

The North Carolina Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Network

2023-2026 Final Impact Report





Executive Summary

The Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Network (IMHSN) was launched and led by El Futuro, with support from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, to strengthen North Carolina's capacity to support the mental health and wellbeing of immigrant communities. From 2023 to 2026, El Futuro convened leaders, advocates, service providers, educators, and individuals with lived experience to build shared understanding, strengthen collaboration, and advance culturally grounded approaches to immigrant mental health. Over three years, the IMHSN grew into a statewide infrastructure for connection, learning, and policy alignment.

Under El Futuro's leadership, the Network expanded to include more than 50 organizations across North Carolina. In partnership with the North Carolina Institute of Medicine (NCIOM) and the IMHSN Advisory Council, the Network produced the state's first Immigrant Mental Health in North Carolina Landscape Analysis, establishing a shared evidence base for understanding immigrant mental health needs and opportunities. Through quarterly meetings, healing-centered gatherings, and two statewide convenings, the IMHSN strengthened partnerships, expanded access to resources, and increased the visibility of immigrant-serving organizations.

El Futuro and NCIOM also led the Network's policy and systems-change efforts through statewide workgroups focused on linguistic access to culturally responsive mental health care and sustainable funding for community mental health programs. These groups developed recommendations that continue to inform discussions with government agencies, philanthropic partners, managed care organizations and more.

During a period marked by heightened fear, misinformation, immigration enforcement, and persistent barriers to care, the IMHSN provided a vital space for connection, learning, healing, and collective action. The Network helped strengthen resilience while advancing more coordinated support for immigrant communities across the state.

To support the Network's long-term sustainability, El Futuro led a collaborative process to transition leadership to NC Counts Coalition, ensuring continued stewardship of the Network's core pillars: immigrant mental health, statewide representation, coalition-building, and policy and systems change.

With a strong foundation in place, North Carolina's Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Network is well positioned to sustain its momentum as a leading statewide network advancing immigrant mental health and wellbeing through collaboration, broad representation, and meaningful policy and systems change across North Carolina.



Background and Need

North Carolina's immigrant communities are growing rapidly, yet the systems meant to support their mental health have not kept pace. Immigrant families face a consistent pattern, across cultures and regions of the state: disproportionate exposure to trauma, chronic stress, and structural barriers to mental health care, while also demonstrating extraordinary resilience and community-driven solutions. There remains a large gap between community needs and system capacity.

Urgent Mental Health Concerns

The IMHSN 2024 Landscape Analysis found that immigrant community members across North Carolina experience a multitude of stressors that compound over time. These include chronic fear of detention or deportation, family separation, discrimination, language barriers, and limited access to culturally responsive care. Many immigrants navigate traumatic migration journeys, economic uncertainty, and ongoing stress about legal status. Providers across the state reported rising levels of anxiety, depression, and trauma-related symptoms among immigrant clients, with few accessible pathways to care.

The Need for a Statewide Network

The challenges facing immigrant mental health are too significant and complex for any single organization to address alone. Leaders at the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, and El Futuro recognized the need for a coordinated statewide structure that can connect organizations and leaders across regions and sectors. The vision was to create a shared space for learning, alignment, and collective action; one that would foster collaboration rather than isolated efforts and help translate community knowledge and lived experience into meaningful policy and systems change.

The Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Network emerged to fill this gap. Shaped through community input from the outset, the Network was designed to strengthen relationships, elevate immigrant voices, and build the collective capacity needed to improve mental health outcomes and advance more equitable, culturally responsive systems across North Carolina.



Challenges

Key Challenges

Heightened Fear and Stress in Immigrant Communities

During the first three years of the IMHSN, members reported unprecedented levels of fear, stress, and uncertainty among immigrant communities fueled by increased immigration enforcement, misinformation, and shifting federal policies. These growing pressures required organizations to devote more resources to crisis response, making it increasingly challenging to sustain long-term systems-change and policy efforts.

