

TALKING POINTS for Brain Health Champions

For Sharing with
Tribal Leaders and/or
Governing Bodies

Why is it important to share with Tribal Leaders and Governing Bodies about Brain Health?

- ▶ Tribal leaders hold an essential role in supporting the health and wellbeing of Tribal members.
- ▶ Tribal leaders can influence attitudes of community members and can affect health systems change.
- ▶ Leadership is needed for a public health approach to be successful.
- ▶ By focusing on prevention and support, Tribal leaders can help to promote good brain health.

TALKING POINT 1

Brain health is an often-overlooked health topic.

- Difficulties with memory and thinking may impact elders, who are a vital part of the community and keepers of traditions.
- **Dementia, including Alzheimer's, is underdiagnosed in Indian Country. Only one in three (31%) AI/ANs aged 65 and older who experience memory loss have talked with their healthcare provider about it.** Less than half of people with dementia in all populations nationwide have been diagnosed.

TALKING POINT 2

Brain health challenges will continue to grow. The burden of Alzheimer's and related dementias is expected to increase over five times between 2014 and 2060. This will increase the number of caregivers and the need for healthcare and services for elders.

TALKING POINT 3

An excellent resource exists: The Road Map for Indian Country. Native leaders, experts and practitioners helped shape the Road Map by providing insights, guidance and examples from their own work. It was produced in 2019 by the Alzheimer's Association and Centers for Disease Control and as part of the Healthy Brain Initiative.

- This document contains useful information for planning, implementing and monitoring dementia programs in Indian Country.
- This includes resources for starting a conversation about how Alzheimer's and related dementias affect all generations and key background information about dementia.

TALKING POINT 4

The Road Map for Indian Country outlines a public health approach to addressing cognitive decline and dementia, including Alzheimer's. Eight strategies focus on three core outcomes:

- **Educate and empower the community.** For example, increasing awareness of brain health and early warning signs through outreach and education campaigns
- **Collect and use data.** For example, ensuring your healthcare operations collect quality measures related to dementia
- **Strengthen the workforce.** For example, advocating for brain health training for healthcare providers and public health professionals.

National Indian
Health Board



WHAT IS Brain Health?

Definitions

What is Brain Health?

Brain health refers to your thinking, understanding, and memory abilities. It also can refer to the things you do to keep your brain healthy and active, like staying physically active and following a healthy diet.

What is Cognitive Decline?

Cognitive Decline refers to a person's increased confusion or memory loss. It is not a diagnosis but a description of what someone is experiencing.

What is Dementia? Alzheimer's Disease?

Dementia is a general term for the impaired ability to remember, think, or make decisions that interferes with doing everyday activities.

Alzheimer's disease is a form of dementia. It can progress from mild memory loss to being unable to carry a conversation, live independently, or be aware of your environment.

What is Mild Cognitive Impairment?

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is a diagnosis and refers to cognitive changes that are serious enough to be noticed by the person affected, family members, and friends, but do not affect the individual's ability to carry out everyday activities.

MCI may or may not lead to dementia.

NON-TYPICAL AGING

Cognitive impairment can take many forms.

You may frequently not be able to recall a family member's name, find something you've put down, or remember details of your life. These changes are caused by damage to your brain cells. You may also experience issues with making decisions, planning, or motor function.

Cognitive impairment, including Alzheimer's and related dementia, may not affect everyone as they age.

VS.

TYPICAL AGING

As you or a loved one age you may notice some changes in your memory, thoughts, or reasoning. You may forget things once in a while, or take some time to remember a detail.

A key difference between typical aging and dementia is memory or thinking problems that disrupt your daily life and ability to complete daily activities, such as preparing meals or paying bills.

