



Alaska Commission on Aging SFY2019 Legislative Advocacy Priorities

Improve capacity to serve Alaskans living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias

Alzheimer's disease, the most common cause of dementia, is a progressive and degenerative illness of the brain which affects a person's ability to think, feel, and function. The disease progresses from mild impairment to an advanced stage in which the person loses the ability to communicate, fails to recognize loved ones, and becomes bed-bound and totally reliant on others for their personal care. The disease is always fatal. Caring for persons with Alzheimer's is difficult, expensive, and heartbreaking.

Because age is the greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's, the rapidly growing number of older Alaskans will lead to an increasing growth in the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease in our state. The number of older Alaskans living with Alzheimer's today is projected to grow from an estimated 7,100 to almost 11,000 by 2025. The number of seniors living with other forms of dementia, including Parkinson's disease, vascular dementia, and Lewy Body dementia, are also increasing. Caring for Alaskan seniors with Alzheimer's and related dementias is expensive.

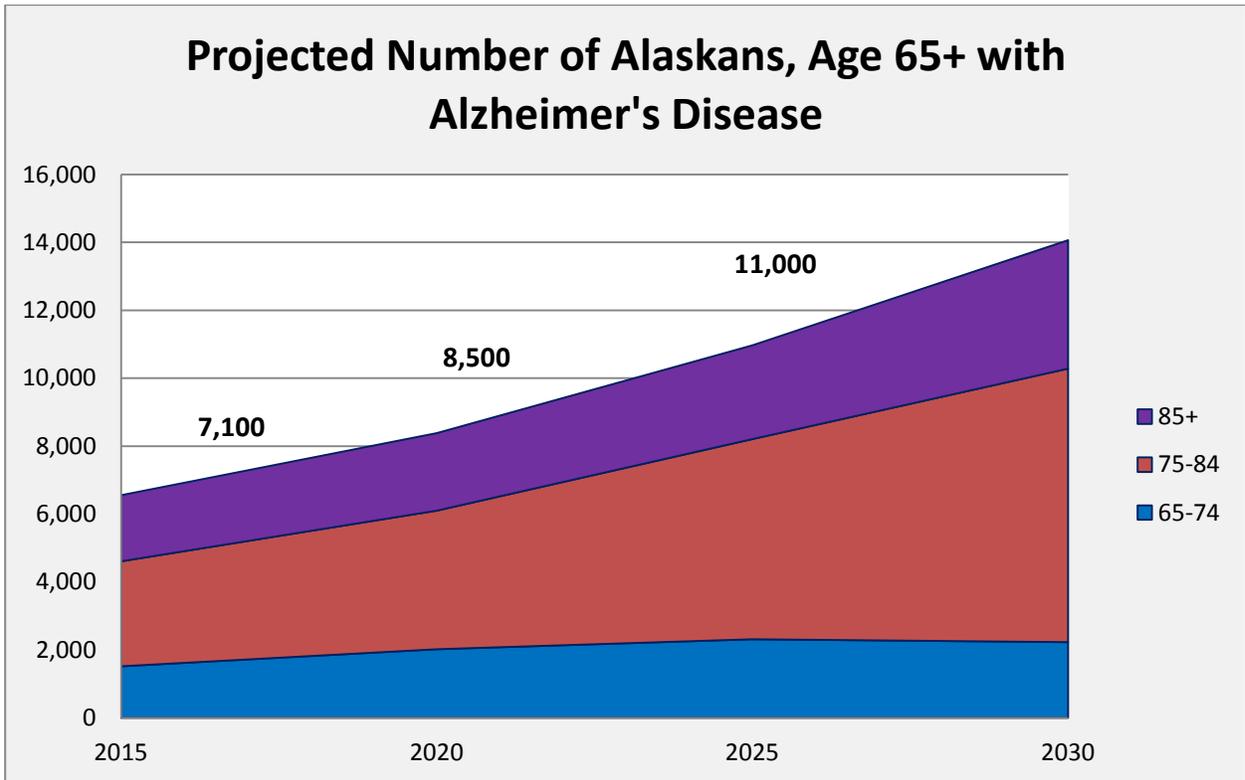
According to comparative findings from the 2016 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) Perceived Cognitive Impairment Module (PCI), Alaskans age 60+ self-reported higher rates of increasing memory loss in comparison to their peers living in the 20-state composite (14% AK versus 10.7% 20-state composite). While Alaskans self-reported higher rates of memory loss than their peers in the 20-state composite, they also self-reported less impact on their health, ability to perform activities of daily living, and less diagnosed depression. In 2016, almost one in three Alaskan seniors with subjective cognitive decline lives alone compared to 1 in 8 in 2013, according to BRFSS PCI findings for those years. Growing numbers of seniors who self-report progressive memory loss are living alone in the community.

Alaska's Roadmap to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) lays out an implementation plan that identifies Alzheimer's as a public health priority. The Roadmap is guided by a desire for early detection and planning, to serve individuals with ADRD in their homes and communities for as long as possible, and to address costs by providing services at the earliest stage possible. In 2017, Alaska spent an estimated \$59 million in Medicaid alone for the care of seniors living with Alzheimer's disease (Alzheimer's Association 2017 Facts and Figures).

Recommendations: The Alaska Commission on Aging supports:

- Sufficient base funding for grant funded services (Adult Day, Senior In-Home, and the Nutrition Transportation Services) and Medicaid services (Alaskans Living Independently Waiver and Personal Care Services) administered by the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services. These services provide care for older Alaskans living with dementia in the community and caregiver support. Preserve funding for the Alaska Pioneer Homes that specialize in long-term care for persons with dementia.
- Incorporate the Home Map assessment tool and "enabling technology" (includes assistive technology, home tele-health monitoring, and medication management) as services in the Alaskans Living Independently waiver to promote greater independence and safety for seniors with cognitive impairments and provide support for their caregivers.
- Include "cueing" and "supervision" as services in the *new* Community First Choice option (also known as the 1915k) for persons with Alzheimer's disease.

- Explore new options to improve care for Alaskans living with dementia in the community, such as an 1115 demonstration waiver.



Source: Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Research & Analysis Population Projections with prevalence estimates provided by the national Alzheimer's Association.

Risks for Seniors with Subjective Cognitive Decline Who Live Alone

Almost 1 in 3 Alaskans with Subjective Cognitive Decline Live Alone

Increased Risk for

- Self-Neglect
- Falls
- Wandering
- Hospitalizations



Source: Alaska 2016 BRFSS PCI Module findings and National Alzheimer's Association

Percent of Alaskans with Subjective Cognitive Decline age 65+ who have not talked to a health care provider

52%

Source: Alaska 2016 BRFSS PCI Module findings