

STATE ALZHEIMER'S PLANS

FIELD ANALYSIS

GROWING PUBLIC HEALTH INVOLVEMENT in STATE ALZHEIMER'S PLANS

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State Alzheimer's and dementia plans are a vital way for state governments to comprehensively assess the state's needs, collaborate with public and private partners, and outline specifically how the state government will address Alzheimer's in the coming years. Integration of public health capabilities into these cross-sector plans is essential to address individual needs and better ensure systems-level changes that help mitigate the growing trajectory of Alzheimer's.

Since 2007, 49 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have published a plan.

ALIGNMENT with PUBLIC HEALTH

Recommendations in state Alzheimer's plans align with common public health core areas including:

- » Increasing education and awareness of the disease
- » Promoting early detection and diagnosis
- » Ensuring equitable access to home and community-based services
- » Addressing workforce shortages
- » Collecting and analyzing data
- » Reducing health disparities

The Healthy Brain Initiative [State and Local Public Health Partnerships to Address Dementia: The 2018-2023 Road Map](#) (HBI Road Map) offers 25 actions for public health officials to fully incorporate Alzheimer's, cognitive health, and dementia caregiving in the government response to dementia.

Ways to Involve Public Health

State public health officials can take the following actions to advance public health involvement in the state government response to dementia.

- » Utilize the HBI Road Map framework to fully address Alzheimer's and all dementia with a public health approach.
- » Lead or be substantively involved in all aspects of the state plan process.
- » Conduct comprehensive needs assessments with diverse community engagement to collect and analyze community input and data, and identify existing strengths and gaps.
- » Track and evaluate implementation of state Alzheimer's plans.
- » Assure the public health and health care workforces are adequate and well-trained.
- » Enhance people's use of evidence-informed interventions that enhance health, well-being, and independence.

The HBI Road Map actions are aligned to four Essential Services of Public Health (ESPH):

- » Educate and empower communities
- » Develop policies and partnerships
- » Enhance workforce development
- » Monitor and evaluate

STATE PLAN ANALYSIS

In December 2019, the Emory Centers for Training and Technical Assistance analyzed state Alzheimer's plans for public health involvement. The analysis provides two snapshots of public health involvement in state Alzheimer's plans — those published between 2007-2015 and those

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published between 2016-2019. Comparing these two time periods reveals deeper involvement by public health, but — crucially — helps make the case for continued, elevated involvement.

Essential Services of Public Health

Recent state Alzheimer's plans were more likely to include the above four ESPH than previous interactions — 44% of plans published between 2016-2019 extensively included ESPH compared with 32% of plans published between 2007-2015.

Recommendations that align with ESPH help pave the way for long-lasting, high impact public health action to change policies, systems, and environments (PSE).

HBI Road Map

More and more state Alzheimer's plans are embracing the HBI Road Map and including specific HBI Road Map actions and references. For plans published between 2016-2019, 42% incorporated the HBI Road Map while only 19% of plans published between 2007-2015 have similar HBI Road Map references.

This finding demonstrates recent progress in integrating public health capabilities into state government efforts that address Alzheimer's. In time, all state Alzheimer's plans should include a full array of public health approaches.

Assigned Implementation

Entrusting a state agency or organization with implementation of recommendations is an effective way to ensure follow-through.

A similar proportion of state Alzheimer's plans in both cohorts tasked plan implementation to specific agencies or governmental bodies (68% of 2007-2015 plans versus 75% of 2016-2019 plans). When

included, state public health agencies are tasked with traditional public health activities, including:

- » Educating health care providers about cognitive health
- » Ensuring caregivers have access to supports and services to maintain their own health
- » Raising public awareness about Alzheimer's, the need for early detection, and ways individuals can reduce their risk of cognitive decline
- » Conducting needs assessments and collecting related surveillance

ROOM for IMPROVEMENT

While public health involvement has grown recently in the development and implementation of state Alzheimer's plans, there is considerable room for improvement. Specifically, state planning efforts should:

- » **Fully utilize state public health capability.** State Alzheimer's plans can better utilize the full capabilities, authority, and regulatory oversight of state public health agencies — especially to enact PSE-level changes.
- » **Tap into health equity expertise.** Public health's deep experience in addressing health disparities and promoting health equity can be more thoroughly deployed to better address vulnerable communities in plan recommendations.
- » **Scale up disaster preparedness.** The [COVID-19 pandemic](#) has shown how vulnerable people living with dementia can be. State Alzheimer's plans can use public health's proficiency in emergency preparedness planning to ensure this vulnerable population is protected and supported.

Notes on Analysis: Analysis was limited to examining the type and extent of public health involvement in state plans; involvement by other sectors (including the aging, disability, and private sectors) fell outside the study scope. Plans from 49 states and Washington, D.C. were included in the analysis, but only a state's most recent plan or plan update available as of December 2019 was examined.



For more information on the public health response to Alzheimer's, visit alz.org/publichealth