

## **Our Children, Our Families Council**

### **Summary of the High Risk Infant Interagency Council of SF (now called Help Me Grow)**

*(Last updated 4/10/15)*

#### **Goals of the Effort**

The High Risk Infant Interagency Council (HRIIC), now called Help Me Grow, is a group of service providers and agencies dedicated to helping families and service providers connect to the resources and referrals a child may need. The HRIIC is funded by First 5 San Francisco, and is operated by Support for Families of Children with Disabilities (SFCD), a parent-run San Francisco-based nonprofit organization founded in 1982..

#### **Focal Population of the Effort**

The HRIIC focuses on serving families with children ages 0 to 5 who are at-risk and/or have special health care needs or disabilities.

#### **Impact**

The HRIIC has aimed to streamline the special education placement process for families. The council encouraged SFUSD to begin screening children for special needs before the fall of their first year of school, and the HRIIC has also worked to reduce the complexity of the special education screening paperwork to make it more accessible to families. Since the HRIIC began meeting in 1989, the members have helped connect many San Francisco families to services for their children.

#### **Challenges**

The HRIIC considers its greatest challenge membership turnover. Because the service providers and agencies represented on the HRIIC struggle with retaining staff, the membership on the HRIIC also changes frequently. This issue makes it difficult to maintain a consistent vision and focus.

#### **Origins of the Effort**

Support for Families started in 1982 as an information hotline for families looking for resources for their children, and it has grown into a robust resource center serving families of children with special needs. In 1989, California established county-level high risk infant interagency councils, which at the time served children up to age 3 with special needs. In 1995, however, the state eliminated funding for HRIICs, so Support for Families tried to keep the group together by funding one staff coordinator. A year later the HRIIC received funding from First 5 San Francisco, which has been funding the HRIIC ever since as an affiliate program within SFCD.

#### **Leading the Effort**

The Director of the HRIIC is Nadia Thind. She has been working within the maternal and child health field for more than 15 years in the non-profit and government sectors, and joined Support for Families as HRIIC Director in October 2014. Nadia's full-time position is funded through First 5 San Francisco.

#### **Members of the Effort**

The HRIIC steering committee consists of 6 agencies, and the general council consists of 20 agencies. Participating agencies include:

- Golden Gate Regional Center
- San Francisco Unified School District
- California Children Services
- San Francisco Community Behavioral Health Services
- Support for Families of Children with Disabilities
- Child Care Inclusion Challenge Project

### **Structure of the Effort**

The HRIIC general council meets monthly, and the steering committee meets every other month and serves to guide the direction of the HRIIC general council. Attendance at HRIIC general council meetings has been a problem in the past but has improved recently. More members attend if a funder is present at the meeting. Attendance also fluctuates based on the topic of each meeting, set by the steering committee. Attendance at steering committee meetings is more consistent.

### **The Role of Data**

The HRIIC uses Salesforce to collect some data on phone calls to the Support for Families hotline. They collect data on what people are calling for, what resources are given to those families, and who is calling. This data collection effort is a recent development, however, so the HRIIC has yet to analyze the data in depth.

### **Related Documents**

- HRIIC website: <http://www.supportforfamilies.org/helpmegrow.html>
- Support for Families of Children with Disabilities website: <http://www.supportforfamilies.org/index.html>