



2024

Annual Impact Report

NORTH CAROLINA
INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE



Letter from the President & CEO

Dear colleagues and friends,

At the North Carolina Institute of Medicine, we bring together hundreds of North Carolinians, both virtually and in-person, to do the hard and important work of analyzing challenges in health care and health policy and identifying ways to work together to improve our state.



In 2024, this work informed more than 30 recommendations across two task force reports; key findings to inform decision-making by state agencies, local elected officials, and the North Carolina General Assembly; new priorities for health and policy researchers; and countless opportunities for collaboration and partnership. We also welcomed three new members to the North Carolina Institute of Medicine Board of Directors, inducted eight new individuals with a broad range of health expertise into NCOIM membership, and celebrated 22 members of the North Carolina General Assembly for participating in the fourth cohort of the NCIOM Legislative Health Policy Fellows program.

Through convening a broad range of state stakeholders, identifying actionable strategies to improve health, and providing research and data to inform policymaking, our work contributes to ensuring that people across North Carolina have the opportunity to be healthy and well.

This past year has also allowed us the dedicated time and reflective space to identify innovative and improved ways to do our work. During this strategic planning process, which we affectionately call the “Evolve Project,” we have focused on refining our processes to more meaningfully engage with affected communities and policymakers, expand our communication and dissemination activities, and effectively assess the impact of our work. We are excited to bring the results of this learning to our work and our partnerships.

2024 has been a year of transition, growth, and learning at the North Carolina Institute of Medicine and we have been so grateful to share this time with you. To all who take the time to engage with this work alongside us: thank you. We couldn’t do what we do without your perspectives, your experiences, and your dedication to North Carolina.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Ries".

Michelle Ries, MPH
Interim President and CEO

Events & Convenings



Robert Espinoza, MPA, CEO of the National Skills Coalition, met in a small session with legislators after delivering the keynote address.



Susan Mims, MD, MPH, FAAP, President & CEO of the Dogwood Health Trust, provided a lunchtime presentation about the Hurricane Helene impact and response in Western North Carolina.

The 41st NCIOM Annual Meeting took place November 21, 2024, at the McKimmon Center in Raleigh, focused on long-term services and supports. Caregivers, providers, policymakers, and researchers gathered to examine the need for innovative, forward-thinking policy solutions for our rapidly aging state.



Attendees discussed evolving needs of the direct care workforce.



NCIOM President & CEO Michelle Ries, MPH, and Board Chair Adam Sholar, JD, welcomed attendees and facilitated the day's events.



Legislative Health Policy Fellows

The 2024 cohort included 10 Democrats and 12 Republicans representing districts across the state who attended a series of educational meetings and engaged in discussion with their peers about innovative approaches to improving health for all North Carolinians.

NC Opioid Research Convening

Hosted by the NCIOM and the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, advocates, providers, community members, researchers, and policymakers gathered July 19 to develop research questions to guide opioid response efforts in North Carolina.

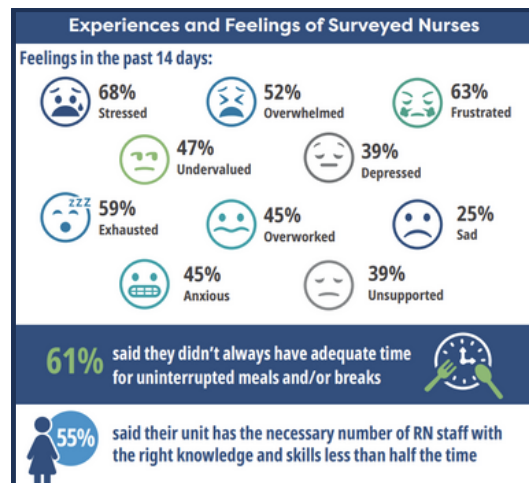
Key Project Findings

For more details on these findings and policy recommendations, visit nciom.org.

Task Force on the Future of the Nursing Workforce

- More nurses are needed in North Carolina
- Improving nurse retention requires changes to workplace culture, policies, and practices
- Intentional efforts should quantify the financial value of nursing care and patient outcomes

Next steps and partnerships: Continued focus and collaboration is needed to implement the recommendations. The NC Center on the Workforce for Health can be a key leader in this effort with other groups like the North Carolina Future of Nursing Action Coalition.



