

Placer County Healthy Brain Initiative

Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan 2020-2022

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Table of Contents

- Executive Summary 3**
- Background 4**
 - The Importance of Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Prevention Efforts..... 4
 - The Impact of Alzheimer's Disease in California 5
 - The Impact of Alzheimer's Disease in Placer County 6
- Collaborating to Create a Plan 7**
- Goals, Objectives, and Strategies..... 9**
 - Goal 1: Community Education & Engagement 9
 - Goal 2: Early Detection & Referral..... 10
 - Goal 3: Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness..... 11
 - Goal 4: Public Transportation 12
- Summary and Next Steps..... 13**

Executive Summary

In 2020 Placer County Public Health Division (PCPHD) received grant funding from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to establish dementia-friendly communities that would emphasize education and help those living with dementia and Alzheimer's disease maintain independence for as long as possible. The program brings key community stakeholders together to form a community-wide advisory committee which enabled sharing, planning, and collaboration. The Placer County Healthy Brain Initiative (PCHBI) Advisory Committee identified local issues and priority actions to create supportive environments for our aging and most vulnerable population groups.

To establish a roadmap for this work, Placer County Healthy Brain Initiative engaged the PCHBI Advisory Committee in a process to develop the Placer County Healthy Brain Community Action Plan which identified sectors of the community that could be adapted or developed to create a dementia-friendly and inclusive environment.

The following four sectors were identified and assessed:

- Promotion of early screening and detection
- Development of dementia-friendly public transportation systems
- Increased public safety and emergency preparedness
- Increased community education and engagement

The final version of the strategies, objectives, performance measures and tactics presented in this community action plan reflect the input of combined efforts of a broad range of stakeholders, including residents, local organizations, healthcare providers, care partners, and county staff. The goals and strategies are intended to be used as a strategic plan by the Placer County Healthy Brain Initiative and PCHBI Advisory Committee.

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Background

The Importance of Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Prevention Efforts

Currently, Alzheimer's disease is the third leading cause of death in the nation¹. Alzheimer's is a progressive brain disorder that damages and eventually destroys brain cells, leading to a loss of memory, thinking and other brain functions¹. Those who are diagnosed with Alzheimer's often see a slow decline in their cognitive abilities and will require support to be able to complete their day-to-day functions. While there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, more research has identified ways to help prevent the onset and slow an individual's progression. Alzheimer's disease not only impacts the individual, but also their loved ones and care partners. Caring for a person with Alzheimer's is extremely taxing on the caregiver as the care provided is more personal and intrusive compared to other diseases, this results in diminished health outcomes for the caregivers themselves². More than 60 percent of Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers rate the emotional stress of caregiving as very high, with many reporting depression and anxiety².

As the Placer County population continues to age, community services and infrastructure must be adapted and made supportive to meet their changing needs. Those living with dementia and their care partners often feel that their community fails to understand their condition, how it impacts their lives, or how to interact with them. This leads to increased feelings of isolation and depression, which can result in withdrawing from the community as their condition progresses.

However, communities can be proactive and work together collaboratively to make dementia-friendly adaptation so that our aging population is considered. A dementia-friendly community is where people with dementia are respected, valued, and understood³. They ensure that all community members are aware of and understand the disease and its impact on the individuals living with it³. Communities that are dementia-friendly offer a variety of services and programs that are strategically designed to support both the individual living with the disease and their care partners.

People affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementias still have an incredible amount to offer their community. If appropriately supported, they can continue to play an active and valuable role even years after diagnosis.

¹ What Is Alzheimer's Disease? (2017, May 16). Retrieved December 08, 2020, from <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-alzheimers-disease>

² *Alzheimer's Disease Caregivers* [PDF]. (2020). Alzheimer's Association.

³ What is a dementia-friendly community? (2020). Retrieved December 08, 2020, from <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-friendly-communities/what-dementia-friendly-community>

There are two important components to any dementia-friendly community:

1. A community focus on reducing stigma and increasing understanding of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias to create greater awareness of the stages and hardships of the disease and ensure that there is meaningful engagement of people living with this disease and their caregivers.
2. Empower those living with dementia to understand their rights and abilities so they feel respected and encouraged to make decisions about their life. This helps them to remain as independent, engaged, and fulfilled for as long as possible.

