



## **IMPH Taskforce: Foundations for Success**

### **Statewide Planning Process to Reduce Exclusionary Discipline of Early Learners**

The South Carolina Institute of Medicine and Public Health (IMPH), an independent, nonprofit organization working to collectively inform policy to improve health and health care in South Carolina, has launched a Taskforce focused on fostering success among South Carolina's earliest learners. This statewide planning process, led by Taskforce Chair Michael H. Leach, is focused on reducing exclusionary discipline of early learners across the state.

In 2026, IMPH will be facilitating an action planning process with the state's experts and individuals with lived experience to develop actionable, consensus-based strategies to reduce early age suspensions and expulsions.

This process will produce an action plan for South Carolina to address suspensions and expulsions of early learners across 3k-1<sup>st</sup> grade. The action plan will include: 1) detailed recommendations comprised of action steps across 1-year, 3-year and 5-year implementation timelines; 2) identified facilitators and support for successful implementation; and 3) key champions for implementation.

IMPH will convene state agency leadership, educators, school administrators, academic partners, health care providers, school-based mental health professionals, advocacy and nonprofit organizations, parents, and other individuals with lived experience to inform the development of the action plan. The IMPH team will facilitate the planning process through data review and analysis and convenings and facilitated discussions. Decisions regarding the action plan and its contents will be made by the Taskforce members.

### **About the Institute of Medicine and Public Health**

IMPH is an independent, nonprofit organization working to collectively inform policy to improve health and health care in South Carolina. IMPH provides nonpartisan, evidence-based information to guide policymakers in making impactful health policy decisions.

IMPH was founded in 2011 and is led by a Board of Directors with backgrounds in medicine, business, government and higher education. The Board provides guidance



on which health issues to pursue and research and ensures that our work is always done with the health and future of South Carolina in mind.

## Taskforce Overview

IMPH’s taskforces allow our organization to convene South Carolina experts and stakeholders from multiple disciplines for a series of time-limited meetings to develop recommendations for improving health. Past taskforces have produced recommendations on maternal and infant health, behavioral health, long-term care, and the health care workforce, among other topics.

## Process



## Taskforce Meetings

We encourage all Taskforce members to attend meetings in-person; the Taskforce process is highly collaborative as we work to reach consensus on recommended actions; however, a virtual option will always be available.

Taskforce members will receive meeting agendas with defined meeting objectives one week prior to the meeting and meeting minutes one week after each meeting. Agendas and presentation slides will also be available on the IMPH website following the meetings.

The action plan developed by the Taskforce will remain embargoed until the release of the report on the scheduled date. We ask that Taskforce members do not share the recommendations prior to the official release date, except with their organizational



leadership as needed to commit the organization to perform components of the action plan.

Meetings for the Foundations for Success Taskforce will be held in-person on:

- February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM (Columbia)
- March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM (Columbia)
- April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM (Columbia)
- May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM (Columbia)
- June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM (Columbia)

*(Address: First Choice Community Center - 217 Park Terrace Drive, Suite 100 Columbia, SC 29212)*

Workgroup meetings will be facilitated virtually outside of the main Taskforce convenings as needed throughout the Taskforce process to allow Taskforce members to engage in the recommendation development process outside of the main Taskforce convenings.

The press conference and report release will be in **October 2026**.

If Taskforce members are unable to attend, we will ask them to consider sending someone else from their agency/organization. If a Taskforce member is no longer able to remain an active Taskforce member, the Project Manager will ask them to identify another team member from their organization to attend remaining meetings.

## **Taskforce Guiding Principles**

The following Guiding Principles will drive our process:

**Consensus:** Even though the decision may not be the first choice, everyone can live with and support the decision. Consensus does not mean unanimous agreement.<sup>1</sup>

**Inclusivity:** Effective collaboration requires transparency and inclusiveness, equality among all participants, and active participation from all partners.

**Impact:** Effective collaboration requires acknowledging capacity and scaling interventions to realistic goals.

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<sup>1</sup> Consensus may be reached with the understanding that some taskforce members maintained an alternative perspective. These perspectives will be acknowledged, considered, documented, and respected as a central component of the deliberative process.



**Strategic Alignment:** Effective collaboration requires all participants to disclose when our own interests are in conflict with those of the taskforce.

**Respect:** Effective collaboration requires mutual trust and respect for organizational boundaries, continuity in communication and interaction, and a distinction between policy analysis and political commentary.

## **Taskforce Roles:**

### **IMPH Team**

The IMPH Research & Policy Manager provides project management and oversight of the Taskforce process, including preparing materials for meetings, facilitating meetings and addressing any needs that may arise. The Research & Policy Manager oversees the action plan development process and the research, writing and dissemination of the report.

IMPH team members for the Foundations for Success Taskforce will include:

Taryn Farrell, MPH – **Primary Contact**  
Research & Policy Manager  
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609-694-9207

Maya Pack, MS, MPA  
Executive Director  
Maya@IMPH.org  
864-238-0554

Amelia Wilks Robinson, MPA  
Director of Legislative Engagement  
Amelia@IMPH.org

### **Taskforce Chair**

The Taskforce Chair is someone who has relevant expertise and can leverage their influence and network to assist staff and Taskforce members in informing and disseminating the final action report. The Chair is the face of the Taskforce and will be invited to speak at Taskforce meetings and the press conference at the end of the Taskforce process.

The Chair supports the Taskforce process through attending and actively participating in the recurring Taskforce meetings when possible. When attending Taskforce



meetings, the Chair will have the opportunity to share opening remarks at the start of the meeting.

Taskforce Chairs may attend the workgroup meetings pending their availability. Feedback captured during the workgroup meetings will be used to support action plan refinement and meeting planning.

The time commitment for serving as the Taskforce Chair can be up to 30 hours, depending on facilitation planning and meeting attendance.

### Taskforce Members

Taskforce members represent the relevant disciplines, agencies, organizations, and sectors related to the selected public health topic. They represent various parts of the state and have a variety of perspectives. Their professional backgrounds are diverse.

Taskforce members are responsible for:

- Attending Taskforce meetings
- Participating in meeting discussions
- Sharing relevant knowledge to help inform action plan development
- Committing to action plan implementation strategies on behalf of their organization
- Reviewing and helping to finalize the action plan
- Sharing the recommendations with their agency or organization
- Attending the press event, if possible
- Disseminating the final report and recommendation with their network

Taskforce members should be willing to:

- Share the role their organization will play in action plan implementation
- Help identify champions to implement the final action plan

Taskforce members can expect a time commitment of 20-25 hours throughout the Taskforce process.