

2025

Annual Impact Report



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

Dear colleagues and friends,

At the North Carolina Institute of Medicine, our mission has always been clear: to bring people together across sectors to identify evidence-based policy solutions that strengthen the health and well-being of our state. We serve as a convener, a trusted source of analysis, and a collaborator committed to building a healthier North Carolina for all.

As we reflect on 2025, we do so with both pride and humility. This year brought meaningful progress and deepened partnerships across the state. In partnership with NCDHHS Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services and AARP NC, we launched the Task Force on Veterans' Health, which focuses on improving the provision and navigation of care for Veterans. Together with NC Child, we released the 2025 Child Health Report Card and co-hosted the State of the Child Summit, elevating the needs and strengths of North Carolina's children. We partnered with the NC Center on the Workforce for Health to foster discussion and analysis to inform the direct care workforce and nurse retention. We also published major reports on children and families and opioid research—each offering actionable insights for policymakers and communities.

We also launched a new issue brief series to help leaders navigate a rapidly shifting policy landscape, addressing the ways that the goals identified in the Healthy North Carolina 2030 report may be impacted by federal and state policy change. And throughout the year, we gathered partners for a range of important convenings:

- A statewide nursing reconvening
- The kickoff of our Task Force on Veterans' Health
- The NCMJ Symposium
- Our 2025 Annual Meeting

Each event reminded us of the power of shared purpose, the importance of collaboration, and the generosity of expertise that you bring to this work.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

This has also been a year of transition. The North Carolina Medical Journal entered a new chapter, and we welcomed changes across our staff, Board of Directors, and membership that have brought fresh energy and new perspectives. At the same time, we have navigated policy shifts that continue to reshape the health care environment in North Carolina.

Looking ahead, we are filled with anticipation and hope. This winter, we welcome a new class of Legislative Health Policy Fellows—leaders who will carry forward the work of building healthier communities. We are also excited to bring together partners from past projects during 2026, to examine progress, policy context, and new priorities for change. In the fall of 2026, we will release the final report of our Task Force on Veterans' Health, a project that reflects our deep commitment to those who have served our state and nation.

Most of all, we want to thank you. Thank you for your support, your wisdom, and the perspectives you have shared with us, and for the dedication and commitment you bring to North Carolina. We are profoundly grateful for your partnership and for the privilege of working alongside you.

