

GEORGIA ALZHEIMER'S
& RELATED DEMENTIAS
STATE PLAN



GARD
— collaborative —

2024
PROGRESS REPORT

STATE FISCAL YEARS 2020-2024

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the members of the Georgia Alzheimer's and Related Dementias (GARD) State Plan Advisory Council. Their commitment and leadership in directing GARD efforts are greatly appreciated.

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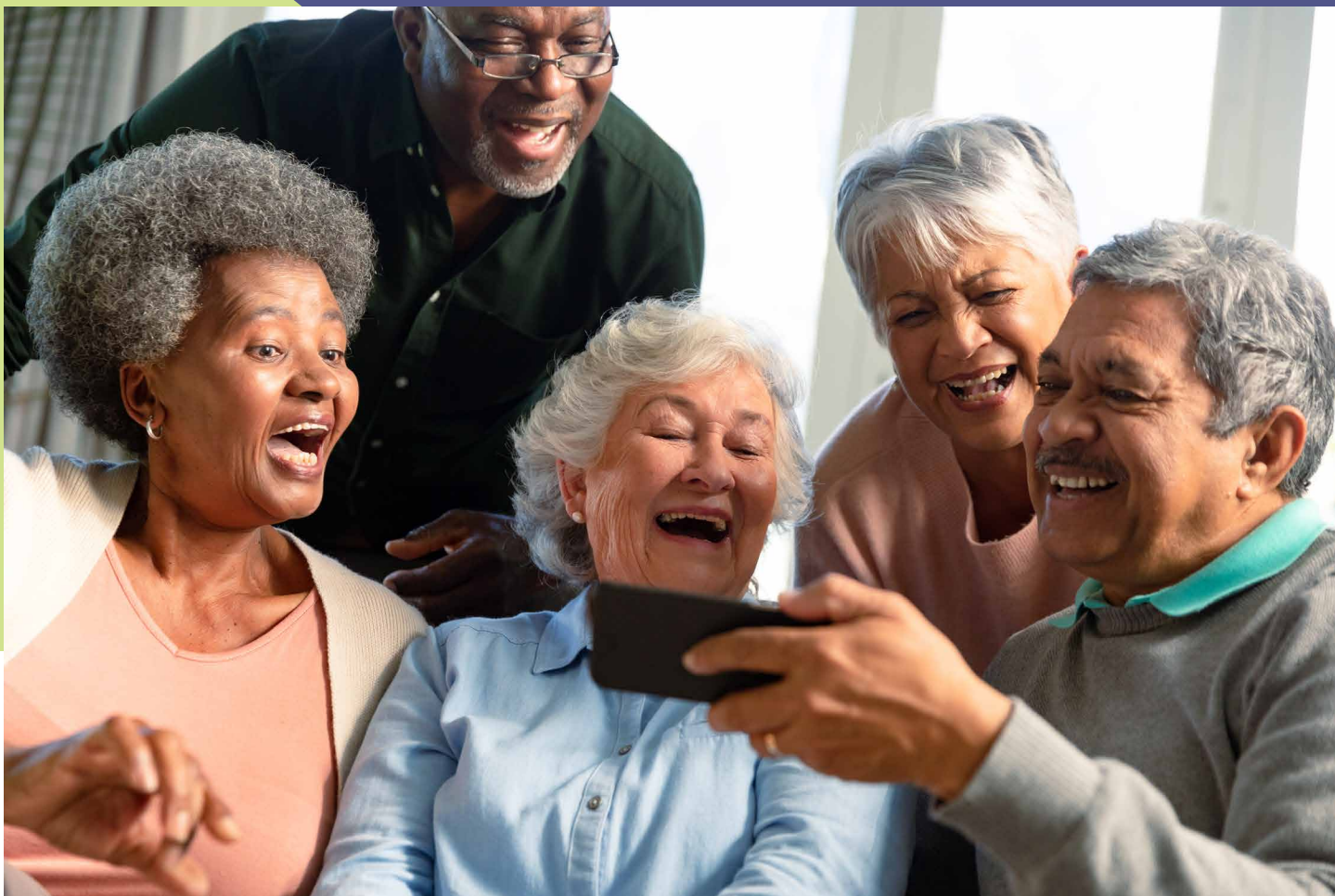
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Driving the GARD State Plan efforts is the GARD Collaborative, a statewide network of representatives from agencies, nonprofits, businesses, persons living with dementia, and their care partners. The GARD Collaborative is comprised of six different workgroups tasked with making strides toward the goals and objectives outlined in the State Plan. Current workgroups include:

- Research & Data
- Service Delivery
- Outreach & Partnerships
- Workforce Development
- Public Safety
- Policy



Background

Background, History, & Timeline

Today, more than 188,000 Georgians live with Alzheimer's disease, and tens of thousands more experience other forms of dementia.

