



# ENHANCING COMMUNITY- CLINICAL LINKAGES

## *A HEALTHY BRAIN INITIATIVE ISSUE MAP*

The *Healthy Brain Initiative: State and Local Road Map for Public Health, 2023–2027* is a guidebook for state and local public health practitioners to address brain health and caregiving in their communities, advance health equity, and fully integrate cognitive health into public health practice.

Find the HBI Road Map and additional tools, resources and data at:  
[alz.org/HBIRoadMap](https://alz.org/HBIRoadMap) and [cdc.gov/aging](https://cdc.gov/aging)



# PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITY-CLINICAL LINKAGES

At this critical juncture in the evolution of science and understanding of brain health, serving as a convener is an important and unique role for public health. This role cascades into nearly every aspect of the HBI Road Map. By recognizing community-clinical linkages and serving as a conduit for relationship building and connection, public health can have a pivotal impact.

Numerous agencies, both public and private, have been working with the aging population and people living with dementia for many years. Public health can support and further this work by leveraging established relationships, bringing in traditional and non-traditional partners from many sectors across the life course, identifying connections and gaps and facilitating coordinated action. Non-traditional partnerships include those outside of the health field such as faith communities, small businesses, unions, schools, media, civic and social justice organizations, and fraternities and sororities.

Partnerships with state and community agencies can improve access to programs and provide critical links to valuable services. New coalitions need to be created or the health department could join existing coalitions, broaden their membership and expand the scope to address brain health. Expanding partnerships increases the reach of the health department's programs and overall utilization of a community's resources.

Partnerships also offer opportunities to address social determinants of health (SDOH) and health equity from different angles. For example, partnerships and coalitions can promote equitable access to healthy and safe neighborhoods and environments. Partnerships can also promote access to community resources that encourage socialization, especially for those living with disabilities, living alone or in areas with limited transportation options.

## COMPELLING DATA

- » Approximately 70% of people with dementia live in the community, with 1 in 4 living alone.<sup>1</sup>
- » Eighty-three percent (83%) of people with subjective cognitive decline have at least one additional chronic condition.<sup>2</sup>
- » In March 2021, only 23% of U.S. civilian workers had access to paid family leave.<sup>3</sup>
- » Lower wage workers were less likely than higher wage workers to have access to paid family leave. In March 2021, 6% of private industry workers with an average wage in the lowest 10% had access to paid family leave, compared with 43% of workers with an average wage in the highest 10%.<sup>4</sup>
- » Nearly half (48%) of people who provide help to older adults do so for someone with Alzheimer's or another dementia.<sup>5</sup>
- » Approximately one-quarter of dementia caregivers are "sandwich generation" caregivers — meaning that they care not only for an aging parent but also for at least one child.<sup>5</sup>

### References

1. Unpublished tabulations based on data from the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey for 2018. Prepared under contract by Health Care Cost Institute, December 2021.
2. Subjective cognitive decline among adults aged 45 and older. Analysis of 2019-2020 BRFSS data. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/data/infographic/2019-2020/aggregate-scd.html>.
3. National Compensation Survey. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/ebs/publications/pdf/family-leave-benefits-fact-sheet.pdf>
4. A look at paid family leave by wage category in 2021. Bureau of Labor Statistics. January 10, 2022. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2022/a-look-at-paid-family-leave-by-wage-category-in-2021.htm>
5. Alzheimer's Association. 2023 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures. *Alzheimers Dement.* 2023;19(4). <https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.13016>

## Potential Partners to Enhance Community-Clinical Linkages

- » Area Agencies on Aging
- » Community-based programs
- » Condition-specific specialists
- » Elected officials
- » Employers and the business community
- » Faith-based organizations
- » Health and social care providers
- » Medical and primary care associations
- » Nonprofits and community leaders representing people who are medically underserved or are at a higher risk for dementia
- » Nutrition programs
- » Other local, tribal, city and state health departments in your region
- » People with lived experience with cognitive decline
- » People with caregiving experience
- » Public safety and emergency response officials
- » Respite services
- » Other governmental agencies

# COMMUNITY-CLINICAL LINKAGES ACTION AGENDA

The framework of the Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI) Road Map, built on the 10 Essential Public Health Services (EPHS) and Public Health 3.0, consists of four domains that encompass one or more of the essential services. Actions within each domain help state and local public health enhance community-clinical linkages.

## STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND POLICIES



**P-2** Utilize **community-clinical linkages** to improve equitable access to community-based chronic disease prevention, dementia support and healthy aging programs.

**P-3** Partner across the community to promote **equitable access to services, supports and quality care** for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

**P-4** Partner with **public and private health plans** to implement evidence-informed policies and programs that impact social determinants of health related to brain health and cognitive impairment.

## MEASURE, EVALUATE AND UTILIZE DATA



Implementation of any action should include plans to collect and analyze pertinent data, evaluate implementation, and share findings with multi-sector partners to work toward shared goals and outcomes. All actions of the M domain support this approach.

## BUILD A DIVERSE AND SKILLED WORKFORCE



**W-4** Strengthen training of **community health and direct service workers** about brain health across the life course to improve equitable care and quality of life for those living with cognitive impairment and to support caregivers.

**W-5** Partner with **public safety and emergency response agencies** to improve their ability to recognize and meet the needs of people living with cognitive decline and dementia.

## ENGAGE AND EDUCATE THE PUBLIC



**E-6** Enhance communication with **people living with dementia, their families and caregivers** about how to access services, care and social supports.

**E-7** Ensure **caregivers** have information, tools and resources about their vital role and ways to maintain their own **health and well-being**.



# PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERTISE TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY-CLINICAL LINKAGES

The [Healthy Brain Initiative \(HBI\) Collaborative](#) is a multi-component approach that aims to fully integrate cognitive health into public health practice, reducing the risk and impact of Alzheimer's and other dementias. Membership includes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and organizations funded to implement the national HBI strategy and BOLD Public Health Centers of Excellence. Each issue map features different HBI Collaborative members.

## HBI Collaborative Co-Chairs — CDC and Alzheimer's Association

Accelerating progress in brain health across the life course requires partnership between public health, community organizations and health care systems. This concept is often referred to as Community-Clinical Linkages. As health departments begin to establish or strengthen these linkages, the CDC and Alzheimer's Association teams have many resources that can help.

The CDC is a leader in establishing the evidence base around community-clinical linkages and their role in prevention and control of chronic disease. This [guide](#) from the CDC's Division of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention provides additional background on community-clinical linkages and the role of public health in creating successful partnerships and interventions.

Following the strategy in the guide, the first step is to learn about your community's resources and clinical sectors. The Alzheimer's Association maintains a [Community Resource Finder](#) that provides information on community and medical services as well as classes

offered by the Alzheimer's Association. By working with your local [Alzheimer's Association chapter](#), you can increase relationships with community and health care organizations and increase access to available resources in your jurisdiction.

The teams at CDC and the Alzheimer's Association are committed to improving brain health across the life course and are here to support you as you navigate how community-clinical linkages fit into your HBI Road Map Implementation.

Website: [alz.org/publichealth](http://alz.org/publichealth)

Email: [publichealth@alz.org](mailto:publichealth@alz.org)

Website: [cdc.gov/aging](http://cdc.gov/aging)

Email: [aging@cdc.gov](mailto:aging@cdc.gov)

**Community-clinical linkages** are connections between community and clinical sectors that aim to improve health within a community. They are an effective, evidence-based approach to preventing and managing chronic diseases such as Alzheimer's and other dementias.

**Evidence-informed approaches** are health or public health practices, procedures, programs, or policies that have been shown to be effective, however have not gone through the rigor to be deemed evidence-based. The effects are clearly linked to the activities themselves, not to outside, unrelated events.

**Public health approach** focuses on improving the health of entire populations across the lifespan, including dementia risk reduction, early detection and diagnosis, prevention and management of comorbidities leading to preventable hospitalizations, community-clinical linkages, referral to services and caregiving for persons with dementia. It also includes building coordinated systems that bind together jurisdiction efforts for dementia and caregiving.