Capacity Constraints and Competing Priorities

Many partners navigated limited staffing, constrained funding, and competing organizational priorities. These challenges were compounded by an increasingly unpredictable political climate, which made coalition-building and policy advocacy more difficult—particularly for smaller, immigrant-led organizations with fewer resources and capacity.

Space for Support and Resilience

These challenges reinforced the importance of the Network as a source of connection and mutual support. In response to the heightened stress experienced by both communities and service providers, the IMHSN intentionally incorporated supportive listening, relationship-building, and healing-centered practices into its meetings and convenings.

The Network remained flexible and responsive to members' evolving needs, creating space for reflection, peer support, and listening. This approach helped sustain member engagement, strengthen solidarity across organizations, and ensure that participation in the Network continued to provide meaningful value during a period of significant uncertainty and change.



IMHSN Activities and Results

Over three years, the Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Network built a statewide infrastructure to raise awareness of immigrant community priorities regarding mental health in North Carolina. The Network also strengthened advocacy, policy development, and information dissemination through coordinated partnerships and community action.

Strengthening Connection Through Convenings and Network Meetings

The IMHSN **created consistent, trusted spaces for leaders across the state to learn from one another, build relationships, and align strategies.**

Key Activities:

- Network meetings bringing together community organizations, clinicians, policymakers, researchers, and advocates.
- Presentations and shared learning opportunities on topics such as Medicaid eligibility and immigration status, AAPI youth mental health, and community-based mental health worker models.
- 2024 and 2026 Immigrant Mental Health Convenings
- Workshops and trainings focused on policy development, grant writing, coalition building, immigrant mental health, and community mental health interventions.
- Integration of restorative and healing-centered practices to model culturally responsive approaches to care.

Results:

- 50+ organizations participated in Network activities
- Quarterly meetings and trainings shared learning across sectors.
- Two statewide Convenings held with 175 participants from 52 organizations and included 30+ senior leaders from across the state.
- The Network representation of 58 of 100 counties in North Carolina, with several organizations representing multiple counties and work statewide.



IMHSN Activities and Results

IMHSN Coalition involvement FY26

Durham County Strong representation (World Relief Durham, Durham County Office of Immigrants and Refugees)

Wake County (Wake County Public School System, SMART Recovery, Arambha Nepali Library)

Guilford County (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, New Arrivals Institute)

Mecklenburg County (Mecklenburg County Health Department, Carolina Migrant Network, Camino)

Johnston County (Johnston County Government)

Chatham County (Chatham County Government,

Chatham County Health Department

Forsyth County (Forsyth Technical Community College)

Wilson County (Casa Azul de Wilson)

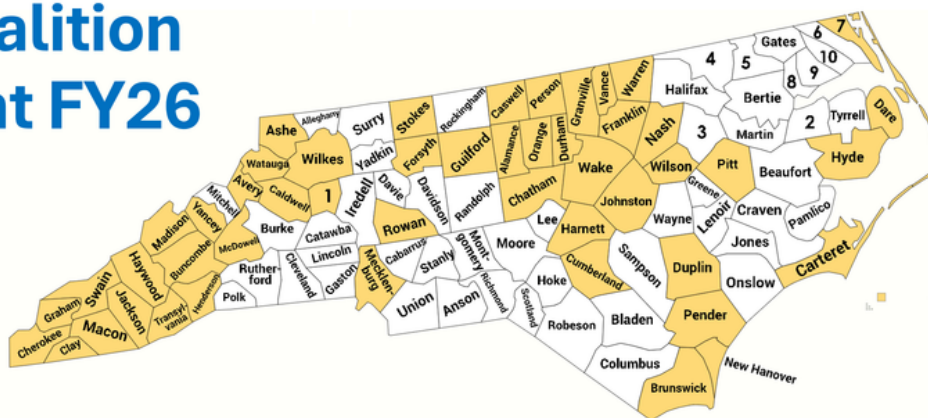
Orange County (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Watauga County (Appalachian State University)

