

San Diego County Alzheimer's Project

October 2015

SDCTA Position:

SUPPORT

Rationale for Position:

SDCTA supports the Alzheimer's Project as it develops regional strategies with direct local impact in mitigating the effects of mental illness in San Diego County. Staff additionally recommends continued review of program effectiveness in meeting outlined goals

Alzheimer's disease and other dementias have significant and growing public health impacts. While the Alzheimer's Project lays out ambitious and forward-thinking recommendations for mitigating the impacts of these devastating illnesses, they should promote fiscally responsible management with regular review of programmatic expenditures and objective analysis of effectiveness based on clearly-defined metrics for success.

With limited public funds, dedicating program expenditures to research may prove less beneficial than efforts with direct local impact. County officials should prioritize strategies with a direct impact on the local community including improving early detection, care coordination and education. The San Diego County Taxpayers Association should support this major public health initiative while maintaining regular communication with Alzheimer's Project administrators for periodic review.

Title: San Diego County Alzheimer's Project

Jurisdiction: County of San Diego

Type: Regional Initiative

Vote: N/A

Status: In Operation

Issue: Mental Health—Alzheimer's disease in San Diego County

Description: The San Diego County Alzheimer's Project is a regional initiative aimed at reducing the impact of Alzheimer's disease countywide. The project's first year has focused on providing recommendations on a variety of mental health-related issues.

Fiscal Impact: At this time, the fiscal impact of the Project is \$460,000 in the most recent County budget allocating funds to the creation of Project resources and implementation of recommendations. Costs associated with new mental health programs may rise depending on the County's implementation methods for the program's recommendations. No new county positions of ongoing expenditures have been created for the Project.

Background:

In May of 2014, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors voted to direct County staff to develop a plan to improve the network of available resources, create a public education campaign and support legislation that increases funding for research related to Alzheimer's disease. Specific direction was given to staff to solicit input from a broad base of experts including caregivers, researchers and mental health organizations. The County of San Diego

Alzheimer's Project was formed to leverage collaboration and resources between public health agencies, hospitals, universities, research institutions and philanthropic organizations.

Alzheimer's disease is cited as the third leading cause of death in San Diego with over 60,000 San Diegans estimated to be living with the disease according to the Alzheimer's Association of San Diego. Nationwide estimates for the costs associated with Alzheimer's total more than \$214 billion annually.¹

In the spring of 2015, the Alzheimer's Project released an annual report for FY 2014-15 detailing the program's findings and recommendations for countywide policies to address the issues associated with Alzheimer's disease.

The Alzheimer's Project recommendations in the FY2014-2015 report relate to the following broader efforts:

- Promote fundraising efforts for research and drug discovery
- Develop clinical standards for screening, diagnosis and management
- Boost public awareness of symptoms and management
- Increase training for caregivers and expand services and support for patients
- Reduce incidents of patient wandering through technology and other methods

Summary of Policy Recommendations:

In 2015, the Alzheimer's Project released an annual report with policy recommendations for dealing with mental illness and dementia in San Diego County.

A summary of these initial policy suggestions that require *new* public or private funding is provided below. A full list of recommendations is available in the Alzheimer's Project Implementation Plan.

Research:

- Secure private investment for local research spending (\$7 million goal by 2019)
- Promote cooperative efforts between academics and health industry
- Expedite drug discovery
- Publicize impacts of Alzheimer's disease
- Support legislation that increases funding for Alzheimer's research

Abuse & Neglect:

- Promote independent living and Public Guardian programs
- Address needs of isolated individuals
- Revitalize Project Care Program for vulnerable populations
- Increase community awareness of recognizing signs of abuse
- Promote tracking of dementia patients with case management system

Wandering

- Coordinate consistent post-Search & Recovery response to prevent future wandering

¹ County of San Diego; "[The Alzheimer's Project: A Call to Arms FY2014-2015.](#)" Accessed: July, 2015.

- Enhance Take Me Home program
- Investigate using ‘Silver Alert’ program to locate wandering individuals

Transportation

- Increase awareness and use of affordable transportation options
- Review expanding Community-Based Care Program
- Expand dementia-specific Adult Day Care/Adult Health Care
- Develop pilot project to investigate impact of health plan reimbursement for non-medical ADOD services
- Expand Family Caregiver Resource Centers countywide

Caregiver & ADOD Patient Support

- Increase awareness of end-of-life issues, hospice & palliative programs
- Increase diversity of caregivers countywide (cultural and linguistic)
- Self-Management programs for early stage individuals
- Develop capacity to support aging in place for ADOD
- Invest in new technology for caregivers
- Increase affordability of home care
- Increase availability & affordability of residential care

