



Dementia Risk Reduction

Suggested Recommendations for Alzheimer's Plans

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Introduction

Under the BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer’s Act, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has awarded grants to state, local and tribal public health agencies to undertake public health programs, interventions and services related to Alzheimer’s and other dementias. The focus of Component 1 awards is on planning and capacity building, including the creation or updating of Alzheimer’s strategic plans.

In order to advance a timely and effective response to the Alzheimer’s crisis, Alzheimer’s plans allow states, localities and tribes to identify and recommend policies and actions that are tailored to the unique gaps and needs in their particular jurisdictions. Alzheimer’s plans should be comprehensive, both in their development and in their content. This means they should be created through a jurisdiction-wide, multi-agency, collaborative process that involves a variety of external partners, including those living with the disease, private entities and groups representing diverse populations. And it means the plan recommendations should cover the entire spectrum of needs of those with dementia and their caregivers.

That spectrum begins with primary prevention: reducing the risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Three sources provide ideas and suggestions for risk reduction recommendations that Component 1 recipients could include in Alzheimer’s plans: (1) the work of the Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI), including the *Public Health Road Map*; (2) provisions of previously-published state Alzheimer’s plans; and (3) initiatives already undertaken by public health agencies. To assist Component 1 awardees in developing their Alzheimer’s plans, this report compiles the best risk reduction recommendations from all three sources.

For further information, advice or assistance, please contact the Public Health Center of Excellence on Dementia Risk Reduction at CenterOfExcellence@alz.org.

Risk Reduction Recommendations

Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map

The [*Healthy Brain Initiative: State and Local Road Map for Public Health, 2023-2027*](#) provides guidance to public health agencies on actions they can take to promote cognitive health. These actions are centered around four key public health domains: Educate and Engage the Public; Strengthen Partnerships and Policies; Build a Diverse and Skilled Workforce; and Measure, Evaluate and Utilize Data. Below are the risk reduction-related components of the *Road Map* that could be included as recommendations in Alzheimer's plans.

Educate & Engage

- Engage diverse audiences to develop culturally responsive messaging about brain health.
- Disseminate culturally relevant messaging to encourage conversations about brain health.
- Engage with communities, especially those at highest risk, about risk factors for dementia.
- Embed cognitive decline risk factors into evidence-informed health promotion and chronic disease prevention awareness and education campaigns.
- Partner with educational systems (K-12 and post-secondary) to include brain health in their curricula.

Strengthen Partnerships & Policies

- Convene and leverage diverse and inclusive multi-sector coalitions to strengthen supportive, equitable policies within communities, workplaces and health care settings across the life course of brain health.
- Partner with public and private health plans to implement evidence-informed policies and programs that impact social determinants of health related to brain health and cognitive impairment.
 - Equip policymakers with information on risk factors.

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Diverse & Skilled Workforce

- Provide evidence-informed training and informational resources for primary health care providers to facilitate culturally sensitive conversations about brain health with patients and caregivers across the life course.
- Train current and future public health professionals about risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia and ways to integrate this information with other chronic disease prevention strategies.
- Promote inclusion of the life course approach to brain health in licensing, certification and continuing education requirements for health care and allied professionals.
- Strengthen training of community health and direct service workers about brain health across the life course.

Measure, Evaluate & Utilize Data

- Translate data analyses and evaluation findings into state and community strategic and health improvement plans that support brain health across the life course.

Risk Reduction Recommendations

State Alzheimer's Plans

Since 2007, state Alzheimer's plans have provided an important framework and accountability for future action on key issues related to the disease. In many states, the planning process has involved identifying specific strategies and programs related to risk reduction, which then were used to create recommendations included in their plans. While some of the below recommendations taken from previously-published plans may not have been fully implemented, they still provide helpful ideas for actionable risk reduction activities.

Improve Planning

- Support, fund, and promote the re-establishment of a comprehensive state public health plan to include cognitive health in its strategies or recommendations where appropriate.
- Integrate brain health strategies and recommendations into state and local public health plans.
- Allocate funds to support the creation of a dementia services coordinator position.