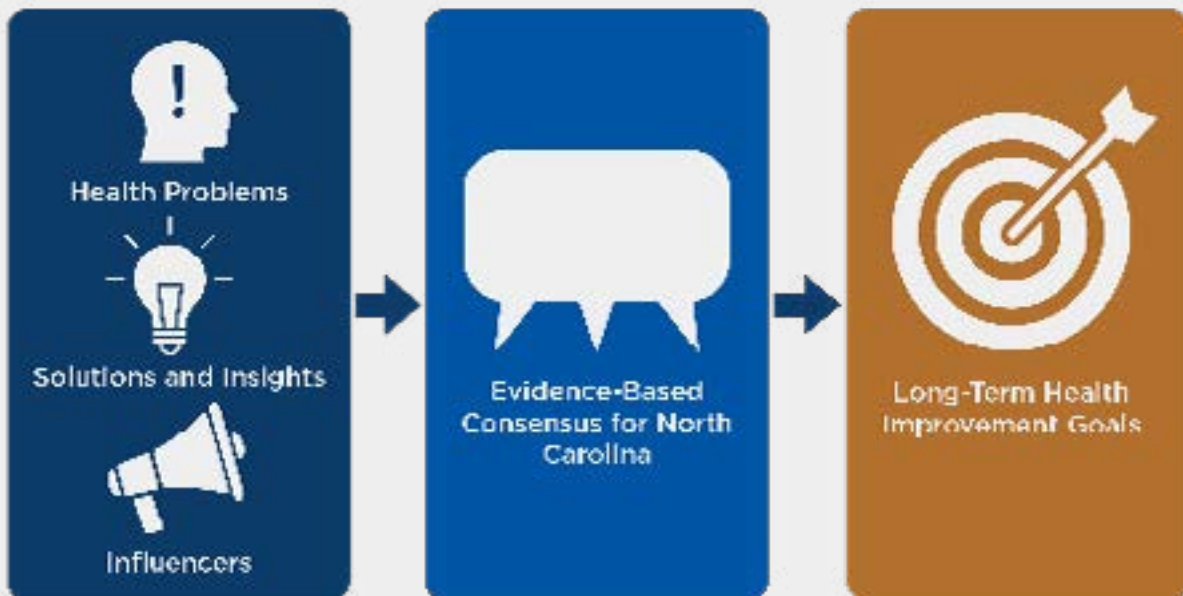
With appreciation,

Michelle Ries
President & CEO
North Carolina Institute of Medicine

SHAPING POLICY FOR A HEALTHIER NORTH CAROLINA

For more than 40 years, the NCIOM has shaped health policy in North Carolina by identifying solutions to the state's health challenges.

The NCIOM is an independent nonprofit organization chartered by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1983. We do our work by convening people from all walks of life to build consensus on issues relevant to health and well-being.



Our work includes:

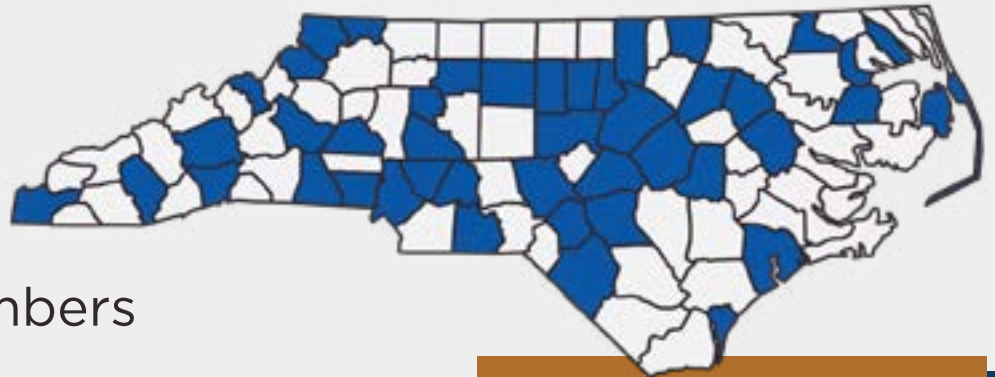
- Bringing together task forces and action teams to identify evidence-based solutions to important health issues.
- Convening and educating health policy stakeholders through our Annual Meeting and initiatives like our Legislative Health Policy Fellows program.
- Publishing the NCMJ, a journal of health policy and debate.
- Providing non-partisan research and analysis on health and health care.

2025 IMPACT, BY THE NUMBERS

14 Staff

200 Members

300+ Task Force and
Work Group
Members



*NCIOM members
represent 44 of North
Carolina's 100 counties.*

6 Active Task Forces and
Working Committees

4 Reports Released

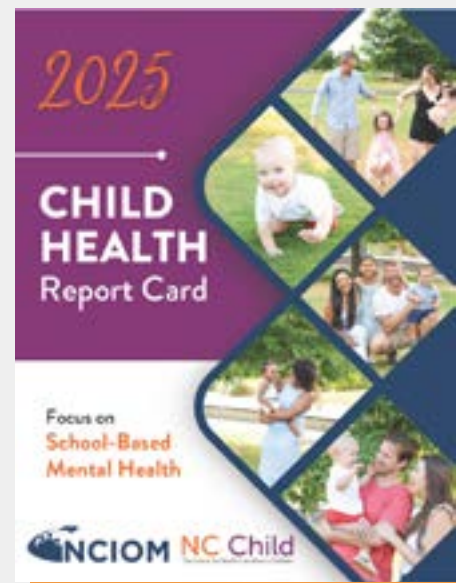
38 Recommendations

4 NCMJ Issues
Published

REPORTS AND RELEASES

In April, the NCIOM and NC Child published the 15th iteration of the “Child Health Report Card,” a biannual report originally launched in 1997, on the state of child health and well-being in North Carolina. The 2025 report card includes 14 key indicators of health, with a special section focused on school-based mental health covering 4 areas:

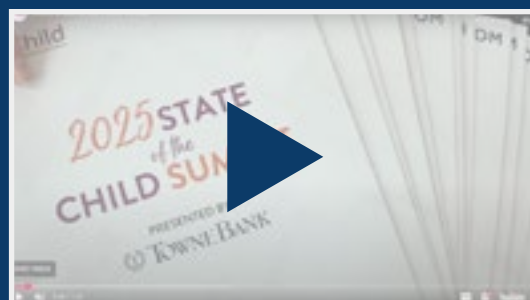
- Access to student mental health support staff.
- Mental health referral services.
- The connection between physical activity and mental health.
- Social media and mental health.



North Carolina's 2025 Report Card

- | | |
|--|---|
| F Housing and Economic Security | C Teen Births |
| F Child Abuse and Neglect | D Healthy Eating and Active Living |
| D Oral Health | D Tobacco, Alcohol, Substance Use |
| F School Health | F Mental Health |
| C Health Services Utilizations & Immunization | D Education |
| A Insurance Coverage | |
| B Breastfeeding | |
| B Preconception and Maternal Health and Support | |
| F Birth Outcomes | |

Each year, the NCIOM co-hosts the **State of the Child Summit** with NC Child. Click the play button below to watch a recap of this year's event.



REPORTS AND RELEASES



» Read More

The NCIOM worked with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to publish **“Building Resilience and Promoting Well-Being: An Updated Action Plan for North Carolina Children and Families”** in May. This report includes recommendations from the Essentials for Childhood Update Committee that convened from July to October 2024. This committee reviewed our 2015 Task Force on Essentials for Childhood and provides new context and priority strategies.

Using the CDC population health framework for child maltreatment prevention, both the 2015 task force and the 2025 updated plan focused on supports that families need to reduce stress, promote economic security, and foster resilience.

The graphic is a webinar announcement for "NCIOM Webinar: Essentials for Childhood Updated State Action Plan". It includes a list of topics to be discussed, a play button icon, and registration information. The NCIOM logo is at the bottom right. The background features a collage of hexagonal images of children and families.

NCIOM Webinar

Essentials for Childhood Updated State Action Plan

Join the NCIOM, the NCDHHS Division of Public Health, and the NC Chamber Foundation for a webinar to discuss:

- What's changed since the 2015 Essentials for Childhood plan.
- New findings and data.
- The structure of the 2025 update report.
- New and refined recommendations.

