

# **Alzheimer's Association, Iowa Chapter Network**

## **2014 Public Policy Priorities**

The Alzheimer's Association, Iowa Chapter Network (ICN) consists of volunteer and staff representation from the Big Sioux, East Central Iowa, Greater Iowa and Midlands chapters. The ICN speaks with one voice on policy issues, provides leadership in developing and supporting state public policy initiatives consistent with the Association's mission and increases the impact of those initiatives through advocates. The ICN recommends the following public policy priorities in 2014.

### **Ensure that Iowa is a dementia-capable state.**

The Alzheimer's Association believes that programs and services must be tailored to the unique needs of people with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias, and their caregivers.

Characteristics of a dementia capable state include:

- Information and assistance services have a method to identify people with possible dementia. Individuals with possible dementia receive a recommendation for follow-up with a physician.
- Options counseling staff communicate effectively with persons with dementia and their family caregivers and know what services this population is likely to need.
- Eligibility criteria and resource allocation take into account the impact of dementia on the need for services.
- Publicly and privately financed services are capable of meeting the unique needs of persons with dementia and their caregivers.
- Self-directed services ensure that persons with dementia and their caregivers are supported in their decision-making and involve others who can represent the person's best interest when necessary.
- Workers who interact with persons with dementia and their caregivers have appropriate training in identifying a possible dementia in persons that they serve, the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, the likely illness trajectory, and services needed.

### **Ensure that training in dementia care is provided to all individuals employed in the delivery of care in residential, home and adult day settings.**

Iowa has traditionally required a set number of hours of annual dementia training for professional caregivers. These requirements include a list of topics that must be covered in the training, but do not address competencies needed to provide quality dementia care. The Alzheimer's Association is a leader in dementia care and has a variety of training options to develop the needed competencies in care. *The ICN supports a review of current training*

*standards and advocates for new standards based on individuals achieving competency in caring for individuals with dementia rather than completing a set number of hours of training.*

**Preserve the elements of Medicaid essential to those with Alzheimer's disease and their families.**

Most people with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias will eventually need long-term care services and many will require nursing home care. Medicaid pays for medical care for people with very low income and long term care for people who have used up most of their own assets. Federal and state health care reform initiatives impact the availability of Medicaid funds and eligibility requirements to access this benefit. *The ICN will monitor changes to Medicaid in Iowa and respond as needed to preserve or improve funding for those with Alzheimer's disease and their families.*