

Alzheimer's And
Dementia Advisory
Council

***FIRST DRAFT AUGUST
2024***

2024 Annual Report



Alzheimer's and Dementia State Plan: Implementation Report

October, 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of the Alzheimer's and Dementia State Plan

In October 2022, the Advisory Council updated the Alzheimer's and Dementia State Plan, prioritizing four key areas based on the Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI) Roadmap. The HBI Roadmap, published by the Alzheimer's Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), was used to influence the state plan to position Arkansas competitively for federal funding to enhance the state's infrastructure to respond to the Alzheimer's Public Health Crisis and support the implementation of the state plan.

The Council identified the following priority areas:

- **Public Awareness and Education**
- **Access and Quality of Care**
- **Family Caregiver Support**
- **Dementia Training and Workforce Development**

The state plan outlines key recommendations to ensure that the direct care workforce is adequately prepared to meet the needs of the dementia population, increase awareness of the importance of early detection and diagnosis, monitor and expand access to care, and support family caregivers.

Alzheimer's and Dementia Annual Report

This report provides an overview of the current status of the Alzheimer's and Dementia State Plan's implementation, highlighting the progress made and identifying the challenges that have prohibited further implementation, and recommendations for future implementation of key recommendations.

Alzheimer's and Dementia State Plan: Implementation Report

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INTRODUCTION

Background and establishment of the Alzheimer's and Dementia Advisory Council

The 93rd General Assembly established the Alzheimer's and Dementia Advisory Council through ACT 391 in 2021. The Council convened its first organizational meeting on September 21, 2021. During these sessions, the Council has engaged with state agencies, providers, caregivers, and field experts to evaluate the state plan, understand the needs of Arkansas families affected by dementia, identify gaps in available support services, and meet the statutory requirements of ACT 391. The statutory requirements outlined in ACT 391 are as follows:

Annual Report Submission:

- **Deadlines:** By October 1, 2022, and by October 1 of each subsequent year.
- **Recipients:** The Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- **Content:** The report must include the status of the implementation of the State Alzheimer's Plan recommendations, any barriers to implementation, and any proposed legislation.

Updated Alzheimer's State Plan:

- **Frequency:** Every four (4) years.
- **Content:** The updated plan should address the items in §20-8-1102 and any other issues the council deems necessary and relevant to addressing Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

State Agency Reporting Requirements:

- **Deadline:** By October 1 of each even-numbered year.
- **Recipients:** The Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- **Content:** The report must include:
 - i. The steps the state agency has taken to implement the recommendations in the plan.

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State Agency Reporting Requirements (continued):

- i. If applicable, the state agency's reasons for failing to implement all or any part of the plan.

Council's Analysis of State Agencies' Implementation:

- i. The Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Advisory Council must include an analysis of the status of state agencies' implementation of the plan in their annual report required under §20-8-1103.

Alzheimer's And Dementia Advisory Council



Senator
Clint Penzo
Co-Chair



Representative
Julie Mayberry
Co-Chair

State Agency Representatives

Toney Bailey, MHA - Branch Manager, Arkansas Department of Health

Kenya Eddings - Arkansas Minority Health Commission

Director Jay Hill - Division of Aging, Adult, and Behavioral Health Services, Arkansas Department of Human Services

Charlotte Bishop - Program Administrator Long Term Care Ombudsmen, Arkansas Department of Human Services

Membership

Dr. Gohar Azhar - UAMS

Stephanie Cooke - Alzheimer's Arkansas

Rachel Bunch - AR. Health Care Association

David Cook - Alzheimer's Association

Dr. Sue Griffin - UAMS

Jennifer Hallum - Area Agencies on Aging

Dr. Kerry Jordan

Tatum Owenby - Arkansas Home-Based Services Association

Toots Lamberth

Cathey McAllister-Griffin - Family Caregiver

No appointee - AARP

Dr. Amyleigh Overton-McCoy - D.W. Reynolds Centers on Aging

Jodiane Tritt - AR. Hospital Association

Dr. Jeanne Wei - UAMS

Arkansas Residential Assisted Living Association



2024 ARKANSAS ALZHEIMER'S STATISTICS



PREVALENCE

Number of People Aged 65 and Older with Alzheimer's (2020)