August 6, 2025 | 1 - 2 p.m.
Register: bit.ly/E4C-webinar

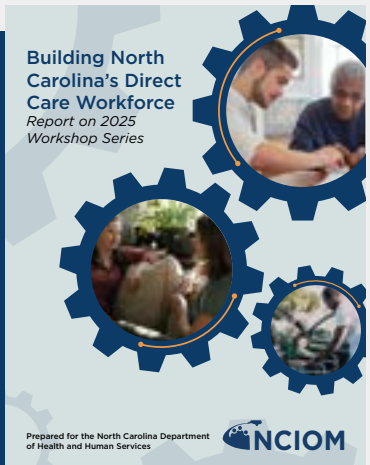
NCIOM

Click the play button above to watch the full webinar

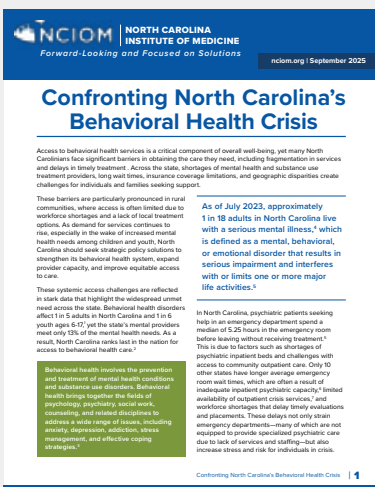
REPORTS AND RELEASES

“Building North Carolina’s Direct Care Workforce,” authored in partnership with the NC Center on the Workforce for Health, represents the culmination of a sprawling workshop series. The series, involving more than 110 individuals including subject matter experts, direct care workers, employers, the state government, universities, community colleges, professional associations, and others, sought answers to important questions like:

- How do we define direct care workers?
- What types of data are available and how do we make sure direct care workers and employers are engaged in research?
- What different strategies, policies, and approaches could help expand and stabilize the direct care workforce?



➤ Read More



Access to behavioral health services is a critical component of overall well-being, yet many North Carolinians face significant barriers in obtaining the care they need. In this issue brief for the Legislative Health Policy Fellows program, NCIOM staff highlight the most prevalent obstacles people face, from insurance and financial barriers to geographic disparities, stigma, and workforce shortages. This brief also provides an overview of ongoing initiatives in North Carolina to confront our state’s behavioral health crisis.

➤ Read More

REPORTS AND RELEASES

Looking Forward at Medicaid and Public Health

As federal policy changes begin to take effect, and with more funding cuts and coverage changes on the horizon, the NCIOM and our partners are exploring impacts on our state.

[Read more in our federal policy change and Medicaid series.](#)



Impacts of Changing Federal Policy on Insurance Rates and Access to Primary Care



Drug Overdose Trends in North Carolina and Potential Impacts of the OBBBA



Federal Changes to Food Assistance in North Carolina



What Medicaid Cuts Mean for NC Children and Families

INFORMING HEALTH POLICY

Primers: Medicaid, Medicare, and Private Insurance

In 2025, NCIOM staff updated primers on three major types of insurance, all of which have experienced significant change in recent years. These primers offer quick overviews of each insurance type, who is covered, and important information to understand how each type operates in North Carolina.

Primer Understanding Medicaid in North Carolina
November 2024

WHAT IS MEDICAID
Medicaid provides health care coverage to eligible people with low incomes in North Carolina, including adults, children, pregnant women, seniors, and people living with disabilities. Medicaid is jointly funded by North Carolina and the federal government and is administered by the state.

States are given flexibility to design their own programs. Each state creates its own health care delivery models, sets eligibility criteria, selects covered services, develops methods for paying providers, and oversees other aspects of Medicaid. When designing the details of Medicaid programs, states must comply with federal standards, such as minimum criteria for eligibility and mandatory covered services.

North Carolina has the 10th largest Medicaid population in the nation (April 2025)¹

MEDICAID IN NORTH CAROLINA
North Carolina Medicaid covers over 3 million people, which accounts for over 1 in 4 North Carolinians. This includes over 665,500 people who have enrolled through Medicaid expansion (as of July 2025).¹ In December 2023, North Carolina became the 40th state to expand Medicaid eligibility to people ages 19 to 64 up to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Between state fiscal years (SFY) 2015 and 2025, average monthly enrollment in Medicaid increased by approximately 70% (Figure 1). In the same period, the population of North Carolina grew by about 10%.

Data from the North Carolina Division of Health Service Regulation. COVID-19 categories not included. Medicaid Expansion became effective on December 1, 2023, at which point some beneficiaries switched from Family Planning (Other Adult) to Expansion.

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Primer Understanding Medicare in North Carolina
November 2024

WHAT IS MEDICARE
Medicare is a federal health insurance program that covers individuals 65 and older, as well as individuals with disabilities, end-stage renal disease, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.¹

MEDICARE'S ADJUSTMENT OF PARTS
Medicare consists of four parts: A, B, C, and D. Part A covers inpatient hospital care, skilled nursing care, hospice care, and some home health services. Part B covers outpatient medical services, including doctor visits, preventive care, durable medical equipment, and ambulance services. Part C, also known as Medicare Advantage, is an alternative way to receive Medicare benefits. Part D covers prescription drugs.

