



THE BRAINS BEHIND SAVING YOURS.<sup>TM</sup>

## Alzheimer's Association Oregon Chapter 2015 Public Policy Priorities

Over 59,000 Oregonians age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's disease, a number expected to rise to 84,000 by 2025. The burden of Alzheimer's disease is far-reaching, touching every corner of our state. More than 173,000 Oregon residents provide daily care for loved ones with this fatal brain disease. The financial toll of Alzheimer's nationwide on Medicare, Medicaid, and businesses is estimated at over \$200 billion annually. In Oregon, where 70% of people with Alzheimer's are cared for at home, the value of unpaid family caregivers is \$2.4 billion. This year, we learned that the demands of caregiving increase the health-care costs on Oregon caregivers by over \$100 million each year.<sup>1</sup>

Alzheimer's can't wait — we must take action now. Standing by while our people suffer is not an option. The following policy priorities reflect our continued commitment to advocate on behalf of Oregonians who are living with this devastating disease.

### Implement the State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease in Oregon

In 2014, we continued to work with stakeholders to implement the recommendations in the State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease in Oregon (SPADO).<sup>2</sup>

SPADO lays out five main goals, with multiple recommendations for strategies to accomplish each goal. The goals are:

- 1) Enhance public awareness and engagement
- 2) Optimize care quality and efficiency
- 3) Protect individuals with dementia
- 4) Improve access to quality care
- 5) Comprehend, prevent, and effectively treat dementia and its impact

In 2015, we will continue to provide leadership to the SPADO Implementation Team and serve on multiple work groups focused on implementing specific recommendations. We will also conduct a review of the accomplishments, surveying portions of the plan that have already been implemented and determining the next steps. We will also continue to look at opportunities to engage the Legislature to provide resources for SPADO implementation and provide updates to elected officials and policymakers regarding implementation and direction.

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<sup>1</sup> All figures are from the *2014 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures* report available at [alz.org/facts](http://alz.org/facts).

<sup>2</sup> In 2012, through collaboration among state and local governments, private-sector care providers, and nonprofit agencies that help people impacted by Alzheimer's, Oregon developed comprehensive state strategies, formalized in SPADO, to address the needs of persons with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. The plan identifies responsible parties, implementation time frames, and measurable outcomes to determine whether the plan is successful in achieving its goals.

## **Public Health and Alzheimer's**

To achieve meaningful progress against Alzheimer's disease, it must be considered a public health crisis. In 2012 and 2013, Oregon included the cognitive impairment and caregiving modules in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey, which provides Oregon-specific data to public health officials to help them create strategies to address the impact of dementia. This legislative session, we will continue to spearhead efforts to ensure policymakers guarantee funding for BRFSS data collection and analysis. We will also continue to engage public health officials to use the Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map to address dementia through the public health model.

## **Long-Term Care 3.0**

Oregon's Department of Human Services (DHS) is embarking on an effort to overhaul Oregon's long-term care system, and in 2014, the Legislature enacted Senate Bill 21 to establish a process to do so. This presents an opportunity to improve the quality of services, increase access, and improve quality of life for Oregonians with Alzheimer's and their families. We will be working closely with DHS, the Oregon Legislature, and our coalition partners to ensure this effort results in the best possible outcomes.

## **Health Care Transformation**

As Gov. Kitzhaber proceeds with an ambitious effort to transform the way health care is organized and delivered in Oregon through the Oregon Health Plan, we will:

- Monitor the impact changes might have on families impacted by Alzheimer's and related dementia
- Offer suggestions on ways to improve the quality, cost, and access to services, supports, and medical care through this process
- Collaborate with coalition partners in protecting evidence-based practices found to help persons with dementia and their caregivers

## **Other Issues Impacting Persons with Dementia and Caregivers**

In 2015, we will continue to monitor legislative and policy efforts that impact persons with dementia and their caregivers and respond accordingly. We are currently monitoring and reviewing the following initiatives:

Homecare Workers: Effective Jan. 1, 2015, direct-care workers will be entitled to receive federal minimum wage and overtime pay protections. Direct-care workers include those who provide home-care services, such as certified nursing assistants, home health aides, personal care aides, caregivers, and companions.<sup>3</sup> In Oregon, 18,000 individuals have live-in caregivers, and a significant portion of those individuals likely have dementia. The state estimates that implementing the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) in Oregon will add \$200 million to the biennial budget. We will monitor state efforts to implement the new FLSA rule and work with

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Labor (2014, October) Fact Sheet #79B: Live-in Domestic Service Workers Under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Retrieved from <http://www.dol.gov/whdregs/compliance/whdfs79b.htm>

community stakeholders and policymakers to ensure the changes do not negatively impact individuals with dementia and their caretakers.

**Paid Sick Leave:** Community organizations have been spearheading a campaign to ensure Oregon law protects the rights of workers by requiring businesses to provide employees with paid sick leave. Lawmakers will likely introduce legislation in 2015 to this effect. Forty percent of private-sector workers and 80 percent of low-income workers have no paid sick days from their jobs — including thousands of grocery store, restaurant and medical center employees. Seventy-four percent of food services workers in Oregon earn no paid sick leave.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, these business practices have a negative and disproportionate impact on women and minorities. We will monitor this legislative effort and lend support as necessary, given the impact on caregivers who may work for companies that do not provide paid leave, inevitably impacting their health and livelihood, as well as the care they provide to persons with dementia.

**Guardianship:** In 2014, lawmakers passed legislation allowing counties to create a Public Guardian and Conservator program. These programs would provide needs-based guardian and conservator services for Oregonians who do not have a friend or relative who is willing or able to assume the duties of guardianship or conservatorship. In 2015, community partners are advocating for further amendments to Oregon's guardianship statutes, which would reflect the right of individuals to a hearing and counsel and change how fees are awarded by guardianship court.

**CARE Act:** Recently, Oklahoma and New Jersey passed the CARE Act. The CARE Act recognizes the critical role family caregivers play in keeping their loved ones out of costly institutions. The legislation would ensure that the family caregiver is recorded when the loved one is admitted to a hospital, notified of an impending discharge to another facility or home, and provided with instruction of medical tasks to perform at home. This legislation would reduce readmission and provide caregivers with the necessary tools they need to provide care and support to persons with dementia. We will monitor this effort if it gains traction in Oregon and lend support to community stakeholders and policymakers.

**Senior Housing with Services:** Oregon policy makers and community stakeholders have been looking at innovative models to meet the housing and service needs of seniors. DHS and other stakeholders plan to form a working group to discuss and review models. We will monitor the progress and lend support to ensure that persons with dementia receive the support and services they need as we explore different housing models.

We will continue to monitor legislative efforts that impact persons with dementia and their caregivers and respond accordingly.

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<sup>4</sup> Families Forward (2014, October) Paid Sick Days. Retrieved from <http://www.familyforwardoregon.org/what-we-do/paid-sick-days/>

**For more information on these issues, contact:**

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For support, local resources, and information about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias,  
call our 24-hour Helpline: 800-272-3900.  
We're here to help.

**Alzheimer's Association Mission Statement**

To eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.