Integrate Messaging

- Integrate dementia awareness training into existing heart, stroke, diabetes, and other chronic disease education programs for providers and the public.
- Integrate brain health messages into other health improvement efforts in community settings frequented by older adults. Include grassroots dissemination of messages, particularly those that build capacity within the community.
- Incorporate messages on brain health and Alzheimer's disease into plans of state and local government, health and social service organizations, educational institutions, businesses and faith communities.

Educate Providers

- Develop a compendium of targeted preventive brain health fitness screening recommendations and education for health care professionals to establish brain health fitness benchmarks and promote brain health fitness.

- Incorporate dementia risk reduction into health professional training programs. Establish brain health fitness continuing education credits for all health care professionals.
- Develop multimedia education programs to promote recommendations for health care professionals and the public regarding brain health fitness and risk reduction.

Promote Policy Change

- Develop white papers to educate policymakers on brain health fitness.
- Identify and implement public policy changes at the state and local levels that would encourage and promote brain health (e.g. pilot nutrition and physical activity programs, home blood pressure monitoring systems).
- Support efforts to increase funding and/or legislation to support a public health approach to dementia including brain health fitness, prevention, awareness, and education efforts.
- Identify and support funding opportunities to address and advance brain health fitness.
- Strengthen community infrastructure that reinforces brain-healthy behaviors.

Develop Partnerships

- Establish and mobilize a broad network of partners in the areas of business, education, manufacturing, and other community-based employers and organizations to implement and promote brain health and wellness programs.

Risk Reduction Recommendations

State Alzheimer's Plans (continued)

- Coordinate with organizations that are actively working to reduce risk factors such as diabetes and heart disease to promote disease prevention and brain health.
- Collaborate with related public health efforts (e.g. diet, exercise, co-morbid conditions, etc.) to encourage possible risk-reduction strategies and educational campaigns.
- Forge partnerships among the state's existing public health programs aimed at reducing potential environmental factors and other health-related problems such as obesity, depression, hypertension, smoking, and diabetes, including identifying grant funding opportunities from the state, local agencies, and foundations and disseminating grant funding across various researchers in the state and their respective institutions.
- Promote strategic partnerships among associations, government agencies, insurers, other payers, private industry, public organizations, and elected officials to support and advance research and policy relevant to cognitive health.
- Partner with community organizations to disseminate evidence-based educational materials for the public around healthy aging and accessing health care proactively. Include organizations such as tribal centers, community and senior centers, faith-based organizations, hospitals and health plans, YMCAs and parks departments, secondary schools and institutions of higher learning.
- Increase the number of organizations that will promote information on the relationship between brain health and overall health in their communications and activities.
 - Support local funding for community-driven dementia actions, particularly for areas with high burden of dementia risk factors.

Educate the Public

- Inform and educate the public about healthy aging, including links between brain health and nutrition, exercise, stress management, social determinants of health, and oral health/periodontal disease.
- Develop a centralized online portal for educational resources and online programs, including information regarding prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias through diet, exercise, management of chronic illnesses like diabetes, hypertension, cessation of smoking, social engagement, and other lifestyle modifications.
- Request that all state and local public health organizations provide content specific to healthy aging, brain health, and Alzheimer's disease/dementia, including internet links to national, state, and local resources.
- Develop employee education and support outreach for public and private sector businesses to promote brain health.
- Coordinate efforts to disseminate evidence-based messages about risk reduction for preserving cognitive health, such as the benefit of exercise, healthy eating, and chronic disease management.
- Disseminate research findings, informational briefs, and infographics on promotion of brain health and reduction of risk factors for Alzheimer's disease.
- Develop evidence-based public messages around promoting healthy aging and brain health, while ensuring messages are culturally/ethnically appropriate and designed to reach statewide populations including persons with limited English.
- Include information on minimizing risk factors in public service announcements to increase awareness of Alzheimer's disease, prioritizing at-risk populations, including caregivers.