Buncombe County and surrounding (UNIDxs Western North Carolina)

McDowell County and surrounding (Centro Unido Latinoamericano)

Outer Banks Region (Casa Abuelita)



Multicounty: Alliance Health, AMEXCAN, Center for New North Carolinians, CONE Health, Education Justice Alliance, Leadership Triangle, Mundeke Gospel Mission (MGM), NC FIELD, Refugee Community Partnership, Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF), UNETE, Union de Latinos del Este de Carolina del Norte, VAYA Health

State-wide and beyond orgs: Carolina Complete Health, Center for New North Carolinians, El Futuro, Faith Action International House, Hispanic Federation, Montagnard Association, NAMI NC, AHEC, NC Community Health Center Association, NC Counts (New Anchor organization), NC Department of Health and Human Services, NC DMHDDSUS, North Carolina Institute of Medicine, NC Latinx Collaborative, NC Association for Immigrants NCA4I, NC Psychiatric Association, North Carolina Hmong Women Association, Office of Governor Stein, RTI International, Strong Minds Strong Communities, United Chinese Americans (UCA Waves), US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)

Landscape Analysis and Tool Development

The Network's early work centered on **building a shared evidence base to guide statewide strategy.**

Key Activities:

- Conducting the Immigrant Mental Health in North Carolina Landscape Analysis in partnership with the North Carolina Institute of Medicine (NCIOM)
- Gathering insights from key stakeholders, including immigrant community members, providers, and organizational leaders

Results:

- Publication of a comprehensive statewide landscape analysis used by organizations, funders, and policymakers
- A shared vocabulary for discussing immigrant mental health challenges and opportunities
- Dissemination of a publicly accessible summary of findings in 14 languages

[Being part of the IMHSN Landscape Analysis Committee] has been so useful for me and my work. I am going to use these materials and learnings, in my work and in my community.

-Landscape Analysis Committee Member



IMHSN Activities and Results

Policy Workgroups and Recommendations

To move from insight to action, the IMHSN convened two policy workgroups in the Fall of 2025 to develop policy recommendations from the findings of the Landscape Analysis.

Key activities:

- Bringing together bilingual providers, community health workers (CHWs), state agency partners, and immigrant-serving organizations to review national models and identify policy gaps.

Results:

2 policy briefs on Linguistic Access and Funding for Community Health Programs including steps to:

- Grow North Carolina's bilingual mental health workforce
- Increase access to language accessible behavioral health care
- Deepening sustainable funding for community behavioral health programs
- Develop collaborative philanthropy pathways

Network Sustainability

To support the Network's long-term sustainability, members participated in a collaborative process to identify leadership aligned with its core pillars: immigrant mental health, statewide representation, inclusion, coalition-building, and policy and systems change. A committee of Network members selected the organization best positioned to lead the Network into its next chapter.

Key Activities:

- Development and Release of the Request for Applications (RFA)
- RFA submission review, scoring and interviewing eligible organizations
- Organization selection and sharing RFA process with Network Members
- Transition from El Futuro to NC Counts Coalition

Results:

- 5 organizations participated as the anchor organization selection committee
- 12 organizations applied to serve as the Network's anchor organization
- 1 organization was invited, and accepted, to serve as the IMHSN's anchor organization
- Successful transition of leadership of the IMHSN



IMHSN Impact

The IMHSN has generated meaningful change across North Carolina's immigrant-serving ecosystem by strengthening relationships, building collective capacity, and advancing shared learning, advocacy, and healing-centered approaches.

Shared Understanding and Coordinated Action

Through landscape analysis and policy workgroups, members developed a common understanding of the challenges and strengths impacting immigrant mental health, including fear, resilience, language access barriers, workforce shortages, and system fragmentation. This shared framework enabled organizations to align messaging, identify statewide priorities, and coordinate advocacy efforts.

Expanded Knowledge and Practical Tools

Network members gained access to new data, strategies, and mental health practices that directly informed their work. Network activities provided practical tools and actionable insights from clinicians, community health workers, policy experts, and state agency partners. In 2026, 96–98% of participants reported increased knowledge, stronger connections, and greater hopefulness following the Convening.

Stronger Connections and Collective Support

Bringing together more than 50 organizations across North Carolina, the Network fostered collaboration among county governments, refugee-serving nonprofits, immigrant-led organizations, and statewide advocates. Convenings, regular meetings, and healing-centered gatherings strengthened relationships, raised awareness of key immigrant mental health issues, established shared priorities, and helped members feel more connected and supported in their work, especially during challenging times.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to connect with community members, share experiences, and stand together in support of immigrant families and their mental well-being."

- 2026 IMHSN Convening Participant



IMHSN Impact

Policy Momentum

The Network's policy workgroups generated actionable recommendations that are already influencing key stakeholders and systems across North Carolina.

Early indicators of impact include:

- **Greater visibility and recognition of community-based mental health models**, including advocacy for evidence-based approaches such as Strong Minds, Strong Communities, as well as broader awareness through publications including *Immigrant Mental Health in America*.
- **Growing recognition of the need for specialized mental health interpreter training**, reflected in initiatives such as the Interpreter Certification Lunch and Learn for Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs) and Small Business Enterprises, which promoted awareness of and interest in mental health interpretation pathways.
- **Increased attention to sustainable financing for Community Health Workers** (CHWs), including discussions about Medicaid funding mechanisms and the inclusion of CHW reimbursement in the Hispanic/Latino Behavioral Health Center of Excellence 2025 Latino Behavioral Health Policy Academy- NC Policy Recommendations report.
- **Stronger interest in workforce development strategies**, including efforts to create educational and career pathways for Latino/Hispanic behavioral health professionals, such as mentoring programs within community colleges and the development of behavioral health apprenticeship opportunities.

"El Futuro's Immigrant Mental Health Landscape Analysis provides exceptional qualitative insight into the barriers to care for Latine and immigrant populations. Findings from this report ... add context to [our policy recommendations]."

- Hispanic/Latino Behavioral Health Center of Excellence Policy Academy Participant



IMHSN Impact

Community Leadership

Across all activities, governance, convenings, policy development, and community engagement, the Network ensured immigrant-led leadership, linguistic and cultural relevance, and practices that honor the wisdom and lived experience of North Carolina's diverse communities.

Examples include:

- **Ensuring Linguistic Access:** To ensure that information was accessible to the communities most impacted by mental health inequities, the Landscape Analysis summary document was translated into 14 languages commonly spoken across North Carolina, reflecting the linguistic diversity of Latino, Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and refugee communities.
- **Community-Centered Leadership:** Throughout its stewardship of the Network, El Futuro remained committed to ensuring that leadership structures aligned with the Network's mission and values. As the Network expanded, it became increasingly important that leadership reflect the diversity of immigrant communities across North Carolina and bring deep expertise in coalition-building and statewide engagement. In response, El Futuro facilitated a leadership transition process designed to position the Network for long-term sustainability and impact.
- **Transparency and Feedback:** Following the selection of the new anchor organization, the Selection Committee provided the Network with a transparent summary of the RFA process. Additionally, every applicant organization was offered individualized feedback, highlighting strengths, areas for growth, and opportunities to strengthen future proposals. This approach was intended to build trust and ensure that smaller, community-rooted groups, often excluded from traditional funding structures, were supported.



The Future of the Network

Transition to NC Counts Coalition



NC COUNTS COALITION

The IMHSN anchor organization selection process focused on identifying an organization with strengths in coalition building, statewide representation, engagement with multiple immigrant communities, and a priority in mental health. With a proven track record of uniting more than 130 grassroots and nonprofit partners across the state, NC Counts Coalition, the Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Network's selected anchor organization, is well positioned to expand the Network's reach, strengthen statewide representation, and deepen policy engagement.

