



Wisconsin State Dementia Plan

2019–2023 Accomplishments

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The [2019–2023 State Dementia Plan](#) was implemented under the guidance of a steering committee and four workgroups organized by settings of care. The plan was a strategy for all of Wisconsin, and its success required the involvement of community, medical, social, crisis and protective service, advocacy, and provider networks. Together, partners worked to implement 38 strategies under nine goals.

Care in the Community Accomplishments

Goal #1: Increase understanding and reduce stigma associated with a dementia diagnosis.

- Leveraged federal [Building our Largest Dementia Infrastructure \(BOLD\)](#) grant funds to create a statewide public awareness campaign with the Alzheimer’s Association to highlight the services and resources available to support people living with dementia and their caregivers. Targeted areas included underserved and rural populations. Messages were designed to educate the public about dementia, the needs of caregivers, and stigma.
- Expanded dementia-friendly community efforts by developing a “Dementia-Friendly Community Best Practice Guide” and a “Dementia-Friendly Business Training Guide.” The guides provided information about programs and resources to support community members living with dementia and caregivers.
- Developed tools and materials to support education and awareness about dementia, including flyers to connect caregivers with resources. Topics included types of dementia, future planning, medication management, behavioral symptom management, personal care, activities and engagement, support for living together or separately, health care needs, safety, communication strategies, and resources.
- Partnered with the [Department of Public Instruction](#) to create a unit for Grades 6-12 on advocacy and brain health. In the unit, students learn about brain health and create an advocacy campaign.
- Partnered with [Wisconsin’s First Lady Kathy Evers](#) to create a video about reducing dementia risk.

Goal #2: Improve and expand support and education for family caregivers of people with dementia.

- From 2019 to 2021, supported the work of the [Governor's Task Force on Caregiving](#). The task force analyzed input from family and professional caregivers, health care providers, and other citizens to recommend 16 policy proposals to the Governor and other state leaders to improve quality of care.
- Under 2021 Act 58, expanded the [Dementia Care Specialist Program](#) to serve all counties and Tribal Nations that share geography with Wisconsin. Dementia care specialists provide cognitive screenings; administer programs to engage individuals with dementia in exercise and social activities; support family caregivers, such as assisting with care planning and support groups; and facilitate community support, such as developing dementia-friendly communities through outreach events and consultations. [This map](#) shows the location of dementia care specialists in Wisconsin, as of 2023.
- Facilitated listening sessions with caregivers on the current challenges and local solutions to better care for those living with dementia. These focus groups, hosted in partnership with dementia care specialists, were part of an outreach strategy to inform the 2024–2028 State Dementia Plan.
- Expanded access to support groups and peer mentoring groups for caregivers and worked with employers to support employees who are caregivers, in partnership with dementia care specialists.
- Recruited leaders from Respite Care Association of Wisconsin to help expand access to respite care.
- Leveraged federal grant funds to train dementia care specialists to provide Savvy Caregiver workshops (sessions that help caregivers understand Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, develop self-care strategies, and learn caregiving skills).
- Promoted the dementia care online training for family caregivers and created a [Spanish-language translation](#) using federal grant funding.

Health Care Accomplishments

Goal #3: Increase timely and accurate diagnosis by PCPs to enable people to receive culturally tailored, high-quality treatment and support to maintain the highest possible quality of life.

- The [United Community Center](#), with funding from a Wisconsin Partnership Program grant, created culturally tailored and accessible diagnostic services by creating the Latino Dementia

Health Regional Consortium and launching a telehealth memory assessment system, supporting a mobile memory clinic across four counties in southeastern Wisconsin.

- The William H. Middleton Veteran Association Hospital increased services for veterans by creating caregiver support groups, additional home-based care options, increased access to assessment clinics for diagnosis, and rural resource hubs, in partnership with Veterans Affairs.
- The Department of Health Services, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and in partnership with the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute, performed an evaluation of the existing [Memory Screening in the Community Program](#) at the county level. Results of the evaluation will be used to enhance the program and provide additional information about the program nationally.
- The Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute, with funding from the National Institutes of Health, increased access to culturally appropriate dementia services by performing a comprehensive assessment of barriers to increase access to diagnosis and other care services in the Spanish-speaking community.

Goal #4: Ensure that systems and providers are dementia-capable to facilitate high-quality care in the most effective and least restrictive environment possible.

