

My name is Meg Polyte and I'm the Policy Director for the Vermont Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. Thank you so much for welcoming me and a handful of advocates into your committee as part of Alzheimer's Awareness Day at the Statehouse. We are here on behalf of over 13,000 Vermonters over the age of 65 living with Alzheimer's, a number that is expected to grow by over 30% to 17,000 in the next two years. We also represent many, many Vermonters who are not included in those numbers. Those are Vermonters who are diagnosed before the age of 65, those who are misdiagnosed, and those who do not have a diagnosis. And we are here in support of the unpaid dementia caregivers. These are primarily family members and in 2022 they provided 28 million hours of unpaid care to loved ones in Vermont.

Your colleagues in the House added a State Dementia Coordinator to the FY24 budget. Today we are sharing the realities of living with and caring for someone with Alzheimer's or another dementia. Twenty-three other states and DC have a permanent Dementia Coordinator, paid for with general funds. Sixteen states, including Vermont, have legislation in the works this year for a permanent position. Attached to my testimony you will find additional facts on the impacts of dementia and how a State Dementia Coordinator will help Vermont create a comprehensive system of dementia care. Please support this position in the FY24 budget.

Vermont needs a State Dementia Coordinator \$150,000 Annual Appropriation

DEMENTIA SUPPORT TO DATE

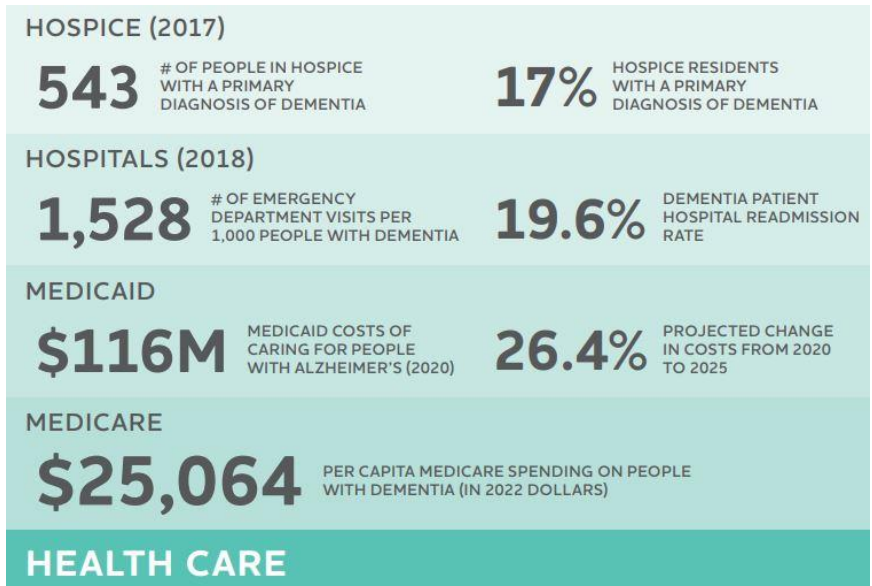
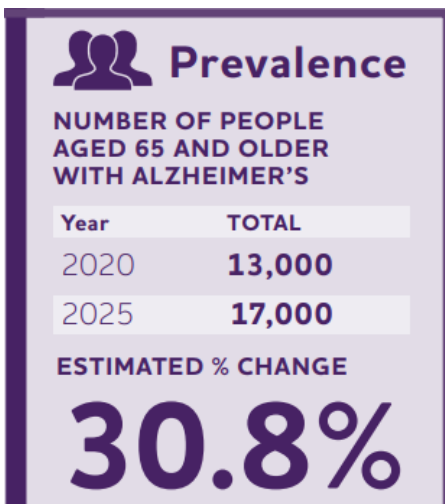
In 2020, Vermont received our first Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure grant from the CDC. This grant was for three years, \$249,000/year. With this grant we have:

- Created the Alzheimer’s Disease and Healthy Aging Program in the Department of Health.
- Completed the *2022-2025 Vermont Action Plan for Alzheimer’s Disease, Related Dementias & Healthy Aging*. This is the first dementia plan since 2008! More than 25 partner organizations helped identify 5 overarching goals and over 150 specific strategies.
- Expanded diagnosis capacity through training and support for Physicians, primarily done through our dementia focused hub-and-spoke work.
- Gathered data on the burden facing unpaid family caregivers.

This March we submitted our application for continued BOLD funding. This round will be for 5 years and up to \$600,000. Awardees will be announced in June 2023.

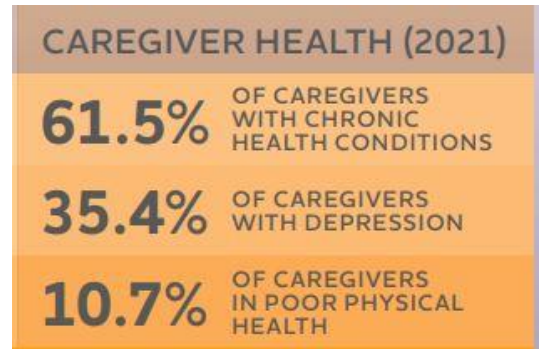
In 2022, we passed Act 113 focused on planning for the care and treatment of Vermonters with dementia. During testimony to the Senate Health and Welfare and House Human Services committees it became clear this work requires coordination between the Dept. of Health (DOH) and the Dept. of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL.) Act 113 proposed a shared position in the Agency of Human Services.

In February H.198: An act relating to establishing a Dementia Coordinator, was introduced with 26 tri-partisan cosponsors. The House Human Services Committee added this position to their budget memo and the House Appropriations Committee added this position to their version of the FY24 budget.



WHY WE NEED A DEMENTIA COORDINATOR

- A Dementia Coordinator will connect the work being done by DOH, DAIL, the Governor's Commission on ADRD, Chronic Disease Prevention, Dementia Hub and Spoke, and the Alzheimer's and Healthy Aging Work Group, creating an efficient and more sustainable system.
- A Dementia Coordinator ensures that the gains achieved with our CDC infrastructure building grants will continue into the future.
- A Dementia Coordinator will save the state money by allowing individual organizations and non-profits to thrive and support aging members in their community in a coordinated, evidence-based way. Keeping Vermonters safely in their homes is cost effective.
- A Dementia Coordinator will follow the latest training, treatments, research, state and federal program requirements, and funding opportunities to help us close gaps in all sectors.
 - Primary Care physicians are reluctant to diagnose without a clear path of next steps to provide their patients.
 - Vermonters with dementia struggle to find sufficient support to remain in their homes or communities.
 - Unpaid family caregivers face a huge burden when caring for someone with dementia. Supporting them will reduce the negative impacts of caregiving, can help them remain in the workforce, and prevent significant stress that can lead to their own illnesses.



A State Dementia Coordinator is supported by:

Alzheimer's Association, Vermont Chapter
Center on Aging at the Larner College of Medicine
Community of Vermont Elders (COVE)
Dementia Family Caregiver Center at UVMMC
Governor's Commission on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD)
Health Care Advocate, Vermont Legal Aid
Green Mountain Support Services
National Association of Social Workers, Vermont Chapter
Vermont Association of Adult Day Services (VAADS)
Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging
Vermont Ombudsman Project

Aging

Vermonters with dementia require significant support. A State Dementia Coordinator will help identify Vermont appropriate, cost effective solutions to this challenge.

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If you have questions please contact:

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