



Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission Annual Report

**Report to
the Governor of Virginia, the Virginia General Assembly
and the Virginia Department for Aging and
Rehabilitative Services**

Richmond

October 1, 2025

THE 2025 REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DISORDERS COMMISSION

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Authority: Pursuant to the Code of Virginia § 51.5-154, the Virginia Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission (Commission) must submit to the Governor, General Assembly, and Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) a report regarding the recommendations and activities of the Commission each year. The Commission, chaired by Lana Sargent, develops and oversees the implementation of the Commonwealth's Plan for meeting the needs of individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders and their caregivers.

Commission Recommendations for the 2026 General Assembly

Deliver a Statewide Program of Dementia Care Specialists at Area Agencies on Aging

Extend the Sunset for the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission

Deliver Comprehensive Dementia Training for First Responders

Support the Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program

Introduce Tax Incentives for Unpaid Family Caregivers

2024-2025 HIGHLIGHTS



Virginia Dementia Road Map updated and revised: see p. 3

Brain Health messaging for Area Agencies on Aging: see p. 3.

Living Well with Dementia: A Community Series to commemorate Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness month in June: see p. 3.

ADRD Commission Policy Recommendations for 2026: see p. 5.

No Wrong Door Dementia Capability project: see box on p. 8.

BOLD (Building Our Largest Dementia) Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act: The Commission collaborates with Healthy Brain Virginia: see box on p. 9.

Virginia Dementia State Plan 2024-2027 Implementation Plan approved and tracking commenced: see p. 12.

Details of the recommendations are found starting on page 5.

VIRGINIA'S DEMENTIA STATE PLAN 2024-2027

In December 2011, the Commission released the first Dementia State Plan. This was updated in 2015, 2019 and again in 2023. The Commission will continue its work through implementing the [Virginia Dementia State Plan 2024-2027: Building a Dementia-Capable Virginia](#) published on January 2, 2024. The Plan maintains a focus on coordinated care through a network of memory assessment clinics and connections to public health initiatives, and in 2024 added, in line with the National Alzheimer's Plan, a new sixth goal related to brain health and dementia risk reduction. Elevating brain health and risk reduction in this way recognizes both the dramatic increase in knowledge in recent years that supports dementia prevention efforts, and the ongoing BOLD grant-funded activity by the Virginia Department of Health, DARS and other partners.

The Plan guides legislators, other public officials, health and human services professionals, advocates, and other interested people on best practices and specific strategies for dementia-focused data collection, care, training, and research and prevention.

The goals of the *Virginia Dementia State Plan 2024-2027* are:

1. Coordinate quality dementia services to ensure dementia capability;
2. Use dementia-related data to support policy development and service provision, and to improve public health outcomes;
3. Increase awareness and promote dementia-specific training;
4. Provide access to quality coordinated care for individuals living with dementia in the most integrated setting;
5. Expand resources for dementia-specific translational research and evidence-based practices; and
6. Enhance brain health and address modifiable risk factors for dementia.

The *Virginia Dementia State Plan 2024-2027*, working in tandem with the National Alzheimer's Plan, provides the best guide to responding to dementia and providing support to the increasing number of Virginians living with the disease and their care providers, whether paid or unpaid. In 2020, there were an estimated 164,000 Virginians living with Alzheimer's disease, and 2023 data from the Virginia Department of Health showed that 16.0% of people over the age of 45 are living with some form of cognitive decline that is felt to be getting worse over time. That translates to roughly 450,000 people, and as the number of people over 45 continues to rise, and with the most rapid increase expected in the over 85 range, this number is also expected to grow steadily in coming years. This growth highlights the importance of the Plan and the Commission's ongoing efforts, and especially of addressing brain health and improving efforts to prevent future dementias.

COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP 2025

Lana Sargent, PhD, *Chair*
Michael Watson, *Vice-Chair*

Leslie Bowie
Bonnie Bradshaw
Bea González
Lissa Greenlee
Stephanie LaPrade
Laura Marshall
Margie Shaver
James Stovall
James Towey
Ishan C. Williams, PhD
Jennie Wood
Zachary Wood
Faika Zanjani, PhD

Ex officio

Annette Clark, DBHDS
Rachel Coney, VDH
Jason Rachel, DMAS
Tara Ragland, DSS
Kiersten Ware, DARS

Scan the code to download
the *Virginia Dementia State
Plan 2024-2027*



COMMISSION ACTIVITIES: HIGHLIGHTS

Virginia Dementia Road Map Revised and Updated

Commission workgroups provided input and advice into updating the Virginia Dementia Road Map, Dementia Capable Virginia's flagship resource for supporting individuals and families in their dementia journey. The Road Map was first published in 2022 as an adaptation of Washington state's Dementia Road Map. For the Virginia version, a section on caregiver self-care was included, as well as an expanded resource section. The document has been incredibly well-received, with the initial print run of 5,000 copies quickly disseminated into the community, and the electronic copy being consistently one of the most frequently downloaded documents from the DARS website.

Work on updating and revising the Road Map began in 2024, and was finalized in early 2025. The update includes additional sections on hospice and palliative care, which are services that are chronically underused by people living with dementia, and expanded information around caregiving, including helping people understand and identify with the tasks that caregiving entails, no matter how they think of themselves (husband, daughter, care partner, caretaker, etc.). Printed copies have been distributed to all Area Agencies on Aging and other partner organizations, and include codes to scan for feedback and ordering more paper copies.

Brain Health Resources for Area Agencies on Aging

The Brain Health Workgroup worked on developing messaging that ties existing programs offered by Area Agencies on Aging to brain health and dementia prevention. The final packet includes flyers addressing six pillars of brain health: healthcare, exercise, nutrition, brain trauma, learning, and social engagement. Additionally, the workgroup provided input and feedback into a social media toolkit that agencies can use to help tie their programs to brain health while raising awareness of brain health issues and modifiable risk factors for dementia. As an example, when offering a falls prevention class, the agency could tie that to protecting your brain, social engagement (group class) and exercise (balance training).

Living Well with Dementia: A Community Series

Dementia Capable Virginia partnered with The Span Center, the Area Agency on Aging serving the greater Richmond area, and the Alzheimer's Association to deliver a program of two community events on Living Well with Dementia. A key message of dementia friendly efforts is that it is possible to have a good quality of life with dementia, and the two events highlighted that message with real-life examples of people finding purpose, meaning and quality in their lives with dementia. Each event was attended by more than seventy community members.

Sponsored by AARP Virginia, the Virginia Department of Health (Healthy Brain Virginia) and the Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen, the series opened

Definitions

Dementia Capable: being skilled in identifying people with possible dementia and working effectively with them and their care partners or caregivers through the stages of their disease.

Dementia Friendly: being accessible to people living with dementia and their care partners, and enabling their continued engagement with their community.

([Alzheimer's Association, 2016](#))

at the Cultural Arts Center on June 20 with [*The Dementia Man: An Existential Journey*](#). This is a one-act, one-man play written and performed by Sam Simon, a resident of McLean who received a diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment (MCI) more than six years ago, and later a diagnosis of early-stage Alzheimer's disease. The second event, held on June 26, was a screening of the VPM documentary [*Dementia and Living Well*](#). This is the fourth instalment in a series of documentaries on Alzheimer's and dementia produced and created by Jacquelyn Pogue and directed by Mason Mills.

Both events were followed by panels, with the first including Sam and Susan Simon and the second Jacquelyn Pogue and Mason Mills. They were joined by local experts from the Alzheimer's Association, The Span Center, the Cultural Arts Center (which supports an evidence-based arts program for people living with dementia called Opening Minds Through Art) and VCU Health.



Sam Simon performs The Dementia Man



Panel discussion following The Dementia Man with (left to right) George Worthington, DARS; Sharon Napper, Alzheimer's Association; Susan Simon; Sam Simon; Amy Strite, The Span Center; Amy Holland, Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2026 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Acting in its advisory capacity and to further the Dementia State Plan goals, the Commission recommends the following actions to effectively and efficiently serve individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ARD) and their caregivers:

Deliver a Statewide Program of Dementia Care Specialists at Area Agencies on Aging

To address the growing public health and economic impact of dementia, the Commonwealth should fund the establishment of **Dementia Care Specialists** in each of its **25 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)**. This program should be modeled after Wisconsin's successful Dementia Care Specialist initiative, which has shown strong outcomes in care coordination, cost savings, and caregiver support.