Medicare is a social insurance program that is funded by payroll taxes on wages and self-employment income. The program is administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

TABLE 1. SERVICES COVERED & SHARED BY PLAN TYPES FOR MEDICARE

Part	Services Covered	Shared by Funding?
Part A	• Inpatient hospital services • Skilled nursing care • Hospice care • Some home health services	• Funded through payroll taxes
Part B	• Outpatient medical services • Physician services • Durable medical equipment • Ambulance services • Prosthetics and orthotics	• Funded through payroll taxes • Shared by Part C
Part C	• All Part A and Part B services, plus additional services	• Funded through payroll taxes • Shared by Part B
Part D	• Prescription drug coverage	• Funded through payroll taxes • Shared by Part B

NCIOM

Primer Understanding Private Health Insurance in North Carolina
November 2024

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE: THE BASICS
Health insurance is a contract between an individual or group and a health insurance company. In return for a regular premium payment, the health insurance company agrees to pay for the cost of medical services covered by the policy when a policyholder becomes ill or injured. Health insurance can be purchased through an employer or through a health insurance marketplace.

Health insurance is a social insurance program that is funded by payroll taxes on wages and self-employment income. The program is administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF NORTH CAROLINIAN WITH PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE BY YEAR

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Legislative Staff Health Policy Fellows Program

As a companion to the NCIOM's Legislative Health Policy Fellows program, 22 staff from the North Carolina House, Senate, and Fiscal Research and Analysis Divisions convened for their own fellows program between January and March 2025. Over the course of 4 sessions, the 2025 cohort discussed community needs and what staff were hearing from their constituents, plus they participated in exercises on problem-solving constituent concerns.

Read more about the [2025 Legislative Staff Health Policy Program](#), and learn more about the upcoming [2026 Legislative Health Policy Fellows Program](#).



FROM THE NCMJ

2025 has been a year of significant change for the NCMJ. This year, the NCMJ became a fully digital publication. The NCMJ also transitioned from 6 to 4 issues annually. These changes allow the NCMJ to publish in a more environmentally and budget-friendly way. The switch to digital publication also allows the NCMJ the ability to publish on a rolling basis, making the content more timely and responsive.

In 2025, the NCMJ released 4 issues on navigating disaster recovery, pharmacists as catalysts for better health, Healthy North Carolina 2030, and Medicaid in North Carolina.



[Click to sign up for NCMJ issue announcements and monthly newsletters in your email inbox](#)

The Essential Roles of Community Health Workers, Access to Healthy Foods, and Improving Community Health in North Carolina: A Conversation with Honey Yang Estrada, President of the North Carolina Community Health Worker Association and NCIOM Member

“...if there’s one thing I can talk about all day, it is community health workers. As we think about the definition of community health workers, as defined by the American Public Health Association, we are frontline public health workers who are trusted members of our community, meaning we look like our communities.



Click the play button above to listen to the full interview

“We speak the same language, we eat the same food, we share the same faith. This trusting relationship allows us to serve as a link, a liaison, an intermediary, as we think about building those connections between health and social systems and community.

“This is why CHWs are so critical when we’re thinking about the health system. All of these things are really, really critical when we think about whole-person health.

2025 EVENTS IN REVIEW



At the 2025 NCIOM Annual Meeting, speakers examined the state of public health in North Carolina at the mid-point in the decade. Focusing on key health indicators in Healthy North Carolina 2030, panel discussions explored federal decisions and their impacts on our state, innovation to reduce overdose deaths, housing as health, food-related needs, suicide prevention, and sexual health.

The 2025 keynote speaker, Dr. Umair A. Shah, spoke about resilience, leadership through change, the urgency of our current moment, and the courage necessary to “connect the dots” in public health.

