

# Embedding Brain Health into Public Health Systems for Sustainable Action

## Kitsap Public Health District

April 2026

### Quick Summary

#### Integrating brain health into existing programs to expand reach and impact

The Kitsap Public Health District assessed internal programs and scanned local data to identify opportunities to embed brain health and dementia risk reduction into existing work. By integrating messaging and programmatic benchmarks across multiple programs, the District strengthened staff capacity, standardized communications around brain health and established a sustainable pathway for ongoing action.

While dementia is increasingly recognized as a public health issue, many health departments are still building internal capacity to address dementia risk reduction, early detection and caregiving. Integrating these topics into chronic disease prevention and health equity initiatives lays the foundation for further public health action.

The **Kitsap Public Health District** (the District) in Washington identified this opportunity and leveraged its strong foundation in chronic disease prevention and injury prevention to elevate brain health as a public health priority. Through participation in the **Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI) Road Map Strategist Program 2024** cohort, the District incorporated brain health promotion and dementia risk reduction into existing programs and systems.

#### Integrating Brain Health into Existing Programs

The District scanned the department's programs to identify those currently addressing dementia risk factors and those that could embed brain health. District staff then used existing tools — such as [Implementing the Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map: A Toolkit for Public Health Organizations](#) — to help program leads link current work to brain health and prioritize long-term sustainability.

From the scan, four programs were identified to integrate brain health messaging into existing content:

1. Assessment and epidemiology
2. Communications
3. Chronic disease and injury prevention
4. Human resources

#### *HBI Road Map Strategist Program*

#### Building local leadership to advance the public health approach to dementia

The Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI) Road Map Strategist Program supports **local health departments** in advancing the public health approach to brain health, dementia and caregiving. Through funding, education and technical assistance, the program equips experienced public health professionals to **serve as systems change agents** guided by the [HBI State and Local Road Map for Public Health, 2023-2027](#).

The HBI Road Map Strategist Program is led by the Alzheimer's Association in partnership with the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO).

Managers from these programs reviewed existing activities, identified opportunities to embed brain health messaging and developed implementation plans outlining specific program modifications related to these new messages. Further, work plans for some programs were modified to include benchmarks related to brain health.

To support the work, the assessment and epidemiology program conducted a scan of the local data, identifying substantial data on dementia and older adult health. These data included assessments conducted by the county's hospital system, data from Kitsap Community Resources, the District's triennial community health assessment, plans developed by the Area Agency on Aging, and available state and national data. The District used those data to integrate brain health into surveillance, assessment and planning activities.

## Impact and Sustainability

Assessing and working internally across programs strengthened District staff knowledge of dementia as a public health issue and dementia risk factors. This work standardized brain health messaging and embedded dementia-related actions and messaging across multiple programs.

District staff reported widespread use of brain health materials at chronic disease prevention events and community outreach activities including the Alzheimer's Association [10 Healthy Habits for Your Brain](https://www.alz.org/10-healthy-habits-for-your-brain)<sup>®</sup>.

By embedding brain health into existing programs and benchmarks across the health department, the District established a sustainable pathway for ongoing action — with or without dedicated funding.

*“What we added was enhanced capacity for brain health efforts so the work would continue after the grant cycle ended.”*

-Karen Boysen-Knapp  
Kitsap Public Health District,  
2024 HBI Road Map Strategist

## Lessons Learned

- » **Start internally and build on existing work:** Assessing internal capacity and identifying where brain health aligns with current programs helps integrate dementia risk reduction into ongoing work. Building on what already exists supports efficiency and long-term sustainability.
- » **Leverage existing resources:** Using readymade resources accelerates the brain health integration into other public health programming. Established tools, technical assistance and peer networks provide expert guidance and ensure efforts are relevant and effective.
- » **Use data to guide and prioritize efforts:** Leveraging existing data helps identify priority populations, target outreach and inform planning. Integrating brain health into surveillance and assessment systems supports long-term sustainability.

Learn more about the public health approach to dementia at [alz.org/publichealth](https://alz.org/publichealth)



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