

2009 public policy priorities

By 2010, an estimated 80,000 South Carolinians will be living with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.



The Alzheimer's Association - South Carolina Chapter, a voluntary health organization, works throughout the state to provide support services for families affected by Alzheimer's now and to develop effective treatments for patients in the future. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's, but we can't accomplish that alone. We call upon the members of the South Carolina General Assembly to join us in supporting the following:

1. Caregiver Respite Grant Program

Most individuals with Alzheimer's, as well as their caregivers, have a strong desire to remain at home rather than begin institutionalized care. This is reflected in the fact that 70% of all long-term care is provided by family caregivers. However, caregiving is extremely taxing on an individual's health, and over 40% of caregivers report high levels of emotional stress. The Respite Grant Program, now funded through the South Carolina Department of Mental Health, is a crucial service that the Chapter is able to provide for over 1,500 families annually to support their mental health and well-being. In the year 2007, 56% of respite grant users reported a significant reduction in stress as a result of utilizing the in-home care, adult day care or short-term facility services made available through respite funding.

As increasing numbers of people are affected by this disease, it is critical that restricted funding for the Caregiver Respite Grant Program be sustained at \$1 million in the 2010 budget.

2. Policy Recommendations by the Purple Ribbon Alzheimer's Task Force

In South Carolina alone, the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease is projected to increase 19% to 80,000 people between the years 2000 and 2010. Our state is taking an important step to prepare for this public health crisis now by developing a comprehensive state plan to address this disease. The Purple Ribbon Alzheimer's Task Force will deliver its public policy recommendations and proposed timeline to the legislature and the Lt. Governor in March, 2009.

Without action, the insightful recommendations of the Purple Ribbon Alzheimer's Task Force will be futile. Legislative support is vital to the implementation of policy solutions to benefit those affected across the state. Constituents will be seeking your support on identified issues in the Spring.

3. Expansion of Alzheimer's Disease Registry

The Alzheimer's Disease Registry maintains a central information database on individuals with Alzheimer's disease or related disorders that assists in the development of public policy and planning. The Alzheimer's Disease Registry, in conjunction with the Alzheimer's Association, seeks a revision to the 1992 legislation outlining the Registry's function that would result in a more comprehensive statistical database. Proposed changes would further define the authorized functions of the Registry, allowing for an expansion of data collection by directly assessing caregiver burden, services utilized, and risk factors. The registry would also be able to direct patients and families to helpful services and resources in their communities.

In order to vastly enhance the scope of data collection and statistical analysis, we call for a revision of SC Code 44-36 authorizing the Registry to obtain the consent of patient or legal representative in order to be contacted by the Alzheimer's Registry.

4. Uniform Adult Guardianship and Protective Proceedings Jurisdiction Act

The Alzheimer's Association joins with the American Bar Association and the National Conference of Commissioners for Uniform State Laws in calling for a uniform set of rules for determining jurisdiction in adult guardianship cases that cross state lines.

The adoption of a more uniform and efficient adult guardianship system will help remove uncertainty for individuals with dementia in crisis and help them reach appropriate resolution faster.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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the compassion to care,
the leadership to conquer