Alzheimer's disease and related dementias touch every person in Placer County. The impact is real, whether it is the rising costs of medical care, law enforcement time to search for individuals who wander, the growing healthcare needs, or the emotional and physical burden of caring for someone living with the disease. When a community prioritizes creating dementia-friendly communities, it marks a fundamental shift in focus from meeting the physical and health needs of the person with Alzheimer's disease to a whole-person approach to helping this individual achieve the best quality of life possible.

The Impact of Alzheimer's Disease in California

With nearly 40 million residents living in California, 690,000 were diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2020⁴. It is anticipated that there will be an additional 126% increase in the incidence of Alzheimer's disease within the next five years⁴. Just in the last two years, the number of deaths caused from Alzheimer's disease has increased over 125%, making it the third leading cause of death in California⁴. As the incident of the disease continues to rise, there are increased associated healthcare costs, increased hours of unpaid care provided, and continued strain on both the families and loved ones of those affected by the disease.

Alzheimer's disease has a devastating impact not just on those with the disease but also family members and friends who serve as their care partners. Caregiving for an individual with Alzheimer's is extremely intimate and intrusive. Nearly 80% of older adults with dementia receive help with a daily personal care activity such as bathing, dressing, grooming, or eating⁵. In contrast, only 20% of older adults without dementia need help with these activities⁵. Studies of caregivers have shown that Alzheimer's care partners reported higher levels of stress, anxiety, and isolation when providing care⁵. Reports from the national Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) indicated that 38.5% of California caregivers aged 45

⁴ *California Alzheimer's Statistics*. (2020). CA: Alzheimer's Association, from <https://www.alz.org/getmedia/e2141cc7-e1b5-4369-b509-f4da3d5b2484/california-alzheimers-facts-figures>.

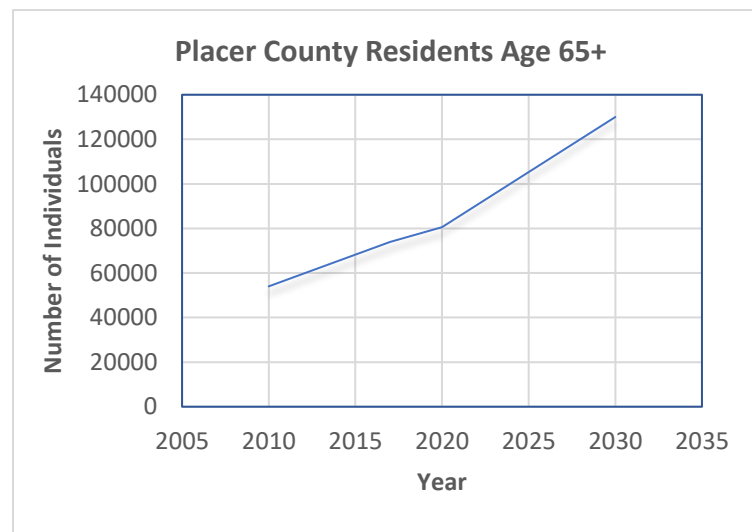
⁵ *Alzheimer's Disease Caregivers* [PDF]. (2020). Alzheimer's Association.

and older indicated that they had two (2) or more chronic health conditions present (i.e., heart disease, diabetes)⁶. Many often ignore their own health concerns to provide care and their health conditions are only exacerbated by the responsibility of their role⁵. Additionally, many caregivers drain their own personal finances to help a loved one living with dementia obtain needed care⁷. Acknowledging that Alzheimer's disease extends beyond the individual and has a systemic effect on a community is an essential component to designing the appropriate interventions for a community.

The Impact of Alzheimer's Disease in Placer County

Placer County spans from the Sacramento Metropolitan Area to North Lake Tahoe with an estimated population of 398,329 people in 2020⁸. The demographic breakdown of the population by race is: 71.5% White, 14.4% Hispanic/Latino, 8.2% Asian, 1.9% Black/African American and 1.1% American Indian/Alaskan Native⁷.

Placer County is an aging community, with 90,469 residents over the age of 65 in 2020, which accounts for 22% of the current population⁹. From 2003-2017, the number of deaths in Placer County from Alzheimer's increased 162%, making it the third-leading cause of death in the county. When looking at disparities in death rates between 2017-2019, non-Hispanic whites and Latinx residents had the highest incidence of death from Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias¹⁰. From 2007-2017, Medicare spending per capita for Alzheimer's disease increased 78%. In 2017, a total of 9% of Medicare beneficiaries in Placer County were treated for Alzheimer's disease¹¹.



⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data*. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [2017].

⁷ Alzheimer's Association. 2020 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures. *Alzheimer's Dement* 2020;16(3):391-460.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Placer County, California. (2019). Retrieved December 08, 2020, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/placercountycalifornia>

⁹ Be Well Placer. (2020). 2020 Age Data for Placer County. Retrieved December 08, 2020, from <http://www.placerdashboard.org/demographicdata?id=268>

¹⁰ Disparities in Death Rates, Alzheimer's Disease and other dementias in Placer: 2017-2019. (2020). Retrieved December 08, 2020, from <https://skylab.cdph.ca.gov/communityBurden/>

¹¹ Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (2017)

Understanding that the toll of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias extends beyond the individual is essential for creating communities that are supportive and inclusive for all community members impacted by Alzheimer's disease.

Collaborating to Create a Plan

The work involved in creating dementia-friendly communities within Placer County requires a long-term commitment and cannot be undertaken solely by one organization. With this understanding, Placer County Healthy Brain Initiative prioritized funding from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to convene a diverse group of key Alzheimer's disease and dementia stakeholders. The creation of this Advisory Committee included a variety of organizations within county who share the same mission to improve and enhance dementia-friendly service coordination to improve the health outcomes and quality of life for the older adult population.

The PCHBI Advisory Committee is comprised of healthcare organizations, transportation agencies, county services, caregivers, and community-based organizations. The input of the PCHBI Advisory Committee was vital in the process of developing the Placer County Healthy Brain Community Action Plan.

Within the first six (6) months of the program, the PCHBI Advisory Committee met three (3) times in November 2020 to conduct a Community Needs Assessment. This needs assessment process highlighted the issue of Alzheimer's disease and dementia in our community, identify existing local resources that were readily available to implement dementia-friendly activities, understand gaps in services and barriers to care, and develop strategies to help our aging population live more independently. This information and the analysis of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias from local, state, and national data sets resulted in the development of the Placer County Healthy Brain Community Action Plan.

The PCHBI Advisory Committee formulated its vision statement during its third meeting in December 2020. Advisory Committee members were asked to share their ideal outcome for this work and share this goal with the group. By sharing their hopes and aspirations, participants were able to identify common goals across the group and the group's vision and mission grew from that. The exercise to create a common vision incorporates participants' dreams and encapsulates the idealized goals of working together:

Vision Statement:

Foster a community that understands, respects, and supports individuals impacted by Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

Mission Statement:

The Placer County Healthy Brain Initiative will ensure all residents with dementia, related cognitive impairment, and their caregivers have access to the necessary supports and resources so they may remain independent and fulfilled in their community.

This shared vision fits well under the overall mission of Placer County Public Health Division which is “to encourage health and wellness of each individual, family, and community in Placer”. Coordinated efforts across public health programs in Placer County provides the opportunity for strategic collaboration that encourages health and wellness in the older adult population. PCHBI serves to bridge the gap in existing public health efforts and implement targeted strategies in a comprehensive, collective manner.

When conducting this exercise, it was evident that participants felt before Placer County could become dementia-friendly, it must become dementia-aware. This means prioritizing goals and strategies that ensure all community members, at every stage of life, understand cognitive decline is not a normal part of aging. In doing so, community members will be equipped with the knowledge and tools to utilize community services to help preserve their independence and improve their quality of life.

Interventions and strategies outlined in the PCHBI Community Action Plan were modeled after The Center for Disease Control's (CDC) *Healthy Brain Initiative State and Local Public Health Partnerships to Address Dementia: The 2018-2023 Road Map*. This initiative encourages the creation of partnerships, collection of data, and the development of community programs that supports populations with a high burden of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Programs modeled after the Healthy Brain Initiative include actionable steps to promote brain health, address cognitive impairment, and address the needs of care partners. The following strategies were incorporated into the Healthy Brain Initiative Community Action Plan:

- **Monitor and Evaluate:** Monitor data and evaluate programs to contribute to evidence-based practices.
- **Education and Empowerment:** Education and empowerment of the public with regard to brain health and cognitive aging.
- **Policy Development and Mobilizing Partnerships:** Mobilizing public and private partnerships to engage local stakeholders in effective community-based interventions and best practices.
- **Assure a Competent Workforce:** Ensuring a competent workforce by strengthening the knowledge, skills, and abilities of health care professionals who deliver care and services to people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias and their family caregivers.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

The following section outlines the rationale behind each goal and discusses in detail the strategies that will be undertaken to ensure program success. There are four primary goals: community education and engagement, early detection and referral, public safety and emergency preparedness, and public transportation.