Risk Reduction Recommendations

State Alzheimer's Plans (continued)

- Develop a web-based clearinghouse and dementia-branded toll free number that provides information and resources on Alzheimer's disease and overall brain health for the public and health care sectors.
- Promote community awareness through the implementation of health promotion campaigns including culturally sensitive messaging.
- Emphasize the benefits of healthy lifestyle choices in the prevention of Alzheimer's disease, including exercise and healthy eating, and proper treatment of chronic conditions.
- Create culturally competent public service announcements to raise the level of public education about brain health and the warning signs of Alzheimer's and other dementias, some of which should specifically target populations with disproportionately higher rates of these diseases.
- Using culturally appropriate communications, educate and raise awareness about brain health and risk reduction strategies.
- Develop a communications/social media strategy to increase public understanding of cognitive health and the connection between improved heart health and brain health. Messages should be multipronged, science based, and targeted to all.
- Expand the use of the life course brain health messaging and curriculum in schools.
- Target the higher prevalence of Alzheimer's and other dementias among older African Americans and Hispanics through education on diabetes and high blood pressure.
- Encourage a wellness agenda that includes a brain-healthy lifestyle, inclusive of exercise, nutrition, cognitive activity, and social engagement as key protective factors against Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

- Target outreach to counties with large ethnic populations to ensure brain health information disseminated among minority populations.
- Develop a public outreach plan that shares information about social determinants and lifestyle risks, and what people can do to achieve risk reduction as individuals, and as communities.
- Develop an evidence-informed Dementia Guide for all priority populations that outlines information about healthy brain aging and risk reduction.

Expand Programs

- Promote a quality diet through provision of nutrition education programs.
- Provide nutrition counseling by registered dietitians to older adults determined to be at high nutrition risk.
- Consider providing programs that are intellectually and cognitively stimulating, including a physical activity component, in areas of the state where there is a critical mass of individuals with younger-onset Alzheimer's.
- Provide physical and mental activity programs using evidence-based programs designed for older adults.
- Provide chronic disease self-management programs using evidence-based health promotion programs.
- Promote brain health initiatives to reduce risk factors, especially in diverse communities.
- Promote self-management tools to encourage healthy lifestyle choices (e.g. healthy diets, increased physical activity, weight management, sleep health, and smoking cessation).
- Encourage wellness across the lifespan through prevention and risk reduction activities that improve brain health.

Risk Reduction Recommendations

Public Health Agency Activities

Over the last several years, various state and local health departments have taken action in their communities to address cognitive decline and dementia risk reduction. Below are recommendations that could be included in Alzheimer's plans based on the public health educational and programmatic activities that agencies across the country have undertaken.

Using Data

- Use Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data to create materials and infographics on the prevalence of dementia risk factors to share at health fairs, webinars, conferences, and other events.

Partnerships

- Collaborate with faith-based groups on community education efforts to promote dementia risk reduction among people who are at higher risk.
- Collaborate with local Alzheimer's Association chapters to:
 - Develop public service announcements about ways to reduce risk of Alzheimer's.
 - Hold a conference to educate health professionals and the public on risk reduction.
- Partner with academic, medical, and other organizations on community events and outreach to raise awareness of cognitive health among higher risk populations.

Online Resources

- Add a brain health section to the public health department's website.
- Create a brain health campaign on the public health department's website. Include quizzes and toolkits to educate on risk reduction activities, including diet, physical activity, and cognitive and social engagement.
 - Build an Alzheimer's awareness webpage, including information on risk reduction.

Community Programs & Education

- Equip health educators with information and training on Alzheimer's and brain health.
- Send information to, and otherwise educate, health care providers on the importance of addressing dementia risk reduction with their patients; include links to relevant resources for providers.
- Provide updates, raise awareness, and educate on cognitive health via meetings, training webinars, and newsletter articles for providers, health plans, and community-based organizations.
- Leverage social media/digital campaigns and culturally appropriate messaging to increase awareness of risk factors for Alzheimer's and other dementia among high risk groups.
- Distribute Spanish-language resources to promote risk reduction among Hispanic populations.
- Create LGBT-inclusive messaging for Alzheimer's risk reduction public awareness campaigns.
- Develop brain health awareness campaigns and community education events.

Integrating Messages

- Incorporate brain health and risk reduction messaging into existing health campaigns focused on smoking cessation, diabetes, and cardiovascular health.