Oral Health Transformation Task Force

- Medicaid beneficiaries and underserved communities face significant barriers to receiving oral health services.
- Coordinating oral, physical, and behavioral health care leads to better patient outcomes.
- Growing, diversifying, and equitably distributing dental professionals remains essential to meet community needs.

Next steps and partnerships: The NCIOM will continue supporting interdisciplinary collaboration and integrating oral health into workforce development initiatives through partnerships with the NC Oral Health Collaborative and other organizations.



Immigrant Mental Health

- Immigrant populations face unique challenges that impact mental well-being.
- Immigrants bring unique strengths and face distinct barriers to accessing mental health services.
- Development of an Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Network could benefit immigrant communities and those serving them.



Next steps and partnerships: El Futuro, a Latino-serving mental health organization based in Durham, NC, partnered with NCIOM to conduct a landscape analysis and policy work groups. The future activities of this partnership and the Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Network will depend on ongoing funding determinations.

Key Project Findings

For more details on these findings and policy recommendations, visit nciom.org.

Essentials for Childhood

- In NC, the cost of Adverse Childhood Experience-related health conditions is estimated at \$552 billion annually.
- One often overlooked strategy for preventing child abuse and neglect is the promotion of Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs), which can mitigate the effects of ACEs.



Next steps and partnerships: The final report will be published in February 2025. In partnership with NCDHHS Division of Public Health, NCIOM will continue to support adoption of practices that foster Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) and prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Maternal Levels of Care Action Team

- Black birthing individuals and rural communities experience disproportionate negative outcomes.
- Implementing risk-appropriate, regionalized care systems ensures high-risk pregnancies receive the right level of support.
- Addressing workforce distribution and training is essential.

Next steps and partnerships: The NCIOM will continue partnering with NCDHHS and the broader perinatal health equity community to advance regionalized maternal care and address workforce challenges.

Equity in Practice Action Team

- Incarcerated pregnant individuals face inconsistent access to care and resources across counties.
- Lack of comprehensive data on perinatal incarceration hinders effective policy and resource allocation.
- Legal aid, substance use support, and re-entry services are crucial.

Next steps and partnerships: The NC Institute of Medicine will remain an ally in this work, monitoring progress and contributing through its leadership role in the broader North Carolina Perinatal Health Equity Collective.

Doula Service Action Team

- Fair compensation, reduced administrative burdens, and access to continuing education are necessary for sustaining the doula workforce.
- Recognizing doulas as essential members of the perinatal care team supports improved maternal health outcomes, fosters collaboration, and ensures they are fairly compensated and supported.

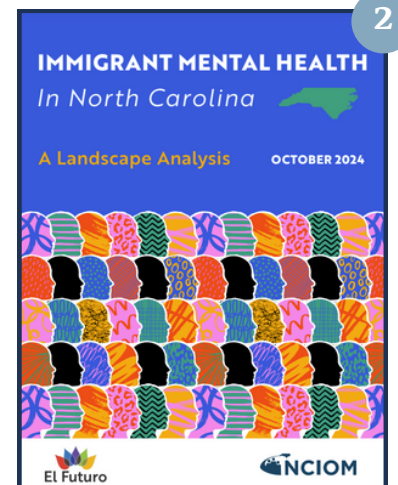
Next steps and partnerships: The NCIOM will support efforts to expand Medicaid coverage for doula services by partnering with NCDHHS and the perinatal health equity community, monitoring policy developments, and advocating for supportive structures.

Collaboration & Dissemination

The NCIOM has continued to collaborate with partner organizations across the state and region to work toward health policy solutions.

In 2024 we worked alongside **NC Child** on the State of the Child Summit [1], **El Futuro** on an immigrant mental health landscape analysis [2], and the **NC Oral Health Collaborative** on our Oral Health Transformation Task Force [3]. We also worked with partners at **NCDHHS** on reports and recommendations related to perinatal health and doula services; convened a diverse **Essentials for Childhood** update committee; and developed an issue brief focused on the health care workforce with the input of **NC General Assembly** members who participated in our Legislative Health Policy Fellows program.

As part of dissemination activities for our Task Force on the Future of the Nursing Workforce, NCIOM staff presented at various convenings statewide [4]. The collaborative work of this task force was recognized by the **NC Nurses Association** [5], and the **NC Center on the Workforce for Health** is a partner in implementing the task force's recommendations.



Collaboration & Dissemination



Left: In June, President & CEO Michelle Ries appeared on Spectrum News show Capital Tonight to discuss the recommendations of the Task Force on Healthy Aging and opportunities for state action. Right: Project Director Brienne Lyda-McDonald presented the recommendations of the task force to multiple audiences across the state, including the House Committee on Families, Children, and Aging Policy in May.