Like many states, Georgia answered the call set forth by the National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease by crafting a unique blueprint to address the growing challenge of dementia.

The six task force members and dozens of experts in diverse fields formed committees, conducted research, and made detailed recommendations that formed the core of the original GARD State Plan. The document described current demographics, prevalence statistics, and existing resources; analyzed the state's capacity to meet growing needs; and presented a roadmap to create a more dementia-capable Georgia.

The Plan's Beginnings

During the 2013 session of the Georgia General Assembly, legislators created the GARD State Plan Task Force, a multidisciplinary group convened to improve dementia research, awareness, training, and care.

State Plan Establishment & Updates

In June 2014, then-Governor Nathan Deal signed the GARD State Plan, which included the establishment of an advisory council to provide oversight for the Collaborative.

The GARD State Plan is designed to be a living document that is responsive to the needs of Georgians and allows for flexibility in approach and strategy for the workgroups. In 2020, the Georgia Department of Human Services' Division of Aging Services (DAS) contracted with the Georgia Health Policy Center to make updates to the plan. The Collaborative continued to work throughout the pandemic in 2020 and faced some challenges and opportunities.



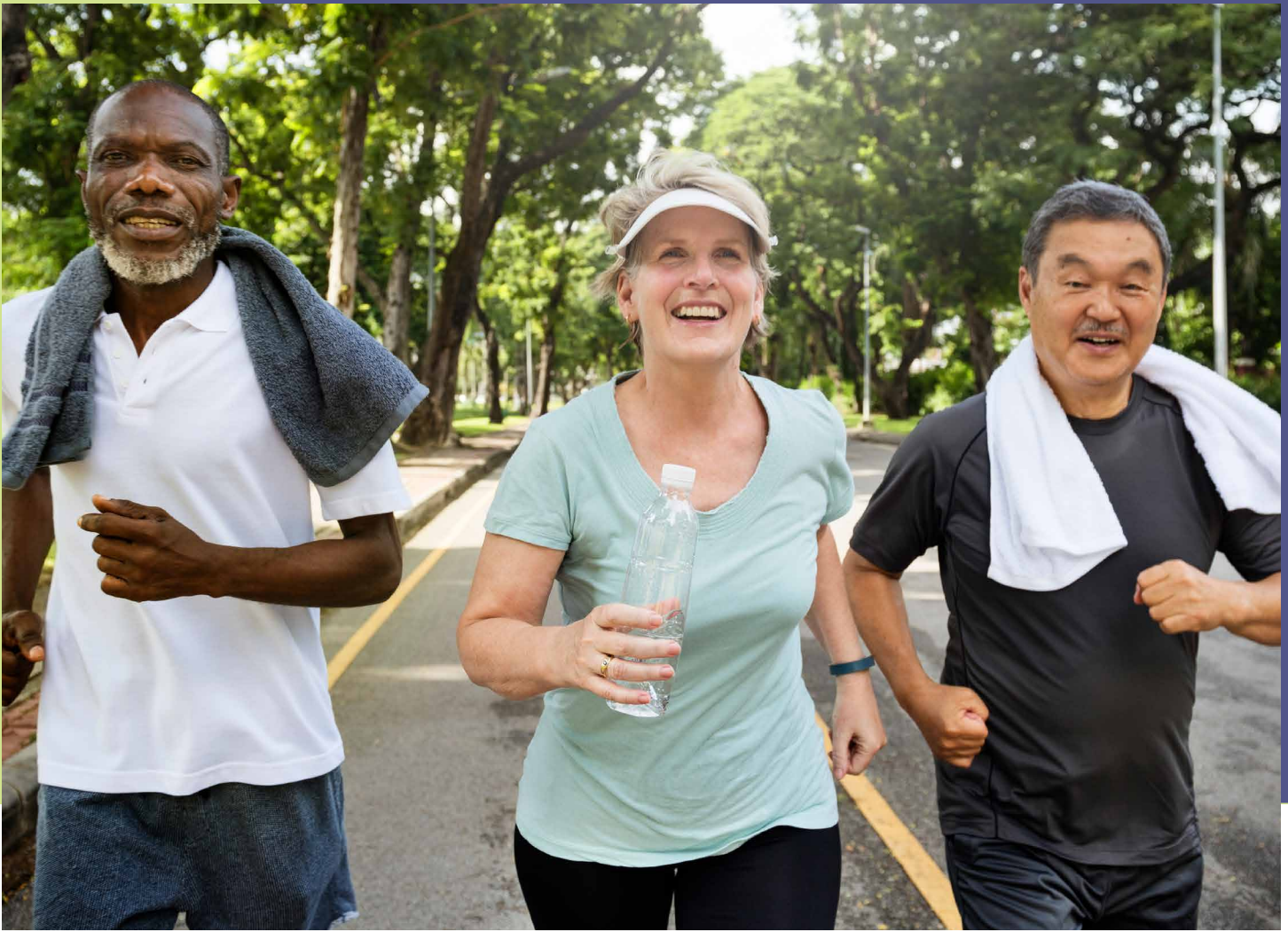
Challenges

- Turnover in participants, leadership, and workgroup chairs
- Lack of virtual technology tools for effective inter-group collaboration
- Conflicting priorities as most GARD members are frontline workers who were engaged in ensuring the safety of older adults during COVID

Opportunities

- Establishment of a dementia team in DAS
- Renewed engagement from volunteers, Collaborative members, and stakeholders
- Updated strategies to inform GARD's work through 2027
- Recruitment of diverse members, targeting specific professionals and broader areas of the state, to join the Collaborative as key stakeholders
- Increased integration and cross-collaboration between the workgroups
- Use of a new technology platform to facilitate inter-group collaboration and communication





State Plan Goals

Research & Data

- Champion and strengthen existing research and data collection related to cognitive decline and dementia diagnosis, care, and support
- Identify and pursue opportunities to expand research and data collection of dementia-related surveillance, care, and support
- Support analysis, translation, and dissemination of available dementia-related research and data for sharing with multiple audiences

Workforce Development

- Develop a person-centered, dementia-capable, culturally-responsive workforce
- Develop and implement a tiered career and training model for Georgia's direct-care workforce to improve job quality and the quality of care
- Improve retention of the dementia workforce

Service Delivery

- Increase the availability of health and social services tailored for individuals living with dementia and their families
- Support efforts that provide training for care partners and volunteers in person-centered care
