

Educating Public Health Colleagues About Dementia

Davis County Health Department

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Quick Summary

Training colleagues to train the community

The Davis County Health Department was able to train over 140 public health staff on dementia and integrate this training into new staff onboarding. Building confidence from the inside allowed the health department to integrate brain health and dementia messages and resources into existing programs, and the health department staff felt knowledgeable and confident to share this information in the community.

Public health professionals are increasingly addressing dementia as a critical population health issue despite that most received little or no formal training on dementia during their education. Providing structured training on dementia helps staff build the skills and knowledge needed to address health issues, expand and sustain public health capacity, and improve population health outcomes as they enter the workforce.

In response to this, the **Davis County Health Department** in Utah provided education about dementia and brain health to its staff as part of the **Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI) Road Map Strategist Program 2024** cohort. Further, the department built attention to brain health into long-term public health work.

Start Internal: Educating Public Health Colleagues

The Davis County Health Department (DCHD) assessed staff knowledge about dementia revealing a need internally for more general information about dementia as well as updated tools and resources for the community. DCHD selected one module from the Alzheimer's Association® curriculum, [A Public Health Approach to Dementia](#). The selection was a one-hour introductory course that provides a clear overview of dementia and explains the critical role of public health.

DCHD delivered the module in a virtual classroom setting, supplementing the training with local data, community resources and additional content specific to the residents of Davis County. The County Commissioner and other senior leaders supported this training and encouraged teams across the health and human services departments to participate.

The initial education cohort reached 140 employees and achieved a 91% completion rate.

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).

Evaluation of staff who completed the module revealed greater confidence in their understanding of dementia and an improved ability to link community members with appropriate resources, including risk reduction programming and caregiver support services.

DCHD was able to reach county staff by featuring dementia and public health training opportunities in the County Newsletter, an internal resource for all county employees.

Impact and Sustainability

Since the Road Map Strategist Program, newly hired staff at DCHD complete this dementia education as part of their onboarding training. This has helped sustain the capacity of DCHD to engage in brain health, dementia and caregiving long-term. Further, the success seen in Davis County served as a model for state health department staff, increasing the uptake and impact of dementia education among public health professionals in other counties across Utah.

Participation in the HBI Road Map Strategist Program helped integrate dementia into overall DCHD public health programming. Public-facing classes and events such as fitness programs and chronic disease workshops include a connection to brain health information and resources.

Lessons Learned

» **Starting internally is valuable:** Building internal awareness and knowledge about dementia strengthened the overall capacity of the health department. Providing foundational training helped staff across divisions understand dementia as a public health issue and identify ways to incorporate brain health, dementia and caregiving into their daily work.

“From that small education that we’ve done for this department, it’s branched out after people are hearing about the kind of training that we’re providing for our staff, and asked us to bring it out to the public, and to our other stakeholders and other groups.”

– Julia Bentley
Davis County Health Department,
2024 HBI Road Map Strategist

- » **Prioritize sustainable actions:** The DCHS Road Map Strategist emphasized the value of implementing strategies that are both meaningful and attainable. Selecting high-quality and accessible tools — such as the [Alzheimer’s Association’s free public health curriculum](#) — helped ensure that dementia education could be delivered consistently among public health staff and sustained over time.
- » **Pair training with local data and resources:** Incorporating community data, local services and available resources helped DCHD staff better understand how dementia affects their community and improved their ability to connect residents with appropriate supports and services.

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



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