ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

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PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

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Strengthening Public Health Leadership for Brain and Heart Health

→ HBI Road Maps in Action: 2026 Strategies and Champions
→ Heart Health is Brain Health: American Heart Month
→ Spotlight on Practice: Mississippi's Community-Driven Approach
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Growing Local and Tribal Public Health Leadership

Sixteen local health departments and Tribal health organizations have been selected for the 2026 cohorts of the Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI) Road Map Strategies and Road Map Champion Programs, sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association. Together, these two initiatives help public health leadership build lasting capacity to address brain health, dementia and caregiving across communities nationwide.

Read the press release.

Awardees receive funding, education, peer support, and technical assistance to implement evidence-informed public health strategies tailored to their communities. Each participating organization designates a Road Map Strategist (local public health) or Road Map Champion (Tribal organization) to assess community strengths and needs, build partnerships, expand internal capacity, share dementia-related knowledge, and guide implementation of priority actions from the HBI Road Map and the HBI Road Map for American Indian and Alaska Native People.

Led in partnership with the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the HBI Road Map Strategist Program is awarding its fifth cohort. The Road Map Champion Program, led in partnership with the American Indian Public Health Resource Center at North Dakota State University, is awarding its second cohort.

2026 Road Map Strategists & Champions

With the 2026 cohorts, a total of 45 local health departments and 19 Tribal health organizations will have participated in these public health capacity building programs:

- Alameda County Public Health Department (California)
- Austin Public Health (Texas)
- Akwa Community of St. Paul Island (Alaska)
- City of Laredo Public Health Department (Texas)
- Fairfield County Health Department (Ohio)
- Franklin County Health Department (Kentucky)
- Multnomah County Health Department (Oregon)
- Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah (Utah)
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe (Colorado)
- New Orleans Health Department (Louisiana)
- Southwest District Health (Idaho)
- Wadena County Public Health (Minnesota)
- Waterbury Health Department (Connecticut)
- Winnebago Comprehensive Healthcare System (Nebraska)
- Yavapai County Community Health Services (Arizona)
- Southern Nevada Health District (Nevada)

American Heart Month: Heart-Healthy Habits are Brain-Healthy Habits

Some of the strongest evidence for reducing risk of cognitive decline involves managing blood pressure. What's good for the heart is good for the brain. February is American Heart Month and public health can help promote heart-healthy habits — including preventing and controlling hypertension — that also support brain health. These habits include:

- Managing diabetes.
- Eating a healthy diet.
- Being physically active
- Getting quality sleep.
- Controlling blood pressure
- Being smoke free
- Maintaining a healthy weight

Learn more with two resources from the BOLD Public Health Center of Excellence on Dementia Risk Reduction.

1. Hypertension and Cognition: What's Good for the Heart is Good for the Brain — a short summary on the current state of the scientific evidence, including implications for public health.
2. Vascular Risks: What's Good for the Heart is Good for the Brain — a short video overview of the evidence behind the heart-brain connection.

Support this heart-brain connection by sharing 10 Healthy Habits for Your Brain. The materials are now available in Arabic, Chinese, English, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

DATA INSIGHTS

Percent of Adults with Hypertension Whose Hypertension is Uncontrolled by Race/Ethnicity

Hypertension affects 46.7% of U.S. adults — about 122.4 million people — with higher prevalence among men and Black adults. Among adults with hypertension, uncontrolled* blood pressure is common across racial and ethnic groups; about 9 in 10 Black and Hispanic adults with hypertension have uncontrolled hypertension.

*Uncontrolled hypertension is defined as those with hypertension who have systolic blood pressure ≥ 130 mmHg.
Source: Unpublished analysis of NHANES data based on the blood pressure control standard used in the EPINEXT-MRD study.

View Fact Sheet

Two Webinar Opportunities to Learn about Hypertension Control and Brain Health

Heart Health and Brain Health — Two Sides of the Same Coin: Understanding the Results of the U.S. POINTER Study

March 23 | 2 p.m.
The National Hypertension Control Roundtable (NHCR) will host a fireside chat to review results from the U.S. POINTER study and its neurovascular ancillary study. The session will discuss what the findings may mean for hypertension control and dementia risk reduction efforts, including how a structured lifestyle intervention improved cognition in older adults at risk of cognitive decline and how researchers are examining neurovascular mechanisms that may underlie those effects.

Register

Recording NHCR Fireside Chat: Updated Hypertension Treatment and Control Guidelines

NHCR leaders discussed what's new in hypertension treatment and control guidance. Fireside Chat: Updated Hypertension Control Guidelines
Passcode: vQ+U#1Ag

HEALTHY HABIT HIGHLIGHT

Control Your Blood Pressure

Medications can help lower high blood pressure. And healthy habits like eating right and physical activity can help, too. Work with a health care provider to control your blood pressure.