Workplace Care

- Work with employers to manage stresses of working caregivers
- Enhance resources for caregivers (webinars, educational materials)

Resource Coordination

- Resolve gaps in connecting adults with ADOD and their caregivers with available resources

Education & Public Awareness

- Train County staff and first responders to better serve individuals with ADOD
- Partner with libraries countywide to distribute awareness materials to the public
- Create public education campaign assist individuals with life and financial planning

Fiscal Impact and Funding Sources:

Financial Impact of Alzheimer’s disease

The County of San Diego cites Alzheimer’s as the third leading cause of death in the region and a costly drain on County health funds.² This same County research estimates the annual costs associated with Alzheimer’s or other dementias as between \$41,000 and \$52,000 a year per patient. Currently, over 60,000 residents of the County are estimated to be living with Alzheimer’s or other dementia. This population of older and at-risk Americans is forecasted to rise.

² County of San Diego Health and Human Services. “[The Economic Burden of Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementias in San Diego County](#).” Accessed: July, 2015.

While it is difficult to forecast a true cost to taxpayers of Alzheimer's and other dementias, nationwide estimates project that costs associated with caring for the disease will be as high as \$1 trillion by 2050.³

The Alzheimer's Association goes on to project that Medicare and Medicaid will spend \$153 billion on Alzheimer's in 2015 and an estimated \$765 billion annually by 2050.

The California Alzheimer's Plan estimates significant increases to Medi-Cal as a result of a rapidly aging population:

The economic value of unpaid care is expected to rise from \$37.2 billion to \$72.7 billion [by 2030]. Costs of formal services, including traditional medical and social supports, are expected to jump from \$16 billion to \$31.3 billion by 2030. Demographic data indicates that older Californians are now living alone—without the support of a spouse, adult child or other relative—placing new demands on more costly, formal services.⁴

Because of nursing home and other care-related expenditures, the California Alzheimer's Plan estimates that the cost to Medi-Cal to care for these patients is at least 2.5 times as high as patients of comparable age and demographics.

Local Program Funding

\$460,000 was included in the county's recently approved budget to support The Alzheimer's Project. This will go toward respite care, support for the Sheriff's Take Me Home Program, Project Care and the home modification program to keep seniors safe in their homes as the disease progresses.

In addition to this, the Collaboration for Cure (C4C) fundraising efforts successfully raised the first year's goal of \$500,000 in private donations for local research. The funding is intended to leverage the region's screening assets to move innovative research proposals forward. This fund has a fundraising goal of \$7 million between 2015 and 2019 as identified in the Project's FY14-15 annual report.

In this annual report, recommendations are made for numerous efforts which require new funding. The Alzheimer's Project has not yet identified the total cost associated with these recommendations or the source of this new funding. According to their annual report, Project leadership will seek investment from private sources to augment the County's current health funding.

The County Health and Human Services Agency funding priorities include the following Alzheimer's Project related activities that will be funded by California Social Services Realignment dollars:

- Hispanic Caregiver Conference
- Financial & Life Planning Outreach and Education

³ The Alzheimer's Association. "[2015 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures](#)." Accessed: July, 2015

⁴ The Alzheimer's Association. "[California State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease: 2011-2021](#)." Accessed, August 2015.

- Alzheimer's Project Website
- Adult Protective Services Media Campaign
- Healthier Living Expansion for Caregivers

Additionally, a federal grant funded by the Federal Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program and received by San Diego State University includes \$2.5 million over a three year period to provide training to enable many in the community to work more effectively with people with memory loss and their families. This grant will assist with meeting identified Alzheimer's Project priorities to train County personnel, first responders, caregivers, healthcare providers, In-Home Supportive Services providers, students, older adult service providers and residential care service providers.

Need for Objective Review

While Alzheimer's disease and other dementia-related conditions impose an immense burden on health agencies, the ambitious plan put forward in the Alzheimer's Project recommendations will undoubtedly come at no small cost. As they are implemented, these new efforts should be regularly reviewed for effectiveness in addition to annual auditing of expenditures from public funds.

Proponents:

- San Diego County Board of Supervisors
- San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer
- Scripps Health
- UC San Diego Health System

Proponent Arguments:

- Alzheimer's Disease will be a major healthcare challenge for years to come and requires comprehensive efforts
- This plan takes into account the needs of both professional and informal caregivers, e.g. family members, as well as adults afflicted with Alzheimer's and other dementias
- The Alzheimer's Project will leverage private investments for research and programmatic funding, relieving the burden on County general funds

Opponents:

- None to date

Opponent Arguments:

- As written, the Alzheimer's Project recommendations do not take into account the fiscal impact of such a large-scale investment in public health
- Project administrators need to create additional safeguards against ineffective spending on program goals and institute accountability measures