

Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Aging and Older Adult Services Committee  
Public Hearing on Alzheimer's Disease

Testimony of the Pennsylvania Department of Aging

Ray Prushnok, Deputy Secretary

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Chair Mundy, Chair Hennessey and honorable members of the Committee, good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss a disease that affects approximately 280,000 older Pennsylvanians and what services are offered to support those individuals through the Pennsylvania Department of Aging and the Pennsylvania Office of Long-Term Living. My name is Ray Prushnok and I serve as Deputy Secretary for the Department of Aging.

Compared to older adults with physical health conditions who are cognitively able to direct their own care, individuals with Alzheimer's disease or dementia and their families often have an increased need for support. An individual in the middle to late stages of the illness may need assistance during the day to perform activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, and eating. As the disease progresses, the individual generally develops a disorientation to space, time, and location and will need additional support and supervision throughout the day to ensure her safety. Whether support is provided informally by family and friends or provided formally through Aging programs, we must consider this increased level of need when developing home- and community- based programs to serve those with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers.

We continue to explore how to serve these individuals within existing home- and community- based programs. Some areas we are exploring include improving training for caregivers, improving outreach to physicians, and educating the AAA workforce through P4A's Training Institute.

The Department provides direct services to older adults with Alzheimer's disease and their families through a variety of programs. In total, the AAA network is serving 8,194 individuals with an Alzheimer's or dementia diagnosis. This is an important caveat – that these are individuals with a documented diagnosis that we were able to validate. Many more people are living with short and long term memory impairment or other signs of these progressive diseases.

- The *Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP)* is designed to assist primary caregivers with caring for functionally dependent older persons and cognitively impaired adult relatives. The program's goal is to reduce caregiver stress and burden through benefits and resource counseling, access to support groups, caregiving skills training and education, support and financial assistance. Many of the participants in the FCSP are persons suffering from Alzheimer's disease or their families. Currently, 1,136 enrolled consumers have an Alzheimer's disease or dementia diagnosis. FSCP consumers who are nursing facility eligible have a rate of diagnosis of 34 percent.
- The *Medicaid 60+, Aging Waiver* is intended for individuals 60 years of age and older who are Medicaid eligible, according to established functional and financial criteria. Services in this waiver may include adult day care, counseling, personal assistance services, home health, personal care, protective services, home-delivered meals, transportation services, respite care, and home support services.

Twenty-six percent of Aging Waiver clients have an Alzheimer's or dementia diagnosis.

- The *OPTIONS Program* provides similar services as the Aging Waiver through the Area Agency on Aging block grant. Thirty-two percent (1,107 out of 3,465) of OPTIONS consumers who are nursing facility eligible have an Alzheimer's or dementia diagnosis.
- *Adult day services* provide a protective environment for older adults who are not capable of full-time independent living. Daily services such as socialization, recreation, nutrition, transportation, supervision, basic personal care, reality orientation, and self-help training can be found in most centers. Additionally, this service provides a respite for caregivers enabling them to work outside of the home or to take a break from the daily rigors of 24 hour caregiving, thus preventing caregiver burnout. Individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias account for approximately 42% of attendees at licensed adult day programs in the commonwealth.
- *LIFE* is a managed care program for frail elderly recipients who have been determined to need "nursing facility level of care" but wish to remain in their home and community as long as possible. LIFE provides a comprehensive all-inclusive package of services to meet their needs. This includes all Medicaid and Medicare physical health and long-term care services. The program is centered around an adult day health center where recipients receive most services. Transportation is provided to and from centers and other services. Home care is provided as needed. Of individuals enrolled in the program, high percentages are individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

In addition to the individuals served through home and community-based services, there are 44,689 Pennsylvanians who are residing in nursing facilities with an Alzheimer's or dementia diagnosis. This represents 58 percent of the total nursing facility census and 62 percent of the Medicaid caseload – growing from 56 percent in 2000.

The Department provides education and outreach related to Alzheimer's disease directly through the educational initiatives we sponsor and indirectly through funding provided to the Alzheimer's Association chapters.

The Brain Health Lifestyles workshop is conducted for our Prime Time Health Coordinators and others who provide health education for adults in Pennsylvania. The workshop is designed to help coordinators provide multiple sessions, covering the domains of nutrition, physical activity, mental stimulation, socialization, and spirituality. In addition, Mental Health education is one of the priorities for Prime Time Health programs implemented by Area Agencies on Aging (AAA's). AAA's provide the Alzheimer's Association *Maintain Your Brain* program and offer education about Alzheimer education and screenings, depression (holidays), brain fitness/mental health,

how to cope with dementia, sleep and aging, puzzles/games for brain stimulation, and living alone.

Additionally, we include Alzheimer's and dementia education in various conferences we facilitate throughout the year. Conference attendees include caseworkers and professionals working in the Aging, Mental Health, and Developmental Disabilities fields. In FY 2008-2009, two sessions on Alzheimer's disease were offered during the Building Bridges conference for professionals in the Aging and Developmental Disabilities fields. In addition, the annual Care Management and Nursing Home Transition conferences routinely offer sessions on Alzheimer's disease for care managers and providers in the Aging and Long-Term Living networks.

The Department provides annual funding of \$200,000 to the two Alzheimer's Association chapters in the Commonwealth. The chapters provide education and outreach to individuals with Alzheimer's disease and their families and to professionals who serve these individuals.

Thank you again for your time. We know how important that issue is to the many individuals and families it affects. We look forward to continuing to work with you to provide the best services and supports possible. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.