

STATE PRIORITIES 2013

Alzheimer's disease is a pivotal public health issue, and state governments stand on the front line. States must take bold action to confront this epidemic now.

1. Develop a comprehensive state government Alzheimer's disease plan

State Alzheimer's Disease Plans create the infrastructure and accountability necessary to confront the sweeping economic and social impact of this disease. By bringing together essential stakeholders – such as state agency officials, legislators, care providers, family caregivers, and people with Alzheimer's – the state planning process is able to identify critical issues, explore solutions, and construct a roadmap to guide a state's development into a dementia-capable state. Every state must develop a State Alzheimer's Disease Plan, and in those states that already have a published plan, efforts must be undertaken to ensure that the plan's recommendations are fully implemented.

2. Adopt uniform adult guardianship legislation

States must ensure that their policies on advance directives and care planning reduce the complexity of end-of-life decision-making. One important step is to enact the budget-neutral Uniform Adult Guardianship and Protective Proceedings Jurisdiction Act (UAGPPJA), as approved by the Uniform Law Commission. UAGPPJA establishes a framework for courts in different states to communicate about adult guardianship cases and thus makes the resolution of multi-state jurisdictional issues easier for family members.

3. Improve dementia training

To best serve those with Alzheimer's, states should have a quality dementia care policy in place that ensures those with Alzheimer's receive care from knowledgeable professionals. All individuals employed in the delivery of care in residential, home, and adult day settings should be properly trained in dementia care. Historically, mandatory training laws have required a minimum number of hours of training, which has not always guaranteed competence. States must shift from an hours-of-training model to a model based on individuals achieving and demonstrating competency.

4. Increase state based surveillance through the BRFSS

Obtaining a more definitive picture of Alzheimer's is essential to any successful strategy to combat the disease. Recent work by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now enables states to collect data on the impact of cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease using the existing state Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). Two modules are available: a Cognitive Impairment Module and a Caregiver Module. States should include these two modules in their state BRFSS to provide a better understanding of – and to identify opportunities for reducing – the impact of this devastating disease.