

WHAT ARKANSAS OFFICIALS CAN DO TO ADDRESS THE ALZHEIMER'S CRISIS

2025 POLICY PLATFORM



ESTABLISH A PERMANENT DEMENTIA CAREGIVER RESPITE GRANT PROGRAM

In 2022, more than 93 THOUSAND Arkansans provided an estimated 139 MILLION hours of unpaid care valued at \$4.2 Billion dollars. Access to respite services is critical for many family caregivers. The Dementia Caregiver Respite Grant program (Established in 2022) provides dementia caregivers with grant funding to access these services.

IMPROVE QUALITY OF CARE

Recent advancements in Alzheimer's research have paved the way for the first-ever treatments targeting individuals in the early stages of Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). Early detection and diagnosis of dementia are crucial for patients who may be eligible for these groundbreaking treatments. It is imperative that clinicians, including APRNs, Physician Assistants, and Doctors, stay informed about the latest advancements in risk reduction, early detection, and diagnosis.

Rural healthcare providers often serve as the initial point of contact for individuals exhibiting signs of MCI. Therefore, it is essential for Arkansas to ensure these providers are well-equipped with the necessary knowledge and resources to address these emerging issues effectively. By doing so, we can enhance the quality of care and improve outcomes for patients across the state.



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EXPAND PROTECTIONS FOR DEMENTIA PATIENTS

Aging adults experiencing cognitive decline are particularly vulnerable to financial fraud, exploitation, and abuse. It is crucial for the state to establish safeguards to protect these individuals. One key measure is to enhance background checks for Home and Community-Based providers who offer services to people with dementia. This will help ensure the safety and protection of this vulnerable population.

CONSUMER PROTECTION LEGISLATION

In 2023, legislation was passed to enhance dementia training standards for facilities licensed to provide memory care services. Alzheimer's Special Care Units (ASCUs) are a recognized licensure for these facilities. Consumers deserve assurance that companies advertising as memory care providers have met the necessary licensure requirements.

ADVANCE RISK REDUCTION, EARLY DETECTION AND DIAGNOSIS

Alzheimer's and dementia represent a public health crisis in Arkansas. As their prevalence continues to rise, the impact on the state budget, workforce, and healthcare system becomes increasingly significant. Arkansas needs a stronger public health strategy to educate the public about the importance of risk reduction, early detection, and diagnosis.

INCREASE ACCESS TO COGNITIVE SCREENING AND CARE PLANNING SERVICES

In 2018, CMS established a billing code incentivizing providers to perform cognitive screenings and care planning services during the annual wellness visit. This benefit is covered under Medicare. The Arkansas Medicaid program has yet to authorize a reimbursement for this benefit.

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