

Convening Partners to Strengthen Community–Clinical Linkages in Dementia

Panhandle Public Health District

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Quick Summary

Education and partnerships strengthen dementia care coordination

The Panhandle Public Health District educated providers, integrated brain health into existing programs and conducted broad community outreach to address gaps in dementia awareness and support. By convening partners and forming a regional coalition, the health department strengthened community–clinical linkages and improved coordination of care and resources for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

Clinical systems alone cannot meet the complex, long-term needs of people living with dementia and their caregivers. Linking clinical care with community-based supports and services helps ensure coordinated, person-centered care is accessible, supports earlier detection and intervention, and better meets the needs of people living with dementia and their families.

The **Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD)** in Nebraska enhanced community-clinical linkages for dementia as part of the **Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI) Road Map Strategist Program** 2024 cohort. Acting as a convener, PPHD brought together local government agencies, community members, health care systems and community-based organizations to develop a coordinated and culturally-resonant public health response to dementia.

Educating Providers and Integrating Brain Health

The Nebraska Panhandle spans 12 counties with rural and frontier regions. Communities in the Panhandle exhibit many strengths including strong networks and a growing readiness to have open conversations about cognitive decline. The broad geography, however, raises barriers to reaching remote individuals, collecting and analyzing surveillance data

about these populations and ensuring there are enough health care providers to meet local needs. With a clear understanding of local barriers and opportunities, PPHD advanced three interconnected actions to utilize these strengths and address barriers through participation in the HBI Road Map Strategist Program.

- » **Educating the workforce:** PPHD provided education to public health and health care

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).

professionals about dementia and available community resources that support people living with dementia and their caregivers. Trainings were delivered to health care providers, public health professionals, students in local nursing programs and staff from community-based organizations — helping expand capacity of both the current and future workforce.

- » **Integrating dementia into programming:** PPHD integrated dementia education and messaging into existing public health programs including falls prevention and chronic disease management.
- » **Reaching the public:** Using an every-door approach, PPHD ensured brain health messaging reached communities across the Panhandle. Materials were produced in English and Spanish, and outreach was integrated into well-attended events such as Latina Red Dress Day and Farm & Ranch Days, broadening engagement and bringing dementia education and awareness to them.
- » **Strengthening clinical–community linkages:** PPHD identified a shared need for more coordinated post-diagnosis support. In response, PPHD developed practical clinical solutions including a simple, hands-on pamphlet clinicians can offer families immediately after a dementia diagnosis.

Impact and Sustainability

Participation in the HBI Road Map Strategist Program elevated dementia as a priority public health issue within PPHD, jumpstarting the integration of brain health messaging into existing activities across the Panhandle. Community engagement and listening sessions further clarified the health department’s unique role as a convener, bringing partners together to address shared gaps and needs.

PPHD strengthened partnerships with local community-based organizations, health systems and a local hospital. Close collaboration led to the establishment of the Panhandle Dementia Coalition,

“As a health department, our role as a convener is central to this work. By intentionally bringing partners together and meeting communities where they are, we reinforced that advancing brain health and dementia support is not the work of any single organization — it’s a shared effort. When partners see themselves reflected in the work, participation deepens, coordination improves and real momentum is created.”

–Jessica Davies
Director,
Pandhandle Public Health District

a regional network dedicated to improving dementia care, supporting caregivers and expanding local resources for people living with dementia and their families.

Lessons Learned

- » **Use convening to drive coordinated action:** Bringing together partners across the region helped identify shared strengths and gaps and work together to develop practical community-sourced solutions. In the convener role, PPHD positioned itself as a trusted leader in brain health and dementia.
- » **Integrate brain health into existing programs:** Embedding dementia education and messaging into current programs expands reach and supports sustainability without requiring new standalone initiatives.
- » **Build partnerships to sustain long-term impact:** Establishing cross-sector coalitions strengthens community collaboration, increases access to clinical services and community resources, and supports ongoing coordination of care for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

Learn more about the public health approach to dementia at alz.org/publichealth



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