Expanding Representation and Strengthening Infrastructure

Over the next two years, NC Counts Coalition's top three priorities for the Network are:

1. Strengthening and expanding the Network's infrastructure.
2. Building the capacity of Network members to engage in policy and advocacy.
3. Educating and engaging community members to promote shared policy priorities and coordinate advocacy efforts.

These steps will help ensure that the Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Network reflects and responds to the full diversity of North Carolina's immigrant communities.

Stronger Together

The Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Network is grounded in the strength, wisdom, and lived experiences of immigrant communities. Every day, immigrants enrich North Carolina through their resilience, cultural richness, innovation, and commitment to their families and communities. Together, through the ongoing work of the Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Network, we have the opportunity to build on these strengths to create a state where every person belongs, thrives, and contributes to an even brighter future. We move forward with hope, confident that when communities lead, lasting change will follow.

-Mary Jones, Director of Client Care and Engagement
El Futuro



Acknowledgements

This report reflects the collective efforts of community leaders, providers, advocates, researchers, state partners, and immigrant community members across North Carolina. We are grateful for the time, expertise, lived experience, and leadership that made this work possible, and for the partnership and commitment of all who contributed to advancing immigrant mental health.

Special Thanks To:

Advisory Council Members

Key Informant Interviewees

Policy Work Group Members

Landscape Analysis Work Group Members

Anchor Organization Selection Committee

North Carolina Institute of Medicine

Tarang

Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust

Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of NC



Appendix

Publications:

2024 Landscape Analysis Report

<https://elfuturo-nc.org/immigrant-solidarity-network/>

Landscape Analysis Summary

<https://elfuturo-nc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/LA-Final-Summary.pdf>

Policy Recommendations

Linguistic Access:

<https://elfuturo-nc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/ISN-Policy-Recommendations-Linguistic-Access-2.pdf>

Community Program Funding:

<https://elfuturo-nc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/ISN-Policy-Recommendations-Community-Program-Funding.pdf>

Anchor Organization RFA Summary

<https://elfuturo-nc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/IMHSN-Anchor-Organization-Selection-Process-Overview.pdf>

2026 Convening:

2026 Convening Findings Report

[Solidarity Through Resilience: Immigrant Mental Health Convening 2026](#)

2026 IMHSN Convening Materials and Information

[2026 Immigrant Mental Health Solidarity Convening | El Futuro](#)

IMHSN Convening Newsletter

[Building Momentum for Immigrant Mental Health Across North Carolina | El Futuro](#)



Building mental health access.
Advancing immigrant well-being.

Stronger together.

The IMHSN united communities, providers, and partners across North Carolina to advance culturally responsive mental health care and policies that uplift immigrant and refugee communities.

OUR IMPACT

- 50+ organizations participated
- 1 Landscape Analysis published
- 58/100 NC counties represented
- Findings disseminated into 14 languages
- 175 participants at 2 statewide convenings
- 2 Policy recommendations released



LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Understanding community challenges to inform systems change.

- Publication of landscape analysis
- A shared vocabulary for immigrant mental health
- Dissemination of a summary of findings in 14 languages



POLICY MOMENTUM

Advancing policies that center immigrant mental health and voice.

- Influenced state policy priorities
- Amplified community voices in policy spaces
- Advanced workforce and language access solutions



GOVERNANCE WITH PURPOSE

A community-guided network rooted in shared leadership.

- Community-led decision making
- Transparent and inclusive processes
- Cross-sector partnerships driving change



TRANSITION WITH CONTINUITY

A thoughtful transition to sustain mission and expand impact.

- Collective decision for the future of the IMHSN
- Continued commitment through NC Counts Coalition
- Sustained the Network's mission and momentum

Building on a Strong Foundation

The work of the IMHSN will continue to grow, with NC Counts Coalition carrying forward its vision of mental health access and well-being for all North Carolinians.



NC COUNTS COALITION

Thank You

Thank you to the community members, providers, leaders, and professionals whose time, expertise, and commitment made this work possible.

El Futuro



Stay Connected!