- The UW Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education created and will maintain a class specific to the health care needs of family caregivers of people living with dementia, providing educational credit for health profession students across the state.
- The UW School of Nursing created the class [Community Supports for People with Dementia](#) to increase interest in gerontology and foster capacity within the nursing profession to better serve those living with dementia.
- The Department of Health Services, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, analyzed claims data on preventable hospitalizations to understand linkages between dementia and other preventable conditions, and to promote best practices in dementia care.
- The ProhealthCare Hispanic Health Resource Center, with funding from the Administration for Community Living, has added dementia capability to the center by receiving training for staff and incorporating dementia specific supports and services for the Spanish-speaking community they serve.

Crisis Response Accomplishments

Goal #5: Increase dementia-related knowledge and competency of crisis response professionals.

- Formed a statewide workgroup to develop best practices and understand the training needs of law enforcement professionals and first responders.
- Created partnerships with a broad and professionally diverse group of professionals who brought unique ideas to improve crisis response for people living with dementia.
- Critically examined and identified innovative crisis and dementia trainings and programs throughout Wisconsin and nationwide.

Goal #6: Develop a uniform system of dementia-related crisis response with priority on treating and managing crisis in place.

- Identified and documented the barriers in accessing appropriate care for people living with dementia who are in crisis, and prioritized the challenges to target solutions.
- Identified statutory and legal barriers and solutions for individuals with dementia in need of emergency mental health care.

Facility-Based Care Accomplishments

Goal #7: Ensure that people living with dementia receive consistent, high-quality, and appropriate care in facilities.

- Promoted standards of practice for memory care by supporting the rewrite of DHS Administrative Code 88 to include dementia-specific training requirements for adult family homes.
- Helped 60 nursing homes create a [Cycling Without Age chapter](#) through distribution of \$390,000 in federal grant funds. The program allows older adults, including those living with dementia, to enjoy the outdoors on a trishaw and stay connected to their community.

Goal #8: Expand the workforce and increase training and credentialing of facility staff.

- Supported expansion of the [WisCaregiver Careers Program](#), which helps recruit, train, and retain certified nurse aides for skilled nursing facilities, all of whom serve residents living with dementia. From 2018 to 2024, the program leveraged \$8.2 million in federal funds to recruit up to 6,000 nurse aides in partnership with over 300 nursing homes across the state.

- Expanded outreach to educational partners, including the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, to discuss the expansion of health care career pathways for students.
- Leveraged federal BOLD grant funds to support geriatric training in post-secondary schools.
- Helped add dementia-related topics to programs offered by [Area Health Education Centers](#).
- Invested over \$30 million in American Rescue Plan Act Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) funds for [provider innovation grants](#) that support direct care workers.
- Celebrated the approval of Northwood Technical College's Gerontology – Aging Services Professional Associate of Applied Sciences degree program accreditation, only the second associate degree program in the United States to obtain this honor by the Accreditation for Gerontology Education Council (AGEC).
- Applauded the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) for addressing equity in undergraduate credit values, thus establishing a new career pathway from certified nursing assistant to an associate degree in gerontology.

Goal #9: Create a new and adequate reimbursement structure based on acuity.

- [2019 Act 9](#), the 2019–2021 state budget act, made strategic investments to provide better care for those living with dementia and their caregivers, including an additional:
 - \$37 million in state funds over the biennium to increase Medicaid personal care rates.
 - \$30 million in state funds over the biennium to increase Medicaid nursing home rates, including a 1% rate increase related to the acuity of patients.
 - \$27 million in state funds over the biennium to increase funding for direct care workers.
- [2021 Act 58](#), the 2021-2023 state budget act, also increased funding, including an additional:
 - \$98 million in state funds over the biennium to increase Medicaid nursing home rates.
 - \$40 million in state funds over the biennium to increase funding for direct care workers.
 - \$31 million in state funds over the biennium to increase Medicaid personal care rates.
 - \$250,000 annually for the Alzheimer's Family and Caregiver Support Program, which allows eligible individuals to purchase up to up to \$4,000 in services and goods to help care for someone living with Alzheimer's disease.
- In 2022, members of the team authored a letter encouraging DHS to bolster Medicaid supports for high-acuity residents in long-term care facilities, including those living with dementia.

- In 2022, DHS announced a [5% Medicaid rate increase](#) for home and community-based service providers. Many older adults, including those living with dementia, rely on these services to meet their needs. Higher reimbursement rates allow providers to recruit staff and maintain vital care supports. The department is establishing a minimum fee schedule to set rates across programs.