



TO: ALL LEGISLATORS  
FROM: ROB GUNDERMANN, PUBLIC POLICY DIRECTOR  
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RE: DEMENTIA CARE SPECIALISTS  
DATE: MARCH 7, 2017

As you may know, there is no funding in the Governor's proposed 2017-19 state budget for Dementia Care Specialists (DCS). There is an effort underway to add funding to the budget for these positions and we want to make it clear that the Alzheimer's and Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin (ADAW) **DOES NOT** support directing new GPR in the state budget to fund Dementia Care Specialist positions.

Currently there are 16 DCS positions serving 26 counties, which are funded through the end of 2017 with federal funding and \$1,128,000 in GPR from the 2015-17 State budget. At the time that budget was written, it clearly stated that these were one-time funds and if the DCS positions were to continue into the future, they would need to be funded through existing ADRC resources.

The ADAW supported the creation of these positions as short-term positions designed to educate and train ADRC staff on dementia. We do not support efforts to use additional new GPR to make these positions permanent or to expand the program from the current 26 counties to the entire state. The costs of expanding the program statewide would be enormous. Covering just 26 counties has cost \$1.8 million annually. Expanding the program statewide would make it the costliest program for people with dementia in our state. Prioritizing needs is a difficult but essential part of public policy, and while we believe there are Dementia Care Specialists in Wisconsin doing good work, we feel there are higher priority areas of need than funding positions in the ADRCs which could be funded by the counties themselves.

When we survey families about their needs, they tell us they need respite and how they need a little help in their homes with specific chores they can't do anymore. I'm frequently asked if Wisconsin will ever have tax credits for people caregiving for someone with dementia and about other problems families have with funding all of the extra costs that go along with dementia. However, I have never had a family in Wisconsin tell me their greatest need is funding dementia care specialist positions in the ADRCs.

This is not a critique of the work being done by the DCSs. Rather, it recognizes the significant needs of families caring for a loved one with a dementia diagnosis and the role of the state in prioritizing how best to meet these needs. We feel very strongly that meeting the needs of Wisconsin families coping with dementia should be our highest priority. The Legislature added funding to the Alzheimer's Family Caregiver Support Program (AFCSP) in the last session and we have seen a tremendous number of families getting help from that program. If the Legislature is interested in providing a significant amount of new ongoing funding for dementia in this budget, we ask that it be dedicated to providing direct services for people with dementia. Providing funding for the AFCSP or providing targeted tax credits for families taking care of someone with dementia in their home for example. The ADAW administers AFCSP in Dane County and by March of 2017 we already have a waiting list for services.

Governor Walker made the correct decision in not providing funding in this budget for the DCS positions. We ask you to maintain the Governor's position.

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