

# Alzheimer's Association Nevada State Policy Platform

## Alzheimer's is the Public health crisis of this century: Nevada must prepare to address this disease.

The Nevada Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease (TFAD) is working to implement the State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease, adopted by the Legislature in 2013. This plan includes several recommendations which, if thoughtfully implemented, will improve Nevada's ability to provide quality, cost-effective dementia care to people with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

In coordination with TFAD's efforts, we recommend that the Nevada legislature enact legislation to create a statewide, systemic approach to:

- **Institute a statewide public awareness campaign to provide information about the earliest signs of dementia and rebuke the stigma of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.**
  - a. Establish and fund a statewide, web-based Alzheimer's information site:
    - i. For those with Alzheimer's and related disorders and their caregivers, to provide information and referral, as well as links to updated, nonbiased information about the disease
    - ii. For professionals, to provide assessment tools, guidelines for disease management, and care coordination or other disease management services
- **Dementia Training: Require dementia-specific training for all levels of health care professionals, including:**
  - All staff in residential care and skilled nursing facilities
  - All Levels of medical personnel in hospitals including admissions and discharge planners
  - Primary care physicians and nurses
  - First responders, law enforcement and fire department personnel
- **Support for Caregivers: Expand supportive services for family caregivers, with particular focus on:**
  - a. Dementia training and education,

- b. Transitions from Hospital to home or other setting
  - c. structured support groups, and
  - d. respite care, with a special focus on expanded access in rural areas.
- **Out of State Placement: Reduce the number of people with dementia identified as “Behaviorally Complex Individuals” (BCI) who are placed in facilities outside of Nevada.**

An estimated 37,000 Nevadans aged 65 and older have Alzheimer’s, and a recent survey found that an additional 159,570 Nevadans aged 45 and over, or **one in seven**, report that they are experiencing confusion or memory loss that is happening more often or is getting worse. Over one-third of those reporting memory problems say it has interfered with household activities, work or social activities. Yet over 80 percent of them have not talked to their doctor about their memory problems yet.<sup>1</sup>

This high rate of memory problems should concern policymakers: new research suggests that healthy elderly people who begin reporting memory lapses are significantly more likely to be diagnosed with [dementia](#) later.<sup>2</sup> And 77% of Nevadans with memory problems have at least one other chronic condition such as arthritis, asthma, COPD, cancer, cardiovascular disease or diabetes. Data show that patients with chronic conditions and Alzheimer’s are much more expensive than their counterparts without Alzheimer’s: three times more expensive for Medicare and 19 times more for Medicaid.<sup>3</sup>

All of these policy efforts need to be designed and funded to work for rural communities as well as urban areas, as 75% of Nevada is rural and more than 500,000 Nevadans live in rural communities.

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1 NV BRFSS 2012

2 Kryscio RJ (2014), “Self-reported memory complaints: Implications from a longitudinal cohort with autopsies” Neurology October 7, 2014 vol. 83 no. 15 1359-1365

3 “2014 Alzheimer’s Disease Facts and Figures,” Alzheimer’s Association, at [http://www.alz.org/alzheimers\\_disease\\_facts\\_and\\_figures.asp#cost](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_facts_and_figures.asp#cost)