

DHSS, Alzheimer's Association Release State Plan to Address Increasing Needs of Individuals with Alzheimer's and Their Families

NEW CASTLE (Feb. 18, 2014) – The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, along with the Alzheimer's Association Delaware Valley Chapter, this week released the Delaware State Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders, a major step in coordinating the delivery of services statewide to support the thousands of Delawareans and their families living with Alzheimer's today and in the future.

Over the past 18 months, a task force co-chaired by DHSS' Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities and the local chapter of the Alzheimer's Association brought together caregivers, advocates and professionals from health care, education and social services to identify ways to more effectively meet the needs of the increasing number of Delawareans impacted by the disease and related disorders. Alzheimer's is an incurable, degenerative brain disease that causes a slow decline in memory, thinking and behavior. Individuals with Alzheimer's eventually lose the ability to carry on a conversation and respond to their environment.

In 2010, 14,000 Delawareans age 65 and older were living with Alzheimer's disease, and an additional 12,000 individuals were living with younger-onset Alzheimer's or related dementias, according to the Alzheimer's Association. By 2025, an estimated 16,000 Delawareans will be living with Alzheimer's alone.

[The state plan](#), which was released at events at Christiana Care Health System's Swank Memory Center in Wilmington and the CHEER Community Center in Georgetown, outlines five goals:

- Increasing the awareness and understanding of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.
- Bringing focused attention to the development of long-term care services for individuals with Alzheimer's disease.
- Strengthening support for caregivers.
- Improving the capacity of Delaware's workforce to respond to the needs of individuals with Alzheimer's disease.
- Increasing Delaware's capacity for Alzheimer's disease-related research and data collection.

"With Delaware's fast-growing aging population, it is extremely important that the state increase and improve our ability to support individuals dealing with the burden of Alzheimer's disease," Gov. Jack Markell said. "Government can't do this alone, so I am especially pleased with the level of collaboration we had from caregivers, families, providers, advocates and researchers in creating this plan. As we carry out the goals, that collaboration will be even more important."

The risk of Alzheimer's disease increases as people age. Of Americans age 65 and older, one in nine has Alzheimer's. In Delaware, the population 65 and older is projected to double between 2000 and 2030 to more than 250,000. By 2030, the state is projected to have the ninth-highest proportion of people age 65 and older in the United States.

DHSS Secretary Rita Landgraf said the impact of Alzheimer's disease places a tremendous burden on individuals and their caregivers.

"We need to build public awareness of the resources and

supports available for individuals and their caregivers,” Landgraf said. “The diagnosis is heart-breaking, but the goal of the state plan is that no one should face living with Alzheimer’s in isolation. We also know that the vast majority of caregivers in Delaware are unpaid and caring for those they love in their homes. The state plan puts a priority on building supports and services that enables individuals to provide that care without exacting a toll on their own physical, mental or emotional health.”

Most people survive an average of eight years after diagnosis. However, some individuals can live with Alzheimer’s for as many as 20 years, placing increasingly intensive demands on caregivers and negatively affecting their health, employment, income and financial security. As the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States, Alzheimer’s disease is the only cause among the top 10 without a way to prevent, cure or even slow its progression.

“We are extremely grateful to Governor Markell, Secretary Landgraf and members of the Task Force and Working Groups for their commitment to develop this comprehensive plan for Delaware that addresses the public health crisis of this century,” said Katie E. Macklin, executive director of the Alzheimer’s Association Delaware Valley Chapter. “We are hopeful that this plan will guide coordinated efforts to reduce the burden of this disease on the estimated 26,000 Delawareans living with Alzheimer’s disease or a related disorder and those who care for them. We are confident that this plan will lead to providing the support needed by individuals and their families today, as well as those in the generations to come.”

The Alzheimer’s Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Its mission is to eliminate Alzheimer’s disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia

through the promotion of brain health.

“We are grateful to the state for their support of our program and their commitment to supporting families who have loved ones struggling from dementia,” said Michael Rosenthal, M.D., chair of family and community medicine at Christiana Care Health System, which oversees the Swank Memory Care Center in Wilmington. “The state plan places important emphasis on the need for education of our health care workforce – the providers, staff, and community services that can inform, work with, and assist patients and families in need.”

“Community-based services are essential to helping people continue to live out their lives in the comfort and safety of their own homes. By assisting our seniors and their caregivers, we allow them to maintain a quality of life each of us would hope for in our later years,” said Kenneth S. Bock, deputy director of CHEER, Inc. in Georgetown.

To find aging and disability services in Delaware, contact the Delaware Aging and Disability Resource Center at (800) 223-9074 weekdays from 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Staff members can provide personalized assistance to help families find and use community services. The resource center’s website, www.delawareadrc.com, helps people to search by county for health services, adult day care, assisted living, caregiver support services, financial assistance, physical therapy, and transportation. A free comprehensive resource, “Guide to Services for Older Delawareans and Persons with Disabilities” is offered through the website or by calling the center.

Photos of the event are found on [Flickr](#).

To download a copy of the state plan, go to:

http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dsaapd/files/alzheimers_plan.pdf

For more information about Alzheimer’s disease and services in Delaware, go to:

<http://www.alz.org/desjsepa/>

To reach the Delaware Aging and Disability Resource Center, call (800) 223-9074 or visit www.delawareadrc.com

For more information on Christiana Care Health System's Swank Memory Care Center, call (302) 320-2637 or visit www.christianacare.org/swankmemorycare

For more information on CHEER, Inc, call (302) 856-5187 or visit cheerde.com.