[Watch highlights from the 2025 Annual Meeting](#)



2025 EVENTS IN REVIEW

The NCMJ Symposium on Navigating Disaster Relief



This year's NCMJ Symposium, held on October 27th, explored the Journal's first issue of 2025, "Navigating Disaster Relief: A Collaborative Approach to Health, Data, and Community Recovery."

Health professionals with direct experience impacting disaster recovery spoke in between interactive sessions where attendees shared their own perspectives, questions, and ideas for future research.



An opening panel featuring Jill Forcina, Cassandra Davis, and Adam Linker, moderated by Peter Morris, explored lessons learned from natural disasters in North Carolina.



To wrap up the day, NCMJ Editor in Chief, Ronny Bell, sat down for a fireside chat with Emily Gangi, the Chief Deputy Director of the Governor's Recovery Office for Western North Carolina, to talk about ongoing recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene.

[Read more about key takeaways and group discussions at the event](#)

REVISITING PAST WORK

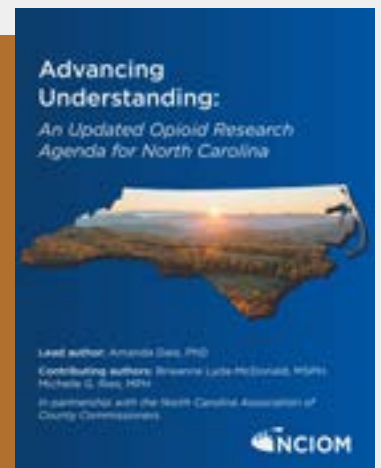
2025 Nursing Task Force Reconvening

In April, the NCIOM joined members of the Task Force on the Future of the Nursing Workforce for a one-time meeting for members to check in with each other, share activities and priorities, network, and discuss continued action on task force recommendations.

Participants gave presentations on North Carolina General Assembly actions on nursing and the workforce, research findings from a retention survey of nurses, and development of a playbook created for the North Carolina Area Health Education Centers.

In October, the NCIOM published a revised set of opioid research priorities in partnership with the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. A collaborative group including people with lived and living experience, researchers, practitioners, and public health and policy professionals outlined 11 research questions. These questions, intended to help understand and impact the rapidly evolving drug overdose epidemic, center around 2 priorities:

- Balance prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery efforts to save lives.
- Recognize and address stigma across sectors.



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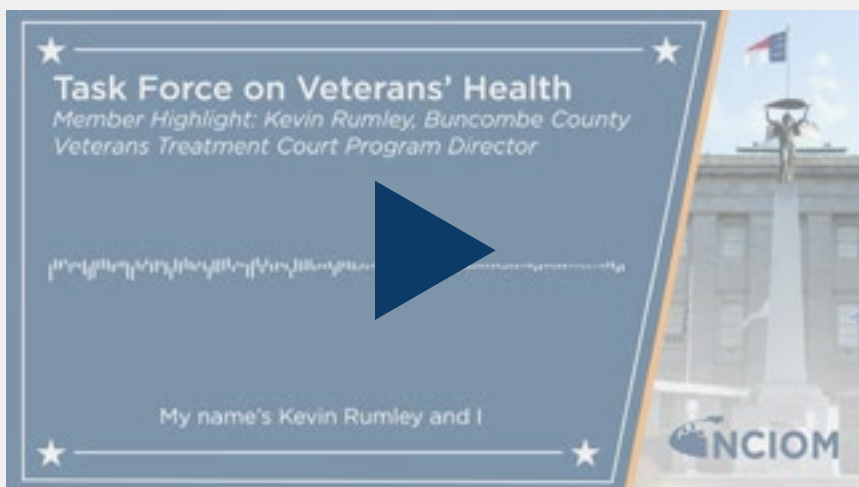
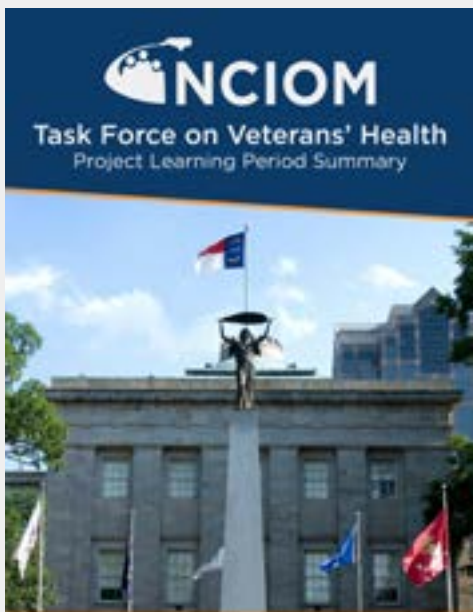
ON THE HORIZON

