



# Alzheimer's Public Health News

November 2021

## Chief Health Strategists: Embedding Caregiving Across the Full Community

Caregiving is a crucial, yet often overlooked component of community life. As the population of people living with Alzheimer's and other dementias grows, this need will become even more pronounced. Public health agencies are uniquely suited to take on the challenges posed by unpaid dementia caregiving by utilizing a chief health strategist approach. Join the Alzheimer's Association on **Tuesday, December 7 at 2:00 pm ET** for ***Chief Health Strategists: Embedding Caregiving Across the Full Community*** to learn more. Please [register](#) in advance.

This webinar will outline the public health challenges to effective informal caregiving, discuss how a chief health strategist approach can embed attention to caregiving throughout the community, and highlight resources and tools public health professionals can deploy to help support unpaid dementia caregivers.

Featured speakers include:

Dr. Lisa McGuire, Lead of the Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dr. David Bass, Senior Vice President, Benjamin Rose Institute

Meghan Fadel, Associate Director of the Healthy Brain Initiative, Alzheimer's Association

John Shean, Associate Director of the Healthy Brain Initiative, Alzheimer's Association

Be sure to [register](#) in advance and in the meantime, check out the action brief [Promoting Caregiving Across the Full Community: The Role for Public Health Strategists](#) for data, ideas, and actions to get started.

## Observance of National Family Caregivers Month

Observed every November, National Family Caregivers Month is a time to honor and recognize caregivers. It is an opportunity to raise awareness of caregiving issues, provide support, and educate communities. Public health professionals can help drive systemic change to support effective caregiving for those living with dementia. A caregiving [action brief](#) is available to assist public health officials in their chief strategist role. In addition, specific actions that public health can take to support caregivers are outlined in a caregiving [issue map](#).

## Alzheimer's Public Health Curriculum



A free, flexible curricular resource introduces Alzheimer's as a public health issue.

## The HBI Road Map



Designed for state and local public health practitioners, the Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map encourages 25 actions that help promote brain health, address cognitive impairment, and support the needs of caregivers.

## Road Map for Indian Country



Designed for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities, the Healthy Brain Initiative *Road Map for Indian Country* is a guide for AI/AN leaders to learn about Alzheimer's and begin planning their response to dementia.

For more information on dementia caregiving in your specific state, the following resources are available:

The [2021 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures](#) contains state-by-state data on the impact of Alzheimer's on caregivers.

State specific fact sheets on caregiving data from the 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) surveys are available for the following states: [Hawaii](#), [Maine](#), [Maryland](#), [New York](#), [Ohio](#), [Oregon](#), [Tennessee](#), [Texas](#), [Utah](#) and [Virginia](#).

## Understanding Healthy People 2030 and Dementia

### Objectives: Webinar Recording Available

A [recording](#) of *Data Drives Decisions: Healthy People 2030 and Dementia* is now available. Healthy People 2030 (HP2030) contains three dementia objectives: (1) improve disclosure of a dementia diagnosis, (2) reduce preventable hospitalizations among persons with dementia, and (3) increase discussion in medical settings about changes in cognitive health. Presenters discussed the new objectives, their data and data sources, and how health equity can be addressed through HP2030. The webinar also highlighted how Nevada included the HP2030 framework in a strategic state plan.

## APHA Highlights

In October, the American Public Health Association (APHA) — the largest professional association of public health practitioners in the United States — held its [annual meeting](#) in Denver, Colorado. Among the topics featured at the conference, several sessions highlighted public health issues related to dementia and caregivers.

Risk Reduction: Matthew Baumgart, Alzheimer's Association Vice President of Health Policy and Principal Investigator of the Public Health Center of Excellence on Dementia Risk Reduction, reviewed the state of the science on modifiable risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia and urged public health to implement interventions in their communities. The review noted that the strongest evidence to date is on [hypertension](#). (Ideas for public health action can be found in the Healthy Brain Initiative's [action brief](#).) Other areas for public health action included physical activity, diet, smoking, sleep and obesity. Additional presentations explored possible interventions to address modifiable risk factors, including behavioral change approaches and antihypertensive treatment.



Learn about the public health approach to Alzheimer's with topic-specific primers, examples, and resources at [alz.org/publichealth](http://alz.org/publichealth)

## Contact

For more information on the Healthy Brain Initiative, public health priorities, or Alzheimer's disease in general, contact [Karissa Charles](#) or check out [alz.org/publichealth](http://alz.org/publichealth).

Workforce: A session focused on the 2020 APHA policy statement, “Strengthening the Dementia Care Workforce: A Public Health Priority.” The policy outlines the increasing public health burden of dementia, the disproportionate impact on some communities, and workforce challenges that impede appropriate care for people living with dementia. Presenters in the APHA session outlined actions that can be taken by public health to support the dementia care workforce and its expansion. The Alzheimer’s Association has compiled some ideas on what public health can do to [educate and train professionals](#).

Caregivers: The importance of social connections among family members to support Black dementia caregivers was the subject of a presentation during the Black Caucus of Health Workers Virtual Roundtable. The discussion explored lessons learned from key informant interviews to better understand the needs and assets of Black family caregivers. The findings included the importance of addressing root causes of systemic or structural inequities in order to identify barriers of Black family caregiving. Additionally, it was noted that public health professionals must take into account the culturally relevant aspects of dementia caregiving that are crucial to minorities and that can affect how they respond to services.

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## **Emerging Evidence**

### **Tooth Loss in Older Adults Linked to Higher Risk of Dementia**

Older adults with tooth loss have a higher risk of cognitive impairment and dementia, according to a new meta-analysis. The authors found that participants with missing teeth had a 48% higher risk of cognitive impairment and a 28% higher risk of dementia. The relationship between tooth loss and cognitive decline was dose-dependent, meaning risk increased with each additional missing tooth. Specifically, each lost tooth was associated with a 1.1% increase in dementia risk. Participants who lost all their teeth had a 54% higher risk of cognitive impairment and a 40% risk of dementia. Individuals who had missing teeth but used dentures did not have a significantly higher risk of dementia than participants without missing teeth, indicating that efforts to address tooth loss could reduce the progression of some cognitive decline.

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## Upcoming Event

The BOLD Public Health Center of Excellence on Dementia Caregiving will host a [webinar](#) on **Friday, November 19 at 12:00 p.m. ET**. The presentation will address why dementia caregiving is a public health concern.

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