Dementia Care Specialists are trained professionals embedded within community aging networks who provide one-on-one support to individuals living with dementia and their families. They assist with care planning, system navigation, referrals to community services, crisis prevention, and education. This approach directly addresses a major barrier for many families: the overwhelming complexity of accessing timely, appropriate dementia care across fragmented health, legal, and long-term care systems.

In Virginia, where **1 in 6 adults over 45 report memory or thinking changes** that are getting worse over time, **more than 160,000 people are living with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease**, and family caregivers provide more than **290 million hours of unpaid care annually**, the need for accessible, locally based dementia navigation is urgent. Placing a trained Specialist in every AAA ensures **equitable statewide access**—especially for rural and other areas with a disproportionate burden of disease.

Funding should support staffing, training, and evaluation, with navigators serving as both direct supports and catalysts for broader dementia-capable community development. Early intervention and ongoing guidance provided by navigators reduce hospitalizations, delay institutional care, and ease caregiver burden, generating long-term savings for Medicaid and other public systems.

The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), in partnership with AAAs, is well-positioned to administer and scale this initiative. With strategic investment, Virginia can implement a tested best-practice program for person-centered, community-integrated dementia care and significantly improve outcomes for thousands of families across the Commonwealth.

The Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission recommends **allocating \$4.1 million** for a comprehensive Dementia Care Specialist program. This would fulfil a longstanding strategy under Objective 4.1 of the Virginia Dementia State Plan 2024-2027.

Extend the Sunset for the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission

Extending the sunset provision for Virginia's Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission is essential to sustain the Commonwealth's coordinated response to the growing numbers of people living with dementia. According to the 2023 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 1 in 6 Virginians over the age of 45 report changes in thinking or memory that are worsening over time.

The Commission leads the development and oversight of Virginia's Dementia State Plan, updated every four years, most recently for 2024-2027. The Plan addresses care coordination, caregiver support, public awareness and brain health promotion. The Commission also facilitates cross-agency collaboration, bringing together leaders from health, aging, behavioral health, medical and social services to align efforts and resources. Recent initiatives, such as the Dementia Capable Summit held in 2023, have supported broader ongoing stakeholder engagement with the Commission. This engagement includes the addition of thirty non-Commission members to the Dementia State Plan workgroups and enhanced communication from the Commission related to progress on the Dementia State Plan throughout the four-year Plan period.

Ensuring continuity in leadership, planning and advocacy by extending the Commission's authority is vital for building a dementia-capable Virginia that meets the needs of individuals and families affected by these conditions. The Commission recommends **extending its sunset by three years to July 1, 2029**.

Deliver Comprehensive Dementia Training for First Responders

Virginia should allocate dedicated funding to support comprehensive dementia training for all current first responders, including law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services (EMS) and behavioral crisis personnel. While the Commonwealth mandates training on Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for these groups, training opportunities remain fragmented and costly. One-off in-person trainings on Alzheimer's and Autism (and including other dementias) are available through the Department for Criminal Justice Services at various locations throughout the state, but while the training is free, associated costs are not covered. Other trainings are available through third parties such as the Virginia Geriatric Education Center and the Alzheimer's Association. This can lead to uneven outcomes across the state.

The Commission recommends allocating \$2.5 million to the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services to develop and deliver standardized, dementia-specific training for in-service first responders. Funds would be used for instructional design, virtual and in-person training modules available on the No Wrong Door learning platform or similar, continuing education credits, and stipends for departments implementing training. Topics should include dementia-related behaviors, de-escalation strategies, communication techniques, and wandering response protocols.

States like Florida are implementing statewide dementia training initiatives for first responders to improve safety, reduce adverse incidents and improve community trust. Without funding, Virginia risks an uneven

standard of care and unnecessary escalation in interactions between first responders and individuals living with dementia. This appropriation would close that gap and protect vulnerable residents.

The Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission recommends **allocating \$2.5 million** to support the dementia training required by law for all current first responders. This is a budgetary request that would fulfill Objective 3.2 of the Virginia Dementia State Plan 2024- 2027.

Support the Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program

The Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program provides critical financial support to unpaid caregivers of individuals living with disabilities or chronic conditions across the lifespan, including those living with dementia. These caregivers often experience high levels of stress, financial hardship and social isolation. Respite care—short-term relief from caregiving responsibilities—is a proven strategy to reduce burnout, improve caregiver well-being, and delay costly institutionalization of care recipients.