60,400

% of Adults Over 65 with Alzheimer's

11.3%



CAREGIVING

of Caregivers

155,000

Caregivers with Chronic Health Conditions

72.8%

Total Hours of Unpaid Care

270,000,000

Caregivers with Depression

38.0%

Total Value of Unpaid Care

\$4,448,000,000

Caregivers in Poor Physical Health

25.0%



WORKFORCE

of Geriatricians in 2021

55

of Home Health and Personal Care Aides in 2020

21,900

Increase Needed to Meet 2050 Demand

143.6%

Increase Needed to Meet 2030 Demand

29.5%



HEALTH CARE

of People in Hospice (2017) with a Primary Diagnosis of Dementia

3,133

Dementia Patient Hospital Readmission Rate (2018)

21.5%

Hospice Residents with a Primary Diagnosis of Dementia

18%

Medicaid Costs of Caring for People with Alzheimer's (2020)

\$396M

of Emergency Department Visits per 1,000 People with Dementia (2018)

1,530

Projected Change in Medicaid Costs from 2020 to 2025

14.6%

Per Capita Medicare Spending on People with Dementia in 2023 Dollars

\$27,092

Nearly

7 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's, and more than 11 million provide their unpaid care. The cost of caring for those with Alzheimer's and other dementias is estimated to total \$360 billion in 2024, increasing to nearly \$1 trillion (in today's dollars) by mid-century. For more information, view the **2024 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures** report at alz.org/facts.

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MORTALITY 262.6% INCREASE IN ALZHEIMER'S DEATHS 2000-2021

of Deaths from Alzheimer's Disease (2021)

1,559

Alzheimer's Disease as Cause of Death Rank

6th

State Mortality Rate Rank

4th





Public Awareness and Education

LEGISLATIVE ADVANCEMENTS

Authorization of the Alzheimer's and Dementia Advisory Council (ACT 391; 2021)

Establishment of the Position of Dementia Coordinator

- In **2023, ACT 682** established the position of Dementia Coordinator. This role will play a vital role in the implementation of the State Alzheimer's Plan and coordinating efforts across different sectors to improve dementia care and support. *(As of the preparation of this report, this position remains vacant at the Department of Human Services.)*

DATA COLLECTION

The Arkansas Health Department will include the Cognitive Decline and Caregiver Modules in the annual Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), alternating them every year to complete each module at least once every six years. This approach ensures comprehensive data collection on dementia's impact and caregiver needs across the state.

STRENGTHENING THE PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE TO ALZHEIMER'S

Individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's and other dementia need comprehensive access to educational information, support services, and resources throughout the disease's progression. However, in Arkansas, there is no centralized resource where these families can find the necessary information. Although various state agencies, nonprofits, and healthcare providers offer educational tools and resources, these are often siloed within their respective institutions, leaving families uncertain about where to turn for help.

Alzheimer's and dementia significantly impact the public health of Arkansans, with the prevalence of the disease expected to rise by 15.5% by 2025. Public awareness of modifiable risk factors and understanding of the disease remains low, which can create barriers to diagnosis and care, and adversely affect families physically, mentally, and financially. The stigma surrounding dementia, exacerbated by a lack of education, makes it even more challenging for those living with the condition and their caregivers. Increasing education and outreach can help promote risk reduction, encourage early diagnosis, and improve the quality of life for both individuals with dementia and their caregivers.



Public Awareness and Education

Enacted Recommendations

KEY INITIATIVES

- The Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's Arkansas, and the UAMS Centers on Aging each provide community education programs that cover various topics, including information about risk reduction, early detection and diagnosis, caregiver tips, research advancements, communication strategies, and basic disease information. These programs are offered to communities at no cost.

Collaborative Partnerships

- **Arkansas Minority Health Commission**
 - The Arkansas Minority Health Commission has partnered with Alzheimer's Arkansas and The Alzheimer's Association to enhance their services in the following ways:
 - The Alzheimer's Association provides the commission with resources and educational material available to communities that host the mobile health unit.
 - Supporting the work of the Minority Health Commission through community health forums and providing resources and educational material for all attendees.
- **UAMS Centers on Aging**
 - In 2024, The Alzheimer's Association entered into a partnership with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Centers on Aging. The partnership provides basic disease information, caregiver training, support groups, and resources for families impacted by Alzheimer's and other dementia. The goal of the partnership is to establish a Dementia Resource Center that would serve as a model that could be replicated in other parts of the state utilizing the state's existing infrastructure



Public Awareness and Education

Pending Recommendations

Public Health Initiatives

Public Health Messaging on Brain Health, Risk Reduction, and Early Detection and Diagnosis

- **Objective:** Develop and implement comprehensive public health messaging to raise awareness about brain health, the importance of risk reduction, and the need for early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's and other dementias.
 - **Achievements:** In 2022, The Arkansas Health Department received funding under the Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure ACT. With this funding, the Health Department was able to:
 - Secure a grant-funded position to assist them with strengthening their capacity to address Alzheimer's and Dementia education.
 - Established a state-wide Alzheimer's and Related Dementia coalition.
 - Included Public Health messaging about Alzheimer's and Dementia on the state website.

Challenges: Limited funding has impacted the state's capacity to fully integrate messaging about brain health, risk reduction, and early detection and diagnosis into its existing public health campaigns.

Recommendation: Public health has a crucial role in educating the public about diseases, including raising awareness about brain health, cognitive decline, risk reduction, early detection, and diagnosis. This messaging is vital for reducing the stigma associated with Alzheimer's and other dementias, encouraging families to discuss cognitive concerns with primary care providers, and ensuring that both the public and healthcare sectors are informed about the latest research, treatment options, and available support services.

Policy Recommendation: Require the Health Department to incorporate messaging about brain health, risk reduction, and the benefits of early detection and diagnosis in their existing public health campaigns. This approach will ensure that the state remains competitive in future federal funding opportunities.



Public Awareness and Education

Pending Recommendations

Public Health Initiatives

Grant Program to Increase Brain Health Education in Underserved Communities - Create a grant program aimed at expanding brain health education initiatives in underserved communities.

- **Rationale:** Targeted educational efforts can help bridge health disparities, ensuring that all populations have access to critical information on brain health and dementia prevention.
- **Recommendation:** Targeted funding that would utilize the state's existing public health infrastructure to expand access to education and support services for communities that are disproportionately impacted by Alzheimer's and other dementia.

Public Health Infrastructure to Enhance Access to Dementia Education, Clinician Support, and Recent Advancements in Research - Invest in public health infrastructure to broaden access to dementia education, provide ongoing support to clinicians, and disseminate the latest research findings.

- **Rationale:** Strengthening infrastructure is essential to ensuring that the latest knowledge and best practices reach both healthcare providers and the general public, ultimately improving dementia care and outcomes statewide.
- **Recommendation:** Improve the collaboration between public agencies and the non-profit sector to deliver evidence-informed education on the recent advancements in Alzheimer's research, care, treatments, and support services.

Data Collection

Alzheimer's and Dementia Registry - Establish a state-level Alzheimer's and Dementia Registry to track the prevalence of these conditions and monitor trends over time.

- **Rationale:** A registry would provide valuable data to inform public health strategies, healthcare planning, and resource allocation for Alzheimer's and dementia care.
- **Challenges:** There is a need for more collaboration among state agencies to ensure that the registry is designed well and placed in the appropriate agency. Limited funding directed at improved data collection has also presented a challenge.



Public Awareness and Education

Pending Recommendations

Alzheimer's and Dementia Registry (cont.)

- **Recommendation:** One of the Essential Public Health Services (EPHS) is to assess and monitor population health status. For example, The Arkansas Health Department has a history of success in implementing a Stroke Registry. The registry has had a significant impact on improving patient outcomes. A dementia registry would improve prevalence data, inform a public health strategy, and improve patient outcomes.

Expanding Partnerships

Area Agencies on Aging - Strengthen collaboration with Area Agencies on Aging to enhance the delivery of services and support to individuals with dementia and their caregivers.

- **Rationale:** These agencies are well-positioned to provide localized support and resources, making them key partners in the statewide dementia strategy.
- **Recommendation:** Continue existing efforts to establish Dementia Resource Centers in each Area Agency on Aging.

Evaluate the Use of Telehealth to Enhance Access to Dementia Education - Assess the potential of telehealth technologies to improve access to dementia education, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

- **Rationale:** Telehealth offers a cost-effective way to extend educational resources and support to communities with limited access to in-person services.
- **Recommendation:** The Alzheimer's and Dementia Advisory Council should assess the current role of telehealth in Arkansas's healthcare delivery and explore ways to leverage this technology to enhance access to dementia training and diagnostic support for rural healthcare providers. This assessment should also include recommendations on strategies and recommendations for implementation.