Dementia-Friendly Sector	Objective
Community Education & Engagement	Create one (1) widespread public awareness media campaign to reduce the stigma associated with Alzheimer's disease and promote community services in Placer County.
Early Detection & Referral	Increase the number of individuals who are aware of and/or seek out regular cognitive assessments by providing strategic education on the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease and the importance of early detection.
Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness	In partnership with enforcement agencies within Placer County, implement Project Lifesaver to protect and support individuals living with Alzheimer's disease who are most likely to wander.
Public Transportation	Implement and/or expand at least one (1) dementia-friendly micro-transit program.

Goal 1: Community Education & Engagement

While some related symptoms and characteristics of Alzheimer's disease are generally known, the disease is associated with many misperceptions. These misperceptions include that memory loss or other cognitive symptoms are part of normal aging, that only older adults can develop Alzheimer's disease or related dementias, or that Alzheimer's disease is only associated with complete disorientation of an individual. Additionally, since the disease is misunderstood, it is often associated with a stigma surrounding individuals and families coping with the disease. These stigmas have a negative influence on both individuals living with the disease and their care partners including discrimination and rejection for the person with the disease, and increased feelings isolation and depression for both the individual and their care partner. Additionally, an individual or community's perception of the disease can vary vastly between different ethnic and racial groups. By focusing efforts on increasing community understanding of the disease through targeted media and educational campaigns, PCHBI intends to de-stigmatize the disease and normalize conversations around preventative screening and lifestyle changes.

Objective 1: Create one (1) widespread public awareness media campaign to reduce the stigma associated with Alzheimer's disease and promote community services in Placer County.

Strategies:

1.1 Conduct market research to determine appropriate media strategies. Promote realistic, positive, and diverse images of people with Alzheimer's disease and their care partners to improve societal acceptance.

1.2: Develop two (2) Public Service Announcements (PSA). PSAs will be placed on commonly utilized streaming platforms targeting Placer County residents.

1.3 Develop and promote a county website that links to evidence-based information on Alzheimer's disease and links to web-based education, resources, and tools for community members to utilize.

Performance Measures:

Included in the performance measures for this objective are the type detailed tracking of media strategies, type of media, dates of media promotions, and number of hits on the county website. Market research findings will be summarized and describe the rationale behind the selection of media markets utilized.

Goal 2: Early Detection & Referral

Early recognition of the signs Alzheimer's, alongside with timely referral to specialists for the appropriate diagnosis, can be helpful for families facing the challenges associated with the disease. When Alzheimer's is identified in its earliest stages, individuals could prevent or slow the disease progression by addressing comorbidities, adjusting certain lifestyle habits, or reducing exposure to commonly known risk factors. Additionally, it provides families an opportunity to create care plans to access treatments that can help manage symptoms or enroll in clinical trials and research. However, many community members do not seek out diagnosis as they are unaware of the signs and symptoms of the disease, unsure how to start the process with their healthcare professional, or they do not have access to healthcare. Many of the most at-risk residents find they are unable to receive timely diagnosis, and often it is only achieved as a result of hospitalization or arrest. However, with the implementation of partnerships with healthcare professionals that would provide at-risk residents with a diagnosis and opportunity to address this health condition. Additionally, not all community members are aware of the medical benefits that allow them to access cognitive screenings on a regular basis, nor are physicians aware of this benefit. PCHBI will prioritize establishing relationships with primary care physicians and increasing education around the importance of early dementia screening to increase utilization of proactive measures to identifying and addressing Alzheimer's disease within Placer County.

Objective 2: Increase the number of individuals who are aware of and/or seek out regular cognitive assessments by providing strategic education on the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease and the importance of early detection.

Strategies:

2.1 Promote cognition assessments during annual wellness visits, including Medicare, to both the general and medical community.

2.2 Develop one public/private partnership with physicians or healthcare systems to implement a dementia screening program with Placer County Health and Human Services.

