: FCO is available primarily in 11 counties. Fisher-Titus Medical Center also serves patients residing in counties surrounding its catchment area of Erie and Huron Counties.



System Referrals by County



Family Connects Ohio (FCO)

Post Visit Connections

CIR FCO staff completed **87 Post Visit Connections** in SFY25. Of those:

- 100% of families felt always respected and listened to by their nurse
- 100% of families felt their nurse always explained things in a way they could understand
- 99% of families felt their questions/needs were a priority for their nurse
- 99% would recommend Family Connects Ohio to a friend
- 86% of moms attended their postpartum appointment with their healthcare provider
- 85% of families reported being able to make contact with the referral agency provided by their nurse



Testimonials

"The visit was MY pleasure. I really liked it."

"I've already recommended Family Connects to a friend."

"My nurse was very nice, I liked my visit."

"I was able to understand everything she was saying to me. It was a good visit."

"I thought this program was beneficial and I found it to be very helpful."

"It was a nice visit, I'm set up with Help Me Grow now."

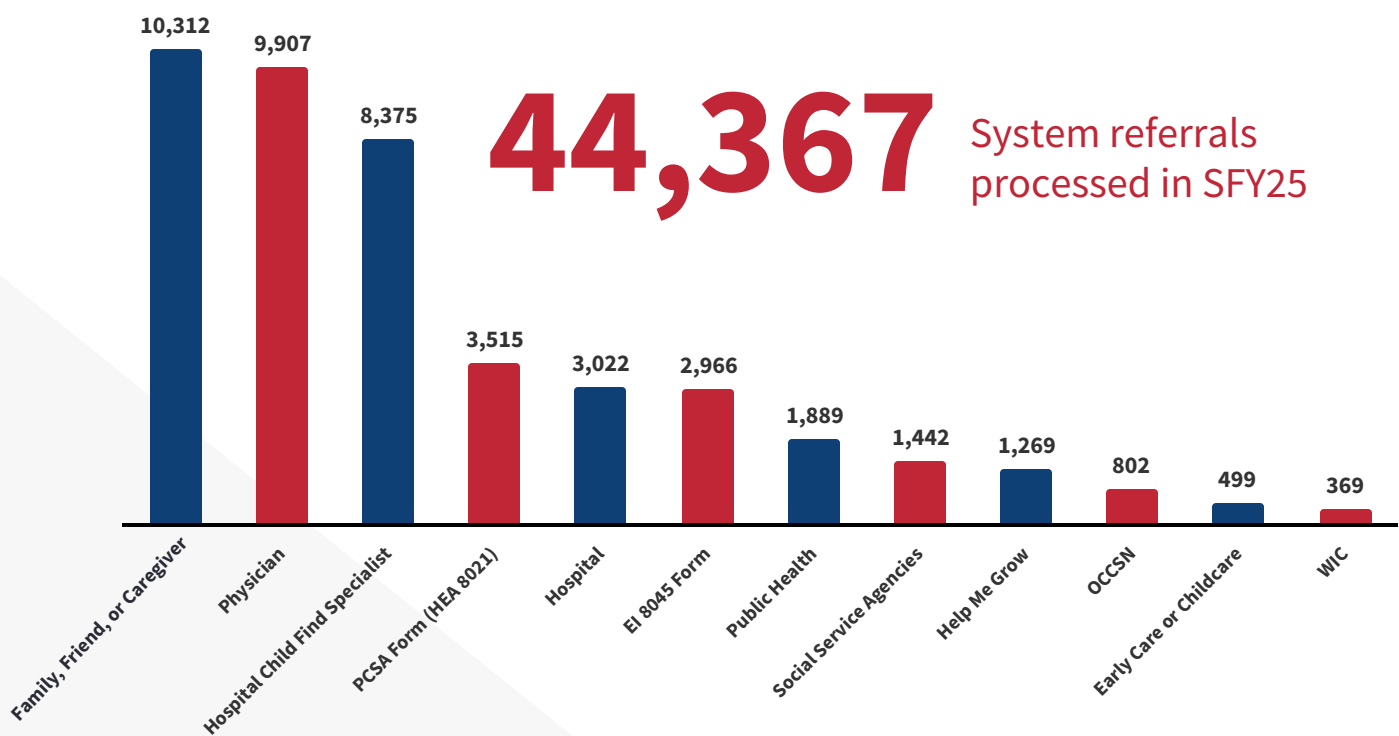
"The nurse was my girl! I loved her!"