- Improve consumer access and experience with the service delivery system, focusing on informal service networks not already captured by the Area Agency on Aging network, public health departments, and health care systems
- Improve consumer and care partner access to needed services and information, including identifying eligibility criteria for services
- Strengthen care partners' capacity to deliver high-quality services for persons living with dementia and their families

Public Safety

- Ensure public safety organizations and financial organizations are prepared to assure the safety of persons living with cognitive decline and dementia who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- Reduce rates of injury and enhance legal protections for people living with cognitive decline and dementia
- Enhance legal protections for people living with cognitive decline and dementia
- Ensure the inclusion of people living with cognitive decline and dementia and considerations for their unique needs in the state's emergency preparedness plans

Outreach and Partnerships

- Initiate and maximize opportunities to disseminate accurate, comprehensive, and timely information to the public about dementia risk factors, protective elements, and management
- Educate the public and organizations to become more dementia-friendly and dementia-inclusive across all types of dementia
- Expand Georgia's capacity to promote brain health and address the needs of persons living with cognitive decline and dementia, their care partners, and their families through strategic partnerships and resource sharing, leveraging existing funding, and accessing new resources

Policy

- Inform state budgetary, legislative, and regulatory actions that impact individuals living with cognitive decline and dementia and their care partners





Achievements

- House Bill 987 was passed in 2020 to improve the care provided to people living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia in an assisted living facility or a personal care home. GARD coalition members, including providers, stakeholders, advocates, and legislators, worked diligently to create this important legislation which increases staff training, improves staffing ratios, requires special certification for memory care units, and increases fines for those who intentionally harm residents.
- GARD members and the Georgia Department of Public Health Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) team have been successful on two rounds of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention BOLD Infrastructure grant funding. Their

current funding runs from 2023-2028. The BOLD team connected partners at the University of Georgia, Second Wind Dreams, Savvy Caregiver, and Alter to provide programming to first responders, communities, and caregivers. They also created a baseline course for emergency medical services (EMS) credit. To date, over 200 EMS continuing education units have been awarded with over 100 unique participants. Additionally, they collaborated with the Georgia Memory Net (GMN) on primary care physician engagement to create telehealth options for GMN patients through local health departments in Georgia cities. There are currently nine live sites. Georgia is the first state in the nation to launch this type of initiative.

