



Part 2: Help Me Grow MN, Referral Information for Clinical Audiologists

Help Me Grow MN:

- **Help Me Grow MN** is an interagency initiative of the State of Minnesota Department of Education, Department of Health, and Department of Human Services. The initiative includes community outreach efforts, the [Help Me Grow](#), and print materials that share information about young children’s development for all Minnesota families and professionals.
- Help Me Grow MN also informs families and professionals about how to get help for a child when they have concerns about the child’s development. Help Me Grow MN is one of the primary ways through which families and professionals can refer infants, toddlers, and young children, ages birth up to kindergarten entrance, and their families for possible Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) support services.
- A printed Help Me Grow MN brochure, **When Parents Know, Children Grow**, is available to share with clinical audiologists and families. It describes basic information about Help Me Grow MN and is available in English, Hmong, Somali, Spanish, Karen. Printed copies of this and other topic brochures and resources can be provided at no cost to clinical audiologists through the Regional Interagency Early Intervention Committees’ (IEICs) contacts. (See the [Help Me Grow MN, picture catalog of materials](#).)
 - To obtain Help Me Grow MN brochures go to the [“Order Materials”](#) page on the Help Me Grow MN website. Use the county dropdown menu or use the map to click on a county to find the name and contact information for the Interagency Early Intervention Committee (IEIC) person in that county who can provide as with Help Me Grow MN brochures and other printed materials.

Referring Children through Help Me Grow MN:

The Help Me Grow MN website provides [online referral information](#) for professionals and/or family members to request assistance for a child when they have any concerns about the child’s development. Links are provided for more in-depth information related to *“Why Should I Refer a Child?”*, *“When Should I Refer a Child?”*, *“How Do I Refer a Child?”* and *“What Happens After Referral?”*

- Parents, extended family members, and professionals with concerns about the development of a young child can make a referral through Help Me Grow MN. This referral option connects young children and families with their local school district ECSE Program, which is responsible for responding to the referral. This response may include a developmental screening or an evaluation to determine eligibility for support services at no cost, regardless of income level or family immigration status.
- **Clinical audiologists are required to refer all young Minnesota children, from birth up to kindergarten entrance, who have been confirmed with *any type or degree of hearing loss, unilateral or bilateral*, for an evaluation for possible support services as soon as the hearing concern is noted.**
- Clinical audiologists *do not* need to first consider if the child would be eligible for either Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention Services or Part B Preschool Special Education Services before referring the child. It is the school district's responsibility to use the clinical audiological information along with additional assessment information when determining the child's eligibility for support services. More information about eligibility for educational support services in Minnesota is provided in [Part 5](#) of this resource.
- To refer a child for possible support services, audiologists can use the Help Me Grow MN online referral link [Refer a Child: Professional Form](#) or refer the child by calling 1-866-693-GROW (4769). Referrals can also be made by contacting the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) program in the child's school district of residence.
- Reference: Under [Federal IDEA Part C Regulations, Sec. 303.303 Referral](#), Primary Referral Sources, which include clinical audiologists, *are required to refer* infants and toddlers with developmental concerns, including hearing loss, to their state's early intervention system *as soon as possible but no later than 7 days after* a developmental concern (including hearing loss) is noted.
 - Information on IDEA Part C referral requirements can also be found at the Help Me Grow MN webpage [IDEA and Help Me Grow](#).

Talking with Families About Referrals through Help Me Grow MN

- Timely referrals of infants and young children with health and/or developmental concerns are critical to providing supports as early as possible to children and families. However, parents and family members may have questions and concerns about a referral through Help Me Grow MN, leading some to be hesitant.

- It is recommended, respectful, and appropriate to talk with families about referring the child through Help Me Grow MN prior to making the referral. However, these discussions should not preclude or delay the audiologist from making the referral. As noted above, the audiologist is required to refer infants and toddlers *as soon as possible but no later than 7 days after* the child’s hearing loss has been noted.
- Sharing information about Help Me Grow MN, what happens after a referral, and possible support services available for eligible MN children and families can be helpful.
 - When talking with families about the referral, clinical audiologists are encouraged to share with parents the [Letter for Families of Young Children with Hearing Differences](#). The letter briefly describes Help Me Grow MN, the clinical audiologist’s responsibility to refer infants and toddlers with hearing loss, initial contacts that parents can expect from their school district following the referral, and the assurance that families’ decisions are respected.
 - Audiologists and family members can learn more about [what happens after a referral](#), as well as summary descriptions of [Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention Services](#) and [Part B Preschool Special Education Services](#) through the Help Me Grow MN website.

Referrals through Help Me Grow MN and Parent Consent

- Healthcare providers and educational providers are bound by [HIPAA](#) (external website) and [FERPA](#) (external website) privacy laws. Considerations of child and family privacy may lead to confusions about parent consent and referrals of children through Help Me Grow MN.
- The resource [Sharing Child Information to Coordinate Early Childhood Special Education \(ECSE\) Referrals; Guidance for Clinics and Schools](#) (external website) from the MN Department of Health and MN Department of Education provides guidance for when signed parent/guardian consent is required —and when it is not required—of a clinic or school district. Signed parental consent *is not required to make an initial referral, if only the child’s name, address, and age are shared*. However, signed parental consent is required to share child-specific screening or medical information.
 - An observed challenge: Some medical/audiology clinics may have previously established policies and internal processes requiring clinic

professionals to obtain signed parent permission before they refer a young child with hearing loss through Help Me Grow MN. However, as noted above, signed parental consent *is not legally required when referring a young child if only the child's name, address, and age are shared.*

- With signed parental consent, the clinical audiologist may choose to share additional brief information about the child on the Help Me Grow MN online referral form.
 - To share a brief note about the child, the audiologist would click “Yes” at the top of the form to indicate they have parental consent to share additional information beyond the child’s name, address, and age.
 - A comment box will open near the bottom of the referral form to share additional brief information that may be important for the school district team to know as they begin their intake process.
 - Example: With a parent’s signed consent, a clinical audiologist may add a brief comment on the referral form about the confirmed hearing loss, the type and degree of hearing loss, unilateral or bilateral, developmental concerns, etc. Note: The school district will still need to receive a formal clinical audiological report to complete the child’s evaluation and eligibility determination.
- Due to data privacy laws, medical/audiological reports cannot be attached to the online referral form within the Help Me Grow MN system, even with parent/guardian consent to share information. However, it is critical that school district teams receive the clinical audiology reports as soon as possible in order to complete eligibility determinations and begin services within required timelines. Optimally, the clinical audiologist would obtain appropriate parent/guardian consent and share clinical audiology reports directly with the child’s resident school district Early Childhood Special Education Program (ECSE) at the time of initial referral or very soon after. Additional information on sharing clinical audiology reports directly with school districts’ ECSE programs is included in [Part 3](#) of this resource.
- After a clinical audiologist submits an online referral for a young child through the Help Me Grow MN website:
 - An automatic confirmation message and confirmation number appears on the screen indicating that the referral was received by the Help Me Grow system. The MN Department of Education recommends that this number be recorded in the child’s file for future reference.

- Based on the address listed for the child on the referral form, the referral form information, including the family's contact information, is immediately forwarded electronically to the appropriate designated intake email address in the child's resident school district.
- Additional information about the school district's actions after receiving a referral is described in [Part 5](#) of this resource.