Make your own brain health improvement plan at alz.org/healthybuilder

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE

Mississippi's Community-Driven Approach

"I am deeply motivated by the opportunity to reduce health disparities and ensure that older adults, caregivers, and underserved communities have access to culturally relevant, evidence-based information and resources."

Paulita Edwards-Childs
Mississippi State Department of Health

Paulita Edwards-Childs leads the Mississippi BOLD Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) Program, focused on reducing health disparities and expanding access to culturally-relevant, evidence-based information and resources for older adults, caregivers and underserved communities.

Paulita applied tools from the Alzheimer's Association Brain Health Risk Reduction Learning Collaborative and the Community Convenings for Dementia Risk Reduction Toolkit to plan and host Mississippi's first community convening in summer 2025. Working with the Alzheimer's Association Mississippi Chapter, the team brought residents together in Sunflower County in the North Delta to discuss dementia risk reduction and local priorities.

Tool Helps Health Systems Plan Dementia Care Programs

A Dementia Care Financial Modeling tool is now available to help health systems build a business case for dementia care programs. Developed by the Alzheimer's Association Dementia Care Navigation Roundtable, the tool helps teams apply the approach outlined in Building a Business Case for a Dementia Care Program as leaders can make informed decisions about program design and sustainability. The Dementia Care Navigation Roundtable was created to encourage and implement more coordinated care models nationwide for people living with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

Read the Report

Report Calls for Greater Global Investment in Strengthening Brains

As AI reshapes the work environment, new strategies are needed to harness human intelligence in the next era of the global economy, according to a new report from the Global Brain Forum and the Michigan Health Institute. The report argues that investing in the brain is an investment in human potential, economic growth and long-term well-being — and that strengthening brain health across the life course is essential for our future. It notes that scaling cost-effective interventions to prevent, treat and support recovery from brain conditions — including dementia — could avert 267 million disability-adjusted life years globally by 2050 and generate up to $6.2 trillion in cumulative gains in gross domestic product.

Read the Report

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Volunteering May Benefit Brain Health

Volunteering is associated with better baseline brain health, according to an analysis of participants in the Kaiser Healthy Aging and Diverse Life Experiences Study(Study of Healthy Aging in African Americans. Older adult volunteers — across the diverse sample — had higher executive function scores, and the effects were larger among those who volunteered more frequently. Volunteers also had higher verbal episodic memory scores. While individuals who volunteered did not show slower cognitive decline than non-volunteers, they did have higher scores at baseline, indicating that staying active and socially engaged in older age may help cognition.

As We Enter Heart Month, Here Were Two Big Findings from 2025

Intensive Hypertension Control Shows Long-Term Cognitive Improvement

Intensive control of blood pressure continues to show a reduction in the risk of mild cognitive impairment or dementia among adults with hypertension and high cardiovascular risk even after treatment stops, according to a study published in Neurology. The same finding from the SPRINT MIND study show that at least seven years after an initial 3.3 years of intensive blood pressure control – to a systolic blood pressure level of less than 120mmHG – the previously observed reduction in rates of cognitive impairment continued.

Community-Led Blood Pressure Program Reduces Dementia Risk

Managing high blood pressure can reduce dementia risk by 15%, according to a study among individuals in rural China. Over four years, those who received regular monitoring, lifestyle coaching, and medication support from health workers saw greater blood pressure control and fewer dementia diagnoses than those receiving standard care.

UPCOMING EVENTS & RESOURCES

Boundary Spanning Leadership Training for State Health Departments

Applications are due February 20

Apply to join ASTHO and the Alzheimer's Association for the Boundary Spanning Leadership Training on March 17 and 19. This two-day virtual experience is designed to strengthen leadership capacity in Alzheimer's and dementia risk reduction. State teams will learn how to break down systemic barriers across agencies and foster innovation to build cross-sector partnerships that elevate brain health.

Apply Today

Funding Opportunity: Dementia Care Innovation Grants

Letters of intent are due March 12 at 5 p.m. ET

The State Alzheimer's Research Support Center (SARSC) is accepting applications for its Dementia Care Innovation Grants. Up to four projects will receive up to $110,000 each to support research that improves the delivery, evaluation or accessibility of dementia care at the state level. Eligible applicants include state and local governments, nonprofits, academic institutions and tribal governments.

Center for Dementia Respite Innovation Accepting Grant Applications

Applications are due on March 30

The Alzheimer's Association is accepting applications for the Center for Dementia Respite Innovation (CDRI) grants. The CDRI initiative is focused on making respite service providers (adult day centers, in-home services, innovative models) more dementia-capable and ensuring they provide the best person-centered care possible. The CDRI will provide grants totaling $4 million to respite providers. Providers can learn more and apply at alz.org/CDRI.

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The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to lead the way to a world without dementia — by accelerating global research, providing care and support for families and promoting brain health and quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and other dementias.

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