"I feel confident that I am latching and breastfeeding correctly."

Early Intervention

System Referrals

CIR processed **44,367 system referrals** in SFY25. CIR monitors the referral source from which each referral is received in order to identify areas of growth and need. The chart below provides the breakdown of all system referrals in SFY25 by referral source.



Note: Children can receive multiple system referrals.

Note: The above referral source categories include the distinct referral sources listed after each. Family, Friend or Caregiver: Family Member, Friend, Parent; Physician: Physician; Hospital Child Find Specialist: Hospital Child Find Specialist; PCSA Form (HEA 8021): PCSA Form (HEA 8021); EI 8045 Form: EI 8045; Hospital: Hospital; Public Health: ODH-EBLL, ODH-NAS, Local Health Department, State Health Department; Social Service Agencies: County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health Agency, Nonprofit Community Provider; Help Me Grow: ODH-BCMH; OCCSN: ODH-OCCSN; Early Care or Childcare: Child Care, Early Head Start, Head Start, Local Preschool; WIC: WIC

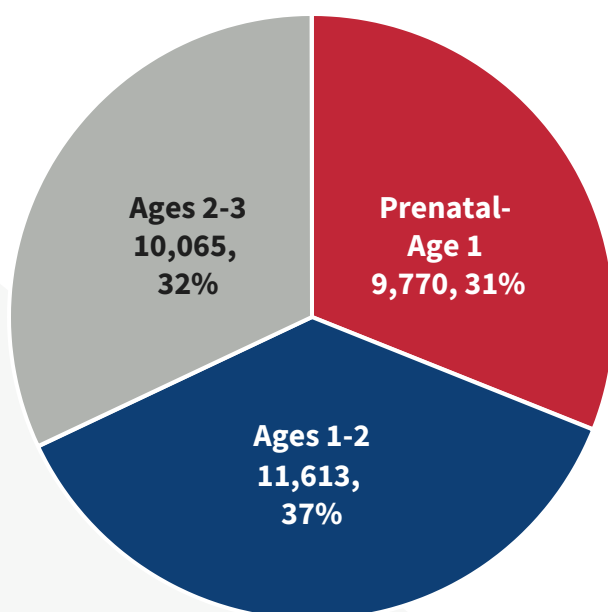
CIR saw an especially strong increase in referrals from **Hospital** sources. These referrals were **up 7%** in SFY25 compared to SFY24. CIR will continue to review referrals by source to develop targeted outreach and marketing strategies.

Early Intervention

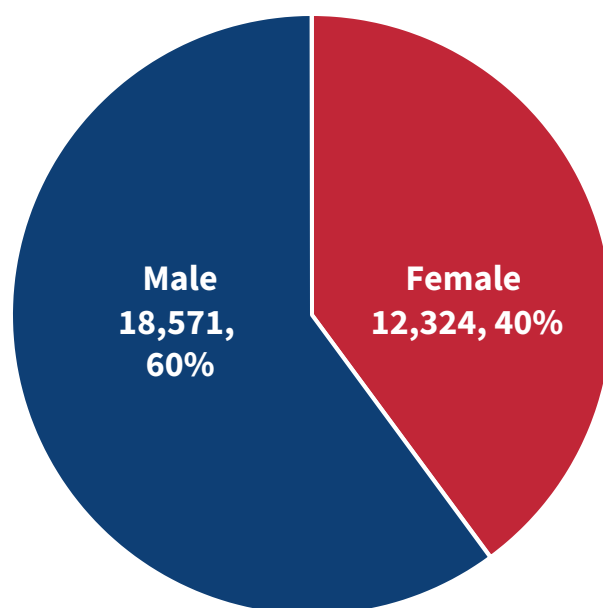
Program Referrals Assigned

A total of **31,448 children were assigned to Early Intervention** in SFY25. CIR tracks the demographic information of each assigned program referral to identify public awareness needed and to ensure children are being referred for Early Intervention services at critical ages.