State funding of \$500,000 is necessary to ensure the program can meet growing demand amid Virginia's aging population. This program has until now been supported entirely by competitive federal grant funding whose future is uncertain even as the number of people accessing the service continues to grow. At \$595 per household per year, this program only supports short-term respite that can be vital in supporting an unpaid caregiver's ability to continue providing care.

This investment would expand the number of individuals served while reducing disparities in access to respite care. The flexibility of the program helps meet caregiver needs even in areas where traditional respite options are limited. Importantly, respite vouchers can prevent caregiver crises that may result in emergency room visits or premature long-term care placements, both of which are more costly to the state.

The Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Commission recommends **allocating \$500,000 annually** to the Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program. This is a budgetary request that would fulfil a strategy under Objective 1.2 of the Virginia Dementia State Plan 2024-2027.

Introduce Tax Incentives for Unpaid Family Caregivers

Virginia should enact legislation to establish a state tax credit for unpaid family caregivers to offset the costs of home-based care. This refundable or partially refundable tax credit would cover eligible expenses such as respite care services, assistive technologies (e.g., monitoring systems or medication reminders), and home modifications that enhance safety for individuals living with dementia or other chronic conditions.

Eligible caregivers would include Virginia residents who provide unpaid care to a dependent adult or child with a medically documented need for assistance with activities of daily living. The credit should be flexible

enough to accommodate the diverse needs of caregiving households and should align with existing state goals to support aging in place, reduce institutionalization, and alleviate caregiver burnout.

Successful models exist. Georgia, Montana, Missouri and others have introduced caregiver tax credits to recognize the economic value of unpaid care and support working families. Implementing a Virginia caregiver tax credit would strengthen family caregiving, potentially reduce long-term healthcare costs and promote equity by supporting caregivers who may otherwise be unable to afford critical care-related services and technologies.

The Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders recommends legislation to **establish a state tax credit for unpaid family caregivers**. Such legislation would fulfil a strategy under Objective 4.3 of the Virginia Dementia State Plan 2024-2027.



No Wrong Door Dementia Capability Project

Following a recommendation from the Commission in 2023, the General Assembly appropriated \$100,000 in FY2025 and FY2026 to support improving the dementia capability of Virginia's [No Wrong Door](#). No Wrong Door is a person-centered system and statewide network of partners supporting older adults, caregivers, individuals with disabilities, veterans and their families. It uses secure technology to link providers together, collaboratively supporting individuals and families seeking long-term services and supports. Commission workgroups had input into the specifics of the project, which include incorporating new memory-related questions and a memory screening instrument into its technology, developing training modules for the screening tools and updating the existing trainings for specific roles within No Wrong Door partner organizations, and developing and disseminating supportive tools and resources.

The project included printing copies of the revised and updated *Virginia Dementia Road Map*, Dementia Capable Virginia's flagship resources to support individuals, families and others impacted by dementia with their journey, and distributing these to all Area Agencies on Aging. A new brochure, *My Dementia Capable Journey*, was developed, printed and disseminated for agencies to provide to people who have taken the memory screening. They can share the results with their health care provider, and connect with the services and resources detailed in the brochure. As the trainings are rolled out in FY2026, the team is also working on incorporating the memory screening tool on [Virginia Easy Access](#) for people to self-screen. The site will help connect them to follow-up referrals and resources.



Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act

In 2020, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) was awarded a BOLD Public Health Programs Enhanced grant for a three-year period, in partnership with DARS and the Alzheimer's Association. After being one of five states to receive an enhanced grant in 2021, Virginia received a further five years of funding in 2023. The main purpose of this grant funding is to “create a uniform national public health infrastructure with a focus on issues such as increasing early detection and diagnosis, risk reduction, prevention of avoidable hospitalizations, and supporting dementia caregiving.” ([CDC, 2021](#)).

This grant project has supported Commission efforts such as the Dementia Capable Virginia initiative and materials developed or adapted through that initiative such as the Virginia Dementia Road Map, the Primary Care Dementia Toolkit, and others. The new grant project has three required strategies that require close alignment with the ADRD Commission, whose members approved this in 2023. These are to expand the diversity and breadth of the Commission, mainly through recruiting additional workgroup members, to develop an implementation plan for the Dementia State Plan and monitor its progress, and to develop and implement an educational program for the Commission members and public.