Access and Quality of Care

Enacted Recommendations

KEY ADVANCEMENTS

Research and Support Innovative Models of Funding and Enhancing Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) for the Dementia Population

- In 2022, The Department of Human Services appropriated \$200 thousand to establish a dementia caregiver respite grant program. The program serves 400 families each year by providing them with \$500 grants to be used for respite care.

Review Existing Medicaid Level of Care and Medicaid Waivers

- **Rationale:** Ensure that the Medicaid Level of Care assessments and Medicaid Waivers are inclusive of individuals with cognitive decline
 - The Department of Human Services provides access to Medicaid (1915c) Waiver Services for dementia patients and their caregivers who are eligible for Medicaid.

Research and Support Innovative Approaches to Expand Access to Dementia Education

- Community organizations continue to work to expand access to education and resources

ACCESS TO DEMENTIA CARE

Access to care and support services at every stage of Alzheimer's and dementia is crucial for individuals and families. Understanding which services are appropriate at each stage of the disease will ensure families have the tools they need to navigate the healthcare system. It is essential to provide education on the disease, detection, diagnosis, and treatment alongside resources that meet these needs. Regardless of location, individuals across the state require access to evidence-based information and healthcare services related to Alzheimer's and dementia.

Many families are unaware of specialized diagnostic options for Alzheimer's, such as neurological examinations, and are often hindered by distance or lack of knowledge about available specialists. Rural areas face additional challenges due to population migration to urban centers, leaving behind limited providers and fewer care options. These communities often have restricted access to hospitals, primary care, and home-based services. The Advisory Council continues to monitor access to care and resources for the dementia population and their caregivers.



Access and Quality of Care

Pending Recommendations

Expand Access to Support Services

Expand Access to Support Services: Leverage the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) infrastructure to enhance the availability and reach of support services for individuals affected by dementia.

- **Rationale:** Utilize the existing public health infrastructure to expand access to dementia-specific resources and support services.
- **Recommendation:** The Area Agencies on Aging (AAA's) are uniquely positioned and equipped to provide resources and connect families to local support services who are navigating the dementia journey. Nonprofit providers need to continue to expand their partnerships with the AAA's by providing them with resources and local support services for families impacted by Alzheimer's and other dementia.

Dementia Resource Centers

Establish a Dementia Resource Center: Develop a centralized hub for dementia-related resources, including training for caregivers, support services, and educational materials.

- **Rationale:** Several states have adopted Dementia Resource Center Models to expand access to education, dementia training, and support services for families. Utilizing existing infrastructure these models can be adopted with a minimal fiscal impact.
- **Recommendation:** Establish a Dementia Resource Center Model that can be replicated and adopted by the UAMS Centers on Aging and the AAA's

Conduct a Statewide Needs Assessment on Dementia Care: Perform a comprehensive assessment to identify gaps and needs in dementia care across the state of telehealth technologies to improve access to dementia education, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

- **Rationale:** The state needs to continue to monitor the availability of support services and resources to meet the needs of the rising dementia population.
- **Recommendation:** The Dementia Services Coordinator should be tasked with conducting a statewide needs assessment and identifying the gaps in dementia care and support services.



Access and Quality of Care

Pending Recommendations

Research Acuity-Based Models of Care: Investigate and evaluate acuity-based care models to better tailor dementia care to the varying needs of individuals.

- **Rationale:** Research innovative models of care and staffing to improve care for patients living with Alzheimer's and other dementia.
- **Recommendation:** Acuity-based models have been studied in several states, but more research and analysis are needed to develop a model that can be tested to assess its impact on patient care.



Family Caregiver Support

Enacted Recommendations

LEGISLATIVE ADVANCEMENTS

Expand Access to Respite Services:
Increase availability of both in-home and community-based respite services to support caregivers of individuals with dementia.

- Since 2022, The Arkansas Department of Human Services has appropriated \$200 thousand annually to fund a pilot program that provides respite funding for caregivers of persons living with dementia.
- To date, the respite program has provided \$500 respite grants to over 800 Arkansas families.

KEY INITIATIVES

Expand access to and use of evidence-informed interventions, services, and support for people with dementia and their caregivers to enhance their health, well-being, and independence.