The charts below provide a proportional look at age and gender of children assigned to Early Intervention in SFY25.



Ages based on the date assigned to an Early Intervention provider.



* Note: Children assigned are deduplicated from children who may have received multiple referrals during the year. Children assigned were identified through deduplicating by their unique child identification number provided in the Early Intervention Data System. Counts by gender are based on available data.

As shown above, 68% of assignments to Early Intervention occurred before age 2, which is **up 1% from SFY24**. CIR will continue to monitor these demographic measures with a goal of referring children as early as possible.

Early Intervention

Elevated Blood Lead Levels

Early Intervention for young children diagnosed with elevated blood lead levels (EBLL) continues to be a priority in Ohio. These diagnoses, along with others that can be found at www.ohioearlyintervention.org, make a child automatically eligible for Early Intervention in Ohio.

In SFY25, CIR processed **1,857 referrals for children diagnosed with EBLL in 82 counties.**

Note: These counts are based on reports provided by the Ohio Department of Health on EBLL referrals. This includes referrals received for children already involved in Early Intervention that do not generate a system referral.

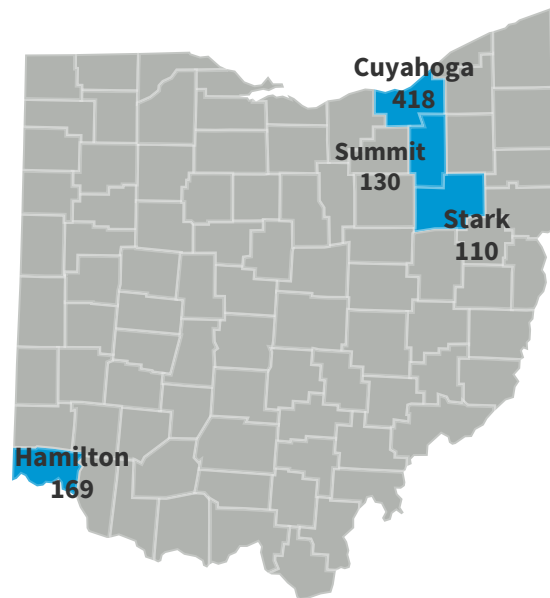
EBLL Referral Outcomes

Assigned or already receiving services	772	41.7%
Declined	431	23.3%
Attempts to contact unsuccessful	619	33.4%
Not eligible due to age at time of referral	30	1.6%

Note: The above table does not include EBLL referrals with incomplete information.

Note: An agreement between state departments allows information for children diagnosed with EBLL to be provided to CIR to offer Help Me Grow Early Intervention services.