Workgroup membership has expanded dramatically since the BOLD project began, with many new stakeholders and partners taking an active role in the Commission's work. A regular survey is now distributed to workgroup and Commission members to collect demographic data on the membership. The Commission and workgroups spent the first six months of 2024 developing the Implementation Plan, which was approved by the Commission and the Virginia Department of Health in late 2024. Dementia Services staff worked along with workgroup members to develop a 'dashboard' document that tracks the progress on the Implementation Plan that is available on <https://vda.virginia.gov/dementia.htm>. Staff have also worked to include dementia-related work supported by other organizations such as the Virginia Cooperative Extension, which supports the evidence-based Dealing With Dementia workshops for dementia caregivers.

The educational program continued in the most recent year with a total of 10 presentations on various topics at the Commission's four quarterly meetings in FY2025. Members heard from presenters across the state and further abroad, with highlights being the Carilion Clinic's Dr Jeffery Goode talking about the clinic's efforts to implement a 'geriatric' emergency department, the first in Virginia, and a workshop on improvisation skills and dementia caregiving from James Wasilewski. Looking ahead, the Commission will be holding a morning summit on Alzheimer's and Dementia on September 9, 2025, with a range of presenters discussing the state of dementia in Virginia, the costs of inaction with rising numbers of people living with the condition, and opportunities for improvement.

Dementia Capable Virginia Initiative



Dementia Capable Virginia brings together resources for the public and for providers under one unified and recognizable brand: <https://vda.virginia.gov/DementiaCapableVA.htm>. The page is broken into three sections: Resources for Individuals and Families, Resources for Providers (including healthcare and community services providers) and Resources for Researchers. Dementia Services are working on

upgrading the website to include expanded content and resource links for all three main target audiences. The new web pages are expected to launch in early 2026 with a crisp look and feel, and easy and intuitive navigation.

The Commission would like Dementia Capable Virginia to be an answer to the question “Where do I start?” that is heard from so many families seeking resources. For individuals and families, new pages will include “What is Dementia?”, “I’m Concerned About Memory Loss”, “How Can I Stay Healthy?”, “Caring for a Loved One”, “Staying Safe at Home”, “Living Well with Dementia”, and “Local Services and Support”. Providing an answer to this question informed how the Commission approached developing the current Virginia Dementia State Plan 2024-2027, and achieving many of the strategies in the Plan requires new content and links within Dementia Capable Virginia.

The impact of Dementia Capable Virginia is deep, with members of the public and professionals able to find useful and informative content. The *Virginia Dementia Road Map* was the second most downloaded document from the Division for Aging Services site in the eighteen months to July, reflecting the need for quality resources and guides to the dementia caregiving journey. The Dementia Services Director and the Commission continue to seek ways of making this popular publication more available through the provision of print copies. The Dementia Capable No Wrong Door Virginia project (see box on p. 8) supported a larger print run than the initial one done in 2022 following the revision of the *Road Map* earlier in 2025.

COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

George Worthington is Virginia's Dementia Services Director. This role was a critical recommendation of the Commission's first Dementia State Plan to work towards creating a dementia-capable service delivery system in the Commonwealth. The Division for Aging Services at DARS additionally secured funding for a part-time Dementia Services Specialist, Heather Kidd, who joined the Department in October 2024 and has significantly added to the office's capacity to support the Commission. For information, resources, referrals, training or other requests, please email dementia@dars.virginia.gov.

Commission Workgroups: The Commission accomplishes much of its work through its various workgroups. Currently, there are five workgroups in addition to the Legislative Committee that develops the Commission's annual legislative recommendations. Four of the workgroups are tied to the six goals of the Dementia State Plan: Coordinated Care (Goals 1 and 4), Data and Research (Goals 2 and 5), Training (Goal 3), and Brain Health (Goal 6). The Dementia State Plan workgroup has focused on updating the Plan every four years, and with the adoption of the Implementation Plan, will continue to meet on a regular basis to review progress and provide guidance on next steps. The workgroups could not effectively do their work without the participation of members from outside of the Commission who volunteer their time and expertise to support Commission activities:

Melissa Andrews
Dan Bluestein
Glynis Boyd-Hughes
Denise Butler
Stephani Curry
Kimberly Davis
Jessica Frederickson
Eve Flippen
Sarah Gardner
Kathy Guisewhite

Judy Hackler
Julia Hammond
Lileeta Harlem
Patricia Heyn
Kim Ivey
Tracey Lewis
Melissa Long
Theresa Mandela
Guy Mayer
Melicent Miller

Josh Myers
Sharon Napper
Joyce Nussbaum
Annie Rhodes
Karen Roberto
Amy Sanders
Ashley Staton
Lindsey Vajpeyi
Chazley Williams

Workforce Training and Education: The Dementia Services Director continues to identify training opportunities to support a dementia-capable workforce in Virginia, and to deliver trainings to direct service workers, such as long-term care facility staff and workers supporting people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities at risk of dementia. The Director also provides community education opportunities. In SFY 2025, the Director delivered 28 training and education sessions attended by a total of 1,011 individuals.

Additionally, the Director works with the Virginia State Police Academy to provide dementia awareness training for each cohort of cadets and has collected training materials to share with first responders across the Commonwealth. This year saw new collaboration with the Department of Corrections to support new training opportunities for correctional staff and also potentially for inmates.

Caregiver Education and Support: In 2021, DARS received new federal grant funding of \$1,349,480 to support the Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program over five years. This program provides respite opportunities for family caregivers who are caring for someone with a chronic condition, such as Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. Further information about this program is available on www.vda.virginia.gov/vlrp.htm.

CURRENT FOCUS:

Implementation and Tracking of the Virginia Dementia State Plan 2024-2027

The Commission continues to partner with public and private partners throughout Virginia and at the national level to implement the Dementia State Plan. Ahead of and during the 2026 General Assembly session, the Commission will promote its recommendations for expanded support for people with dementia and their caregivers and facilitating dementia education and access to services, including at a morning summit on Alzheimer's and Dementia on September 9, 2025. The Commission has devoted significant time and effort to developing a workplan including measurable outcomes that is attached to the fourth iteration of Virginia's Dementia State Plan, and will be focused on working to achieve those through its workgroups and other community partnerships. These efforts are being tracked on a "Dashboard" document that is available on <https://vda.virginia.gov/dementia.htm>. Additional information about the Commission and its activities may be found at: <https://vda.virginia.gov/boardsandcouncils.html>.

Dementia Friendly Virginia

DARS collaborates with LeadingAge Virginia as state co-leads for dementia friendly efforts through the Dementia Friendly Virginia initiative. Dementia friendliness is a key component of a robust dementia capable structure, as it includes efforts to help people living with dementia and their caregivers thrive in their communities.

Communities across the state continue to join others across the United States in fostering dementia friendliness by affiliating with Dementia Friendly America. Expansion in the reporting period, with one new community joining the national network: Dementia Friendly Blue Ridge based in Winchester. However, Dementia Friendly Orange and Dementia Friendly Nelson/151 joined Dementia Friendly Central Virginia, and Dementia Friendly Greene is in the works under that broader initiative. In total, there are eleven affiliated communities in Virginia. Some local efforts have also expanded their reach, such as Dementia Friendly Valley which plans to encompass Dementia Friendly Harrisonburg/Rockingham, Dementia Friendly Lexington and (the newest proposed effort) Dementia Friendly Staunton, Augusta and Waynesboro. Several local communities are providing regular virtual programs to help to raise awareness and reduce stigma that are accessible across the state.

Dementia Friendly America provides tool kits, webinars, and other resources, but each community decides what it needs to do to better support people with dementia and their caregivers. Businesses and government agencies also can learn how to make their offices and stores safer and more inviting for people with dementia at www.dfamerica.org. The Commission continues to support Dementia Friendly Communities through the new *Virginia Dementia State Plan 2024-2027* in recognition of this initiative's role in dementia capability.

Dementia Friendly communities and the allied Dementia Friends initiative help raise awareness of dementia and reduce stigma, helping to improve the quality of life for individuals living with dementia, their families and care partners. Since launching [Dementia Friends Virginia](#) in 2018, more than 750 Dementia Friends Champions have delivered 60-minute information sessions attended by more than 11,000 Virginians.

