



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

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**Kentucky Alzheimer's Association's 2010 Legislative Priorities  
Focus on Resources for Caregivers  
56,000 Kentuckians with the Disease are Cared for by Family/Friends at Home**

**LOUISVILLE, Ky., December 16, 2009** – More resources for education, training, respite and other services for those who care for family members with Alzheimer's are the top legislative priorities for the Alzheimer's Association's Kentucky-area chapter in 2010. According to the national Alzheimer's Association, 70 percent of individuals with the disease remain at home for the eight to 20 years that they will live after diagnosis.

That adds up to 56,000 Alzheimer's patients in Kentucky being cared for by family and friends, who are also suffering the affects of the disease in the form of financial and personal stress, said Teri Shirk, President and CEO of the Kentucky and Southern Indiana Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association.

"Alzheimer's patients, like almost everyone else, usually want to stay in their own homes as long as possible," Shirk said. "But when the demands of 24/7 care become overwhelming or it's no longer safe to live at home, families in many areas of the commonwealth may have a hard time finding the right care. Only a small number of Kentucky nursing homes and assisted living residences have the resources and special training essential to provide quality dementia care."

Moreover, according to Shirk, diagnostic and medical resources are lacking in many parts of the state, and there are often long waits to see specialists and get respite services that give caregivers a much-needed break. And the problem is growing, Shirk says: More than 80,000 Kentucky residents will be living with Alzheimer's in 2010, compared to 76,000 in 2009.

That's why the local chapter of the Alzheimer's will be advocating in the 2010 session in Frankfort for legislation that will:

- Resolve adult guardianship jurisdiction conflicts: The current patchwork of adult guardianship systems in the United States creates financial and emotional burdens for caregivers. These can be alleviated if the legislature in Kentucky and other states adopt the Uniform Adult Guardianship Act an act that will enable courts in different states communicate better, more easily determine the appropriate court for overseeing the guardianship process and set procedures for transfers of guardianship among state jurisdictions.
- Preserve and enhance state programs, including Medicaid: The chapter will oppose any reductions to Medicaid services or eligibility and advocate to ensure that

services for individuals and families facing Alzheimer's are available in the most appropriate setting.

- Support families who provide care for loved ones with Alzheimer's: Legislation implementing an income tax check-off to allow individuals to designate refund dollars for Alzheimer's education, awareness and caregiver programs.

The local chapter also will urge the legislature to collect more data about people with dementia—including the number of people at various stages of the disease, where they live, the type of care they're receiving and co-existing chronic conditions.

"This information is essential to help the state better plan services for the growing number of Alzheimer's patients and their caregivers," Shirk said.

**About the Alzheimer's Association:**

The mission of the Alzheimer's Association is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. For more information about resources and training for individuals and families facing Alzheimer's, visit [www.alz.org/kyin](http://www.alz.org/kyin), or call 502-451-4266 in the Louisville area, 859-266-5283 in the Lexington area, or 812-475-1012 in the Evansville area.