2.3 Engage community partners and organizations in educational trainings about healthy aging, risk factors, signs of Alzheimer's, the importance of early diagnosis, and creating care plans.

Performance Measures:

Performance measures for this objective will include the development evaluation systems to monitor the number of Placer county residents that receive cognitive assessments and dementia diagnosis. The number of trainings conducted, the number of individuals trained, and qualitative data on educational trainings will be used to monitor and adapt trainings.

Goal 3: Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness

People with Alzheimer's disease are especially vulnerable during disasters such as severe weather, fires, floods, earthquakes, and other emergency situations. It is important that first responders, enforcement agencies, and caregivers have a disaster plan in place that includes the special needs and considerations of people with Alzheimer's disease. Additionally, individuals with Alzheimer's disease are prone to wander, and best strategies to support these individuals is to ensure enforcement agencies have the training and resources to quickly identify and locate the individual. A person with Alzheimer's may not remember their name, address, and can easily become disoriented and stressed when they are unaware of their surroundings. However, preventative strategies such as targeted education to enforcement on engaging with these individuals, and the utilization of tracking resources such as Project Lifesaver, can ensure that interactions with first responders are positive, safe, and supportive while in turn preserve enforcement resources and time.

Objective 3: In partnership with enforcement agencies within Placer County, implement Project Lifesaver to protect and support individuals living with Alzheimer's disease who are most likely to wander.

Strategies:

- 3.1 Develop and provide comprehensive Alzheimer's disease and related dementia trainings to first responders, law enforcement, and emergency preparedness.
- 3.2 Incorporate emergency protocol for individuals with cognitive impairment into the Placer County Emergency Preparedness Operations Plan.
- 3.3 Promote the use of the Placer County public mass notification system, Everbridge, to those living with Alzheimer's disease and their care partners.

Performance Measures:

Evaluation of this objective will include results from the law enforcement training needs assessment, which will be utilized to guide the development of trainings for engaging with those living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. It will also include the number of trainings provided, the number of outreach activities, and the number of individuals trained. Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected from enforcement agencies utilizing Project Lifesaver. This data will highlight the number of individuals that utilize this service, the average time spent locating an individual in the program, and reports from enforcement officers utilized the program.

Goal 4: Public Transportation

Using public transportation can help an individual with dementia continue to be an active participant in society. However, individuals at different stages of their disease progression have vastly different public transportation needs. Ensuring a community has diverse public transit options is essential to creating and fostering a dementia-friendly environment. Caregivers also need to be able to easily identify and access public transit options. Often, it is difficult to determine what options are available and which options are the most appropriate for an individual's physical needs as well as for their daily needs. The addition of micro-transit options that meet the needs of Alzheimer's residents and their caregivers, alongside the development of travel resource guide will ensure that Placer County residents at any stage of Alzheimer's disease will be able to effectively utilize public transit and help maintain their independence.

Objective 4: Implement and/or expand at least one (1) dementia-friendly micro-transit program.

Strategies:

- 4.1 Develop a strategic transit plan with targeted interventions to address the needs of residents at all stages of Alzheimer's disease and their care partners.

4.2. Develop and disseminate an Alzheimer's disease and dementia-focused travel resource guide highlighting the public and micro-transit options available within Placer County.

Performance Measures:

Performance measures for this objective include an asset maps of current transit options available, the number of residents aged 65+ older that utilize public and micro-transit and the number of travel resources guides disseminated or downloaded.

Summary and Next Steps

With the creation of the of the Placer County Healthy Brain Initiative (PCHBI), the Placer County Healthy Brain Initiative Advisory Committee, and community-based activities focused on creating dementia-friendly communities, PCHBI is well equipped to address Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias.

Four major objectives were identified: Community Education and Engagement, Early Screening and Referral, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and Public Transportation.

PCHBI plans to continue and even expand its preventative dementia and age-friendly work and will include additional projects as program capacity allows. Next steps include development of a county-wide messaging campaign, establishing relationships with healthcare partners and physicians, increasing trainings and outreach, tracking of performance measures, and ongoing evaluation activities.

PCHBI prioritizes its continued support of and collaboration with the diverse array of organizations represented in the Placer County Healthy Brain Initiative Advisory Committee and is dedicated to creating dementia-friendly communities within Placer County so that residents of all ages feel supported and respected in their community.