NCIOM staff at 2024 Annual Meeting

With the support of funding from The Duke Endowment, we have been working as a team to strategically plan for sustainable improvements in our work. Throughout this "Evolve" initiative, we have identified learnings, best practices, and strategic priorities for change.

By the Numbers

- In 2024, our work was viewed more than **95,000** times by more than **45,000** people.
- We published more than **100** articles in the NC Medical Journal, including **23** peer-reviewed studies.
- Our task forces, reports, publications, and other activities were mentioned **55** times in local, regional, and national media.

The legislation and introduced bills listed below refer to or otherwise address recommendations from North Carolina Institute of Medicine task forces. Though the NCIOM does not directly advocate for policy change or legislation, implementation of recommendations is one measure of our impact.

Improving behavioral health:

2024 saw increased investment in and prioritization of improving behavioral health across the state. The plan from the NC Department of Health and Human Services, "Transforming North Carolina's Behavioral Health System," outlined steps for implementing Governor Cooper's behavioral health roadmap and the \$835 billion investment by the North Carolina General Assembly in improving behavioral health across the state.

This plan reflects several strategies identified in NCIOM work, including the Child Health Report Card (2023), the report of the NCIOM Task Force on Pandemic Preparedness (2022), the NCIOM Task Force on Mental Health and Substance Use (2016), and the Task Force on Essentials for Childhood (2015, update in 2025):

- **Strengthening behavioral health, I/DD, and TBI workforce**
- **School health workforce development and increased collaboration with community providers**
- **Improved integration of behavioral health services**
- **Advancing System of Care framework**

Behavioral health services have also been recognized as a key in Hurricane Helene response efforts from the state. In October, the North Carolina General Assembly passed disaster relief packages that allocated \$5 million toward improving mental health services in public schools for students, families and staff impacted by the hurricane. Community colleges were also funded \$1.25 million for behavioral health services for impacted students and staff. NCIOM continues to monitor additional relief spending bills.

Strengthening the nursing workforce:

With the publication in May 2024 of "Time for Action: Securing a Strong Nursing Workforce for North Carolina," the NCIOM identified many areas of opportunity and strategies for strengthening the nursing workforce in our state. We are beginning to see these strategies reflected in policy changes and proposed legislation across the state, including:

- **Preparing future nurses, including expanding nursing faculty and supporting student needs:** In July 2024, the University of North Carolina System announced an award of nearly \$29 million in grants, funded by the North Carolina General Assembly in the 2023 state budget, for the expansion of nursing education at 12 public universities and North Carolina's Area Health Education Centers.
- **Support school nursing:** In May, NC S814 "Healthy Students - A Nurse in Every School" was introduced in the legislature. This bill would require at least one full-time, permanent nurse in every North Carolina public school. The NCIOM task force recommended additional strategies for financing school nursing, including optimizing Medicaid billing, private insurance, and tax revenue.

- After convening state stakeholders to review progress on recommendations from the 2014 – 2015 **Task Force on Essentials for Childhood**, a new report will be published in early 2025.
- In the spring of 2025, we will publish the latest edition of the **Child Health Report Card** in collaboration with NC Child. Since 1997, this biannual report has presented 15 key indicators of child health.
- Starting in January and running through April, NCIOM will convene a series of workshops alongside NC AHEC, the UNC Sheps Center for Health Services Research, and the NC Center on the Workforce for Health focused on strengthening the direct care workforce.
- We have embarked on the learning phase of a new **Task Force on Veterans' Health**. This task force will have a special focus on improving community-based health care, addressing mental health and substance use, and developing the veteran-serving health care workforce. This Task Force will begin meeting in mid-2025.



After more than 40 years, the NCIOM will discontinue bimonthly publication of the *NC Medical Journal* in favor of a digital-first, rolling publication.

ncmedicaljournal.com will continue to be a hub for peer-reviewed research of relevance to North Carolina health policymakers and practitioners.

Health policy analysis, interviews, and NCIOM updates will continue to be disseminated via the new NC Health Policy Forum newsletter - sign up using the QR code to the right.



Thank You to Our Supporters!

The NCIOM is grateful to these individuals and organizations for their generous support as we strive to improve the health of all North Carolinians. To make a contribution, visit <https://nciom.org/about-us/support-us/>

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