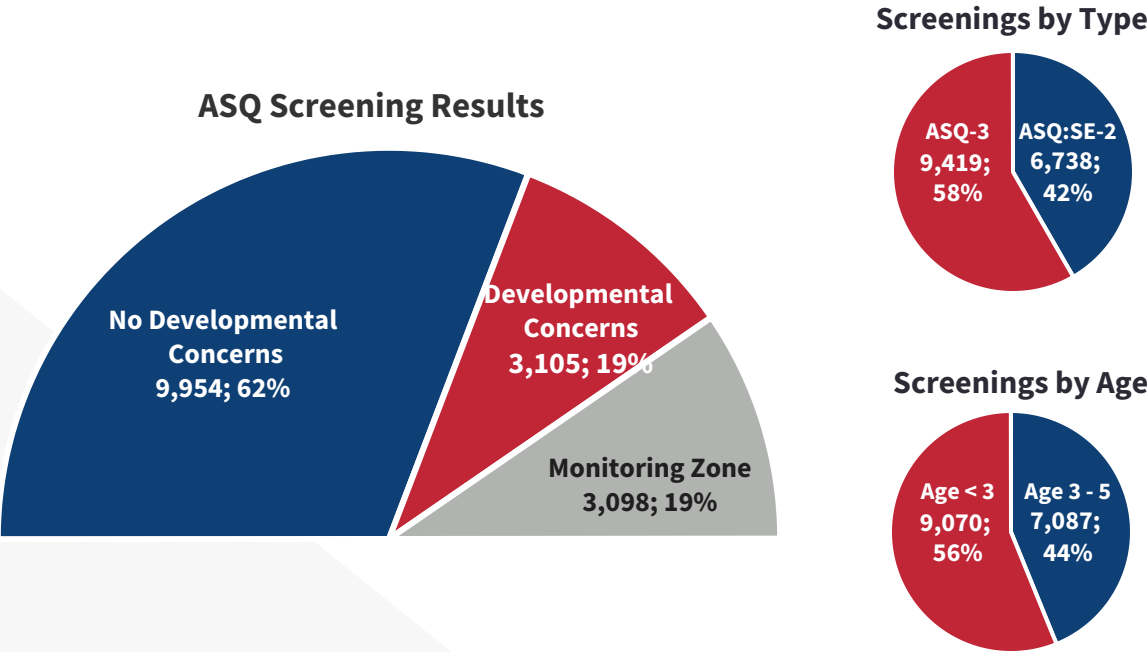
Top four counties:



ASQ Developmental Screening Program

Families

CIR continued to provide the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) online developmental screening service in SFY25. **16,157 ASQ screenings were completed**, of which 15,723 were completed in the newly implemented Sparkler application. A total of **8,474 distinct children** received an ASQ screening in SFY25.



Connections from ASQ Screenings

Children connected to Early Intervention	294
Children connected to Home Visiting	48
Children connected to both Early Intervention and Home Visiting	8
Children connected to Preschool Special Education	213
Children served (received an IFSP or home visit after connection from ASQ)	95

ASQ Developmental Screening Program

Sparkler Program Partners

During SFY25, CIR created Sparkler Dashboard profiles for 700+ programs. Each profile gave programs access to customize their account by creating cohorts and users; view ASQ completions and scores; complete the free ASQ screenings for children in their program; explore a comprehensive library of play-based activities; download customized reports to share with families; and follow a child’s developmental progress.

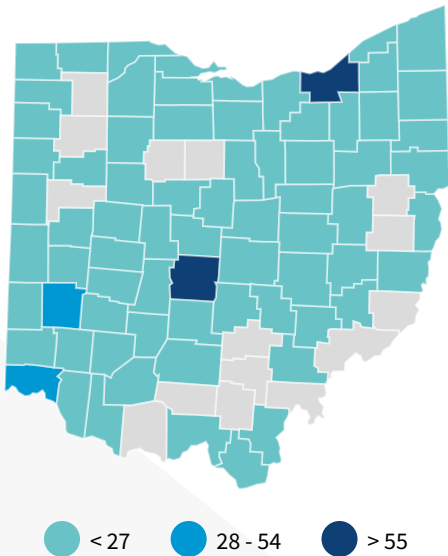
The chart to the right shows the Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) rating of Early Care and Education programs who elected to share their rating during the Sparkler Program Partner application process.

Sparkler Program Partners serve families all across Ohio, with Cuyahoga, Franklin, Montgomery, and Hamilton having the highest number of partners in SFY25.