- The Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's Arkansas, and the UAMS Centers on Aging have each expanded the number of programs, training, and support groups across the state and continue to assist families navigating the dementia journey

Supporting Family Caregivers

Supporting a person living with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia often involves helping with activities of daily living (ADLs) like bathing and dressing, as well as instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) such as managing finances, shopping, and arranging transportation. Caregivers also provide emotional support, help manage health conditions, and coordinate care with family members and healthcare providers. This role is demanding and often falls on unpaid caregivers, with 83% of the help provided to older adults in the U.S. coming from family members, friends, or other unpaid individuals. According to the Alzheimer's Association, in 2023, an estimated 155 thousand Arkansans provided 270 million hours of unpaid care valued at \$4.448 billion in cost savings to the state. Supporting the rising population of family caregivers is essential to ensure patients are able to age in their preferred care setting.

The financial and emotional burden on caregivers is substantial, with the total lifetime cost of care for someone with dementia estimated at nearly \$400,000 in 2023. Seventy percent of this cost is borne by family caregivers through unpaid caregiving and out-of-pocket expenses for necessities like medications and food. These estimates may even underestimate the true financial impact, as they often exclude costs related to home modifications, respite services, and the health challenges faced by caregivers. This highlights the critical role that caregivers play in the lives of those with Alzheimer's and the significant economic impact of their unpaid contributions.



Family Caregiver Support

Pending Recommendations

Expanding Respite Care

Establish a permanent dementia-caregiver respite grant program.

- **Rationale:** Family caregivers play a vital role in the Arkansas health care system. Investing in support services like respite saves taxpayer money by delaying placement in more costly care settings and provides caregivers with the opportunities to tend to their physical health and the needs of other family members.
 - **Recommendation:** The current pilot program has provided targeted relief to the growing number of dementia caregivers in the state. During the first two years, the program has exceeded its goal of allocating more than 30% of the respite funds to rural communities, expanding access to respite care in the most vulnerable portions of the state. Arkansas needs to continue its investment by establishing a permanent dementia respite grant program and increasing the funding levels to expand access to these services.

ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS

Work in coordination with state agencies and non-governmental organizations, such as the Area Agencies on Aging, the UAMS Centers on Aging, and the Alzheimer's Association, to develop and deliver no-cost training for family caregivers of people with dementia to improve the delivery of care and support better outcomes for family caregivers.

- **Rationale:** Expanding partnerships between the private and public sectors creates the opportunity to work within existing systems and expand access to evidence-informed training and support for family caregivers
- **Recommendation:** Expand the partnership between the private and public sectors and leverage the existing infrastructure to expand access to training, resources, and dementia services.



Dementia Training and Workforce Development

Enacted Recommendations

LEGISLATIVE ADVANCEMENTS

Dementia-Specific Training and Education: Develop and provide dementia-specific training and education aimed at supporting risk reduction, early detection, and diagnosis across various clinical settings.

- Established Dementia Training Requirements for Home-Care Providers **(Act 70, 2023)**
- Established Dementia Training Standards for all municipal officers **(ACT 202, 2023)**
- Established Dementia Training Standards For All Direct Care Staff in Assisted Living Settings; Updates the Training Requirements of Alzheimer's Special Care Units **(ACT 335, 2023)**

KEY INITIATIVES

Establish dementia-specific requirements for certain DHS personnel (APS, LTC investigators..)

- In partnership with the Alzheimer's Association, the Department of Human Services provides training for Adult Protective Services and Long-Term Care Investigators at no cost to the agency.

Strengthening the Healthcare Workforce to Meet The Needs of Dementia Population

Primary care providers (PCPs) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) play a crucial role in supporting brain health, reducing the risk of cognitive decline, ensuring early detection and diagnosis, and connecting patients with community resources. Their long-term relationships with patients enable them to build trust, discuss brain health and risk reduction throughout the life span, and conduct cognitive assessments to establish important baselines.

This approach requires a strong understanding of how to accurately assess cognitive impairment and manage dementia as a chronic condition. By addressing these issues early and openly, PCPs, APRN's, and health systems can help reduce the stigma around dementia and encourage more proactive brain health discussions. This foundation is key to implementing treatments that are most effective in the early stages of cognitive decline.

Alzheimer's and dementia are complex conditions and patients suffering from these chronic conditions present with unique needs. It is essential that the healthcare workforce are adequately trained to diagnose and care for these patients at every stage of the disease continuum.



Dementia Training and Workforce Development

Pending Recommendations

Alzheimer's And Dementia Training Standards

Establish dementia training programs for Community Health Workers

- **Rationale:** The role of community health workers continues to expand across the state. The Council recognizes the opportunity to leverage this category of workers to provide education and referrals to the families that they serve who might be experiencing cognitive decline.
- **Recommendation:** Establish dementia training requirements for Community Health Workers to ensure that they are equipped with the tools and resources to serve the needs of the dementia population and their caregivers.

