

APHA Adopts Policy Statement to Strengthen the Dementia Care Workforce

Today, over 5 million Americans are living with dementia — a figure expected to rise to 14 million by 2050. A range of health and direct care providers play an important role in dementia care. These providers include primary care physicians, geriatric physicians, neurologists, and direct care professionals (including nursing homes, assisted living, and home health aides). However, the United States is experiencing a well-documented health care workforce shortage that could jeopardize care for individuals living with Alzheimer's and other dementia.

In October, the American Public Health Association (APHA) — the largest professional association of public health practitioners in the United States — adopted a policy statement designed to strengthen the public health response to Alzheimer's, dementia and cognitive health. This is the first-ever APHA policy statement focused on dementia. Ten recommendations in the policy statement provide actions for policymakers and leaders in the private sector to **better prepare the nation's workforce to adequately, competently, and compassionately care for people living with dementia.**

The policy statement — ***Strengthening the Dementia Care Workforce: A Public Health Priority*** — outlines the increasing public health burden of dementia, the disproportionate impact on some communities, and workforce challenges that impede appropriate care for people living with dementia. In response to the growing need for a dementia-capable workforce, the statement calls for investment in health and social care for people with dementia, including:

- Adoption of clear standards and action steps for hiring, training and retaining an adequately sized and skilled workforce in the health care, public health, and long-term care sectors;
- Improved public financing of community-based services; and
- Rigorous public monitoring of quality to support improvement in the provision of care across the care continuum.

This new policy statement will better ensure robust public health action to address Alzheimer's and all dementia. The full statement will be added to the APHA [policy statement database](#) in early 2021, but an official summary is available in the [APHA press release](#).

As the nation ages more people will develop Alzheimer's and need quality care, however a shortage of qualified health care workers could jeopardize care for individuals living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. **State governments need to implement policies that will (1) create incentives and career pathways to [recruit and retain](#) health care professionals; (2) require competency-based [dementia training](#) for all involved in the delivery of care; and (3) require training of [adult protective services](#) workers and law enforcement about how to recognize and interact with individuals living with dementia.**

For more information and/or to be connected with the Alzheimer's Association policy director in your state, please contact Jennifer Rosen (jrosen@alz-aim.org), Director of State Affairs for the Alzheimer's Association and Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM).