



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



United Ways of Vermont and VT Early Learning Challenge Grant Launch Help Me Grow Vermont



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BURLINGTON – A new statewide phone line to support families with young children was announced today by the **United Ways of Vermont**. Parents and caregivers can now dial 2-1-1 to be connected with trained Help Me Grow child development specialists who can answer questions about children’s behavior and development and connect families to resources and services in their community.

The project was funded by the Vermont Early Learning Challenge Grant – a federal grant that supports collaborative systems reform in early childhood across the Agency of Human Services, the Agency of Education, and **Building Bright Futures**.

“We know that we can do more to support families and help children lead healthy lives if we can detect developmental and behavioral issues early,” said Breena Holmes, MD, director of Maternal and Child Health for the Vermont Department of Health. “Vermont has many strong programs and services to support young children and families, but we know that not all families get connected to the services they need. This resource will help families understand young children’s behavior and development, identify if their child is at risk, and connect them to programs and supports right where they live.”

The Health Department spearheaded the Help Me Grow initiative in partnership with many other state and community organizations.

Already in the first few weeks that the line has been operational, parents from across the state have called with a range of issues, including looking for parent education resources and setting up developmental screening for a child. Callers have been connected to services at agencies including local Parent Child Centers and Children’s Integrated Services.

“We’re off to a really great start,” said MaryEllen Mendl, director of **Vermont 2-1-1**, “Everyone has questions when caring for a young child, and now parents have easy access to someone who can answer those questions or help them find what they need.”

The child development specialists will be available from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday – Friday. Callers can leave messages after hours, as Vermont 2-1-1 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Help Me Grow Vermont 2-1-1 services are confidential.

“We are so excited to partner with the Health Department to help families with questions about their child’s development and provide access to our robust resource directory,” said Martha Maksym, president of the United Ways of Vermont. “We believe that the best way to achieve our Vermont 2-1-1 mission is to support coordinated efforts with our partners.”

The Help Me Grow initiative is part of a broader effort to strengthen and align the systems that support young children and families in Vermont. Information collected by call center staff will help identify family needs as well as gaps in and barriers to services across the state. This data can then be used to help ensure that young Vermonters and their families get the support they need.

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