Dementia-Specific Training and Education: Develop and provide dementia-specific training and education aimed at supporting risk reduction, early detection, and diagnosis across various clinical settings.

- **Rationale:** Ensure that healthcare professionals are adequately trained to identify signs of dementia and provide quality care at every stage of the Alzheimer's and Dementia Continuum of care
- **Recommendations** - Arkansas has made great strides in strengthening the dementia training standards across care settings. The state needs to continue this path by ensuring that the healthcare workforce is prepared to meet the unique needs of a growing dementia population.
 - **Expanding Dementia Training Requirements for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN's)** - APRNs play a critical role in the delivery of healthcare in some of the more remote portions of the state where access to care is limited. In some cases, they fill the role of the sole primary care provider and are often seeing patients impacted by dementia. Establishing dementia training standards for this provider type ensures that they have the latest evidence-informed information on risk reduction, early detection and diagnosis, and available treatments.

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STATE PLAN ANALYSIS

The Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Advisory Council finds that there have been significant steps in implementing the Alzheimer's and Dementia State Plan (2022-2026) across priority areas. The state continues to respond to the Alzheimer's crisis by strengthening the healthcare workforce, expanding access to resources and support services, and ensuring that family caregivers have the training and support they need to care for their loved ones.

The Council also finds that the state needs to strengthen the Public Health Response to Alzheimer's and Dementia so that every Arkansan understands the risks associated with Alzheimer's and Dementia, the importance of brain health, and the benefits of early detection and diagnosis. The Arkansas Health Department has a proven track record of impacting the health of Arkansans across chronic conditions including, diabetes, stroke, vaccines, and cancer. Building on those successes, the state needs to invest in a public health strategy that will ensure Arkansas families have access to evidence-informed strategies that will reduce their risk of developing cognitive decline and promote a healthier lifestyle for All Arkansans.

The Council finds that the state needs to continue its investment in interventions and support services such as respite and expand access to resources by adopting the Dementia Resource Center Model. According to the Alzheimer's Association, the prevalence of Alzheimer's will continue to increase by 15.5% by 2025 and Arkansas must continue to expand its infrastructure to ensure adequate access to support services, education, resources, and dementia training for all who are impacted.

Alzheimer's is a public health crisis and has an impact across state agencies, the workforce, and the healthcare system, and has a significant fiscal impact on the state budget. The Alzheimer's State Disease Plan ensures the state has a comprehensive strategy to improve the state's response to this disease and endorses the full implementation of this plan.

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

PUBLIC HEALTH AND AWARENESS

Establish A Public Health Strategy to advance risk reduction, brain health, and early detection and diagnosis.

Require the Arkansas Health Department to create a public health strategy that enhances messaging on risk reduction, early detection, and diagnosis, while integrating brain health messaging into existing public health campaigns.

ACCESS AND QUALITY OF CARE

Medicaid Coverage for Early Detection, diagnosis, and Care Planning Services

In July of 2024, the FDA approved a second Alzheimer's treatment for patients in the early stages of Alzheimer's or Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) due to Alzheimer's. These treatments are only viable for patients in the early stages of the disease. It is essential that there is adequate access to diagnostics and care planning services for all who are impacted by this disease. In 2018, CMS established a billing code incentivizing providers to perform cognitive screenings and care planning services during the annual wellness visit. This benefit is covered under Medicare but is not provided to the state's Medicaid population. The Council recommends that the Division of Medical Services establish a reimbursement for this code to ensure access to care and diagnostics for individuals not eligible for Medicare.

DEMENTIA TRAINING STANDARDS

The state has made significant steps in equipping the healthcare workforce to meet the needs of the dementia population. Dementia training is critical, especially for care providers who are not connected to a major health system. Arkansas needs to continue this path to ensure that healthcare professionals across care settings are receiving access to the latest developments in research, diagnostics, risk reduction, and care to improve patient outcomes.

FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT

Expand Access To Respite Care and Support Services

In 2023, more than 155 thousand Arkansans provided an estimated 270 million hours of unpaid care valued at \$4.448 billion. Access to respite services is critical for many family caregivers. Arkansas should continue to invest in respite care by establishing a permanent respite grant program.