

Health Care Transformation

Emerging Initiative

Expanding and Spreading State-Based Transformation in and Beyond North Carolina to Improve Health in the South

North Carolina is a leading national model for the shift from “paying for health care services” to “paying for health.” In the past five years, North Carolina policymakers and health care leaders have implemented significant bipartisan health reforms, leading the nation in building innovative programs and supporting infrastructure, especially related to addressing children and families’ health and resource needs (e.g., housing, food) through coordinated, cross-sector models.

Leading State and Regional Health Care Transformation



The Need

North Carolina now needs continued commitment and funding to power transformational change in health care practices in partnership with patients, families, and community-based organizations—and assistance to ensure a smooth journey through practical evaluation of reforms, identification of best practices, and strategies to spread innovation. Continued investment and support will help North Carolina deliver on the promise of better health, health equity, and health care affordability. This roadmap for North Carolina can serve as a guide for progress in other states in the American South.

Our extensive and deepening work in North Carolina can be further strengthened and extended to other states in the American South. These future expansions are important given that residents in the American South face higher rates of chronic disease, substance use, and have lower life expectancy than the rest of the country. People of color are a larger share of the population in the South than in the other U.S. states, and rural communities in the South are growing. These diverse populations are implementing innovations in community partnerships and care delivery to overcome historical and systemic barriers to high-quality health care and reduce disparities in health outcomes.



Our work is helping to support North Carolina in building an innovative and coordinated health care and social service system.

Why This Work Matters

State policymakers and health care leaders across the South need help identifying strategies to make it easier for everyone to access the health care they need and for health care providers to provide the best care for patients. Through research and partnerships with community organizations, state officials, and health care leaders, Duke-Margolis is implementing programs to develop and evaluate what strategies work, aiming to translate evidence into actionable steps that states can implement easily. To accelerate effective reform, Duke-Margolis helps turn strategic vision into practical policy and care delivery models.

Duke-Margolis is uniquely positioned for this work given our deep experience and connections in health policy, especially payment reform and the development of new models and care redesign; significant clinical expertise and access to a “learning laboratory” through collaborations between Duke-Margolis and leading experts at Duke Health, including Duke-Margolis faculty leadership in primary care transformation; our respected role as a neutral convener in North Carolina, other states, and

nationally that can bring together diverse groups to examine complex health and social care issues; and our existing partnerships, infrastructure, and expertise in state-based health reform efforts.

For example, Duke-Margolis has helped build an innovative, cross-sector model from the ground up. NC Integrated Care for Kids (NC InCK) is a new state payment and health care delivery model focused on 100,000 children insured by NC Medicaid. NC InCK leadership are integrated in Duke-Margolis and bring expertise in child-serving systems, collaboration with school districts, Medicaid population health, and pediatric value-based payment models. The policy reforms, infrastructure supports, and implementation best practices stemming from this program can be applied to other state and federal health and social care programs for children and families.

Given Duke-Margolis's track record helping guide bipartisan health reforms in North Carolina, historically a “purple” political state, we are uniquely positioned to work with state-based partners to identify shared reform goals, build trust, and identify and align value-based payment reforms and infrastructure supports to realize the vision of “paying for health” rather than health care.

Finding Solutions

Duke-Margolis aims to launch the North Carolina Health Reform Collaborative to advance state health reform goals through:

- **Rapid response research and policy analysis** to help guide short-term decision-making to achieve measurable progress on health equity and affordability,
- **Evaluation and evidence generation** to develop, assess, and improve effective and equitable payment and delivery reforms that help providers focus on caring for patients, and
- **Stakeholder engagement and education** to assure all perspectives and insights contribute to progress.

Duke-Margolis is working to expand these capabilities and findings to support state health care transformation policy in other Southern states:

- **Applying these same activities to our growing state partnerships in the American South**, including in Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. We are convening safety net health care organizations, including federally qualified health centers, payers, and other stakeholders to identify opportunities to improve safety net care and accountable care reforms in Texas. In Arkansas and Louisiana, we are exploring opportunities to help build a path forward for value-based care reforms in collaboration with federal partners.

- **Expanding our efforts in North Carolina to more regional capabilities and collaborations, to improve health across the American South.** As more Southern states consider Medicaid expansion, Duke-Margolis and respective state-based partners can play a key role in helping identify and advance bipartisan goals for needed health reforms across the South. Duke University faculty and researcher expertise, along with student and trainee engagement, will further expand the breadth of research and engagement to improve health in the American South

Duke-Margolis has prioritized Expanding and Spreading State-Based Transformation in and Beyond North Carolina to Improve Health in the American South as an opportunity for pioneering funders to name and impact new student initiatives and scholarships focused on state-based health care transformation, expand Duke's community of health policy researchers and faculty, and establish a Duke Health Policy Action Fund that will provide start-up support for innovative health policy scholarship and solutions for the most pressing challenges in North Carolina and across the American South.