

2017 STATE POLICY PRIORITIES

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 Implement and Update State Alzheimer's Disease Plans

Since 2007, almost every state has developed a State Alzheimer's Disease Plan to address the growing economic and social impact of the disease. These comprehensive plans identify critical issues, recommend solutions, and create a roadmap to guide a state's development into a dementia-capable state. State legislatures and state agencies must fully implement the recommendations included in their state's Alzheimer's disease plan and revisit and re-publish their plans every three to five years to ensure they are kept up to date and account for current needs and recent developments.

2 Improve Dementia Training

People with Alzheimer's disease deserve quality care throughout the course of the disease – and they deserve to receive it from knowledgeable professionals across the care continuum. All individuals employed to provide care in residential, home, and adult day settings must be properly trained in dementia care. Yet training standards vary widely by state. For example, less than half of

all states require dementia training for staff of nursing homes, and less than one-fifth of states require it for adult day staff. As the number of people living with Alzheimer's and other dementias increases, states must have adequate dementia-training laws to equip workers across the care continuum with the ability to provide person and family-centered care, communicate effectively with persons with dementia, and address specific and unique aspects of care and safety for people with dementia.

3 Adopt Uniform Adult Guardianship Legislation

States must ensure 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.

4 Increase State Based Surveillance and Data Collection

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.

5 Preserve Medicaid

Among individuals with Alzheimer's, 75 percent will be admitted to a nursing home by the age of 80 (compared to only 4 percent of the overall population). As a result, Medicaid is critical for many people with Alzheimer's. While Medicaid spending constitutes one of the largest items in most state budgets — and most states continue to face severe fiscal constraints — state policymakers must ensure that critical benefits are preserved.