- During the 2022 Legislative Session, GARD partners from the Georgia Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association successfully advocated for a \$1.25 million investment from the General Assembly to fund a statewide Dementia Care Specialist program to meet the unique needs of people living with dementia.
- GMN received a \$3 million expansion fund in FY 2023, which resulted in two new Memory Assessment Clinics, for a total of seven statewide.
- Research and Data Co-chairs Dr. Miranda Moore and Dr. Adrienne Cohen conducted a research project on dementia in Georgia and presented at the 2024 Southern Gerontological Society Meeting and Conference.
- House Bill 571 was signed into law in May 2024, amending the GARD State Plan to require an update every four years, aligning with the state plan cycle for the DAS State Plan.
- DHS's Forensic Special Initiatives Unit (FSIU), who are representatives of the Public Safety workgroup, played a major role in launching specialized regional multidisciplinary teams to respond to and investigate crimes against at-risk adults, including those with cognitive decline and dementia. They continue to help with start-ups of new teams and assist with working difficult cases. FSIU also provides certification for law enforcement on abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- GMN hosted two virtual training sessions: (1) Frontotemporal Degeneration: Misdiagnosed & Misunderstood and (2) Navigating the Mild Cognitive Impairment/Dementia Journey: Considerations for Effective Counseling with nearly 300 professionals in attendance.
- The Workforce Development workgroup developed a three-part continuing education series for the American Psychological Association that was designed to increase health professionals' awareness of the signs, symptoms, and lived experience of people living with young onset dementia and their care partners. The series, entitled "Young Onset Dementia: What Health Professionals Need to Know," covered the following: (1) Understanding Signs & Symptoms; (2) The Lived Experience; and (3) The Role of Therapists.

- The Georgia Gerontology Society and the GARD Workforce Development workgroup created a series of videos featuring Georgia citizens with dementia and their care partners. Interviewees discussed a series of issues including what they want health care professionals to know: challenges, communicating with professionals, first signs, five key messages, how to treat people living with dementia, importance of support, maintaining a good quality of life, the diagnosis journey, ways communities can help, and words of wisdom from care partners.
- In collaboration with the Outreach and Partnerships workgroup and partners at the Culture Change Network of Georgia and Georgia State University's Gerontology Institute, the Workforce Development workgroup developed a series of open access micro-learning videos called "Dementia, Including Alzheimer's: What Public Health Professionals Need To Know," that serve as an accessible introduction to dementia care and have been enriched by the direct contributions and feedback from individuals living with dementia and their care partners to ensure authenticity and practical relevance. The Georgia Department of Public Health Injury Prevention Program, as a recipient of the CDC BOLD Infrastructure grant, facilitated this project by becoming a course provider to host the learning modules on the TRAIN GA learning platform. The four modules are live on the TRAIN GA learning platform and available for EMS course credit.
- GARD partners from Georgia State University's Gerontology Institute and The Culture Change Network of Georgia have received two three-year Civil Money Penalty Reinvestment Program grants. The \$1.6 million Building Resources for Delivering Person-Centered Care in Georgia Nursing Homes (BRPCC) and the \$1.5 million Trauma-Informed Approach to Improving Dementia Care in Georgia Nursing Homes grants have provided important resources, staff development and training, and accessible high-quality education for Georgia's 374 nursing homes. The interventions are expected to improve the quality of life of nursing home residents, including those living with dementia, and reduce the misuse of antipsychotic medications. Additionally, they will increase the residents' sense of autonomy, independence, empowerment, and connectedness.

The grant team developed CULTURE CHANGE MattersSM educational modules for supervisory staff and direct-care and support associates. The team has created over 80 microlearning videos and a series of webinars on person-centered dementia care, quality improvement, and trauma-informed care as well as given nursing homes and stakeholders the opportunity to take the Certified Eden Associate Training and Dementia Beyond Drugs: Changing the Culture of Care online educational experiences.



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