NCIOM Task Force on Veterans Health

Our Task Force on Veterans Health, funded by the NC DHHS Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services and AARP North Carolina, is working to identify opportunities to improve access to and the experience of care in community-based settings for Veterans, their families, and caregivers.

In the task force's first meetings, members and NCIOM staff are already learning about unique stigma, especially associated with mental health and substance use treatment. We are also hearing about existing programs and people who have spent their careers figuring out how to best serve Veterans, as well as opportunities to lean in and improve access and awareness.

The task force will wrap up in May 2026, with a report to be published by November.



Click the play button above to listen to and read an interview with task force member Kevin Rumley

[» Read More](#)

Legislative Health Policy Fellows

The 2026 Legislative Health Policy Fellows program will kick off in the spring, with the 5th cohort of Fellows coming together for a 4-day curriculum to dive deep into the data, information, and knowledge necessary to guide effective health policy.

Throughout the first few months of 2026, this new cohort of Fellows will meet with each other, NCIOM staff, and expert guests to advance their understanding of the health issues that face our state, examining the strengths and challenges of our systems and exploring innovative opportunities to help people improve their health and well-being.

This signature NCIOM program has brought together over 80 legislators from the North Carolina Senate and House of Representatives, covering 24 Senate districts, 38 House districts, and representing 52 counties across the state.



Click the play button above to see what 2 Fellowship alumni have to say about the program.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Project Support



THE DUKE ENDOWMENT

General Operating Support



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Investing in Impact:



2025 Annual Meeting Sponsors



Individual Contributors

Goldie Byrd • Lori Byrd • Danny Scalise • Bill & Lisa Way

» Become an NCIOM supporter today!

Your support helps us produce high-quality, consensus-driven health policy material to improve the health of North Carolinians.

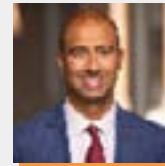
nciom.org/about-us/support-us

MEMBER HIGHLIGHT: NEW NCIOM MEMBERS IN 2025

Appointed by the Board of Directors, the members of the Institute are drawn from government, education, business and industry, the health and legal professions, the hospital and health insurance industries, private philanthropy, the voluntary sector, and the public at large. Membership is an honorific designation that highlights individuals' commitment to improving health in North Carolina. [NCIOM members](#) participate in activities of the Institute, including task forces, work groups, publications, conferences, and professional networking opportunities.



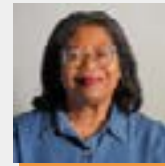
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Special thank you to Adam Sholar, NCIOM’s outgoing Board Chair. Adam’s term as Chair has ended, but he will remain on the Board in 2026.

We are pleased to welcome the NCIOM’s new 2026 Board Chair, Lori Byrd.

New Board members starting in 2026

L. Allen Dobson Jr., MD, FAAFP
Christopher Grubb, MD
Riteshkumar Patel, PharmD, CPP, BC-ADM, CDCES
Abhijit Roychowdhury, MD
Michael Tart, MBA

Outgoing 2025 Board Members

Thank you for lending your time and expertise to the NCIOM!

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