Note: Some programs declined answering and/or serve more than one county

Program Type	
ECE- Center	488
ECE - Family Childcare Homes	123
ECE - School District	75
Home Visiting Providers	8
Early Intervention Providers	4
Parent Support Programs	4

SUTQ Rating (if applicable)	
Gold	284
Bronze	203
Not rated	106
Silver	64



Community Resource Directories

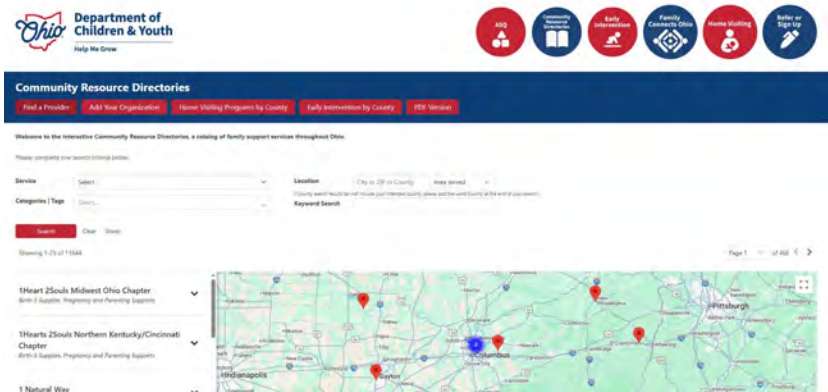
The Help Me Grow Community Resource Directories had **18,859 visitors in SFY25**. CIR continued to improve and expand the directories throughout the fiscal year, and those updates included:

New categories:

- Doulas
- Pregnancy Loss and Recovery
- Infant or Child Loss
- Potty training resources
- Firearm safety resources
- DCY Parent and Youth Ambassadors (PYAs)
- Homelessness shelters
- Domestic violence shelters
- Food banks

Adding providers from resource guides sent to CIR by:

- The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center
- The Ohio Children's Trust Fund
- Darke County General Health District
- Local mom groups statewide
- And more



Top zip code searches

1. 43123 (Franklin County)
2. 43227 (Franklin County)
3. 43015 (Delaware County)
4. 45242 (Hamilton County)
5. 44320 (Summit County)

Top county searches

- Cuyahoga
- Franklin
- Hamilton
- Montgomery
- Warren

Top keyword searches

- Diapers
- Housing
- Speech
- Preschool
- Lead

Top five category searches

- School Districts
- Baby Supplies
- Speech Language Pathology
- Childcare
- Diapers

helpmegrow.org

During SFY25, CIR updated helpmegrow.org to match the new Heart of It All branding guidelines.

With the expansion of the ASQ Developmental Screening Program, the ASQ webpage was updated and reformatted to educate families on the expanded service offerings, and a new ASQ providers page was built to help professional providers learn about the expanded ASQ Online Service including Sparkler, materials to promote the service, and information on becoming a Sparkler Program Partner. Family Connects Ohio (FCO) also received a dedicated webpage at program launch, along with an FCO bubble in the header menu.

Google Translate was installed, giving users 53 language options on the site; along with installing Google Search Console to gain data on how users were finding the helpmegrow.org website through Google search engines.

WEBSITE VISITS IN SFY25

2,744,419



26%

increase in website
traffic from SFY24



640K

impressions

*how many times a
user saw a link to
your site in Google
search results.*

Budget Summary

The Ohio Department of Children and Youth provided \$8,348,260 to fund Bright Beginnings and its regional subcontractors' work of operating Help Me Grow Central Intake and Referral statewide for SFY25. Regional subcontractors included:

- Action for Children
- Butler County Educational Service Center
- Educational Service Center of Eastern Ohio
- Greater Dayton Area Hospital Association
- Lucas County Family Council
- Noble County Health Department
- Pike County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Bright Beginnings and its subcontracted regional partners want to thank the providers, stakeholders, and families involved with the Help Me Grow system of supports for another successful year. We continue to provide a coordinated system to ensure that Ohio's young children and their families are connected to supports and services that help achieve their best outcomes.



**Department of
Children & Youth**
Help Me Grow