

MEMORANDUM

DATE	June 1, 2026
TO	Workforce Development Committee
FROM	Rosanne Helms, Legislative Manager
SUBJECT	Consideration of Requiring Coursework in Alzheimer’s, Dementia Caregiving

Background

As the Board continues its review and update of coursework requirements, a stakeholder group has requested that the Board consider adding coursework focused on Alzheimer’s, dementia, and caregiving for the Board’s LMFT, LCSW, and LPCC license types. The request emphasizes the growing need for specialized training as the state’s population ages.

Based on the Board’s previous discussion in November 2025, this Committee will also be considering coursework requirements related to perinatal mental health, and menopausal mental health. The specific details of that proposal (specific content and required hours) will likely be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

If the Committee chooses to move forward with the Alzheimer’s, dementia, and caregiving coursework proposal, it will need to determine both the appropriate number of required hours and the specific content areas to be included. The anticipated approach would not mandate this training solely at the graduate level. Instead, the Committee may consider a flexible requirement that allows applicants for associate registration to complete the coursework either through graduate level education or through approved continuing education. The requirement would apply to degrees begun on or after January 1, 2030.

Presentation

Barbra McLendon, MSW, Associate Vice President of Public Policy with Alzheimer’s Los Angeles, will provide an overview of the importance of this training and present the organization’s request.

Recommendation

Conduct an open discussion to consider the efficacy and potential impact of including coursework in Alzheimer’s, dementia, and caregiving within the Board’s coursework requirements for associate registration.

Attachments

PowerPoint Presentation: Bridging Care: The Vital Role of MFTs in Supporting Dementia Caregivers (*Barbra McLendon, MSW, Associate Vice President, Public Policy, Alzheimer's Los Angeles*)



Bridging Care: The Vital Role of MFTs in Supporting Dementia Caregivers

Barbra McLendon, MSW
Associate VP, Public Policy

bmclendon@alzla.org



Alzheimer's Disease in the US

2026



7.4 million
people
in US living with
Alzheimer's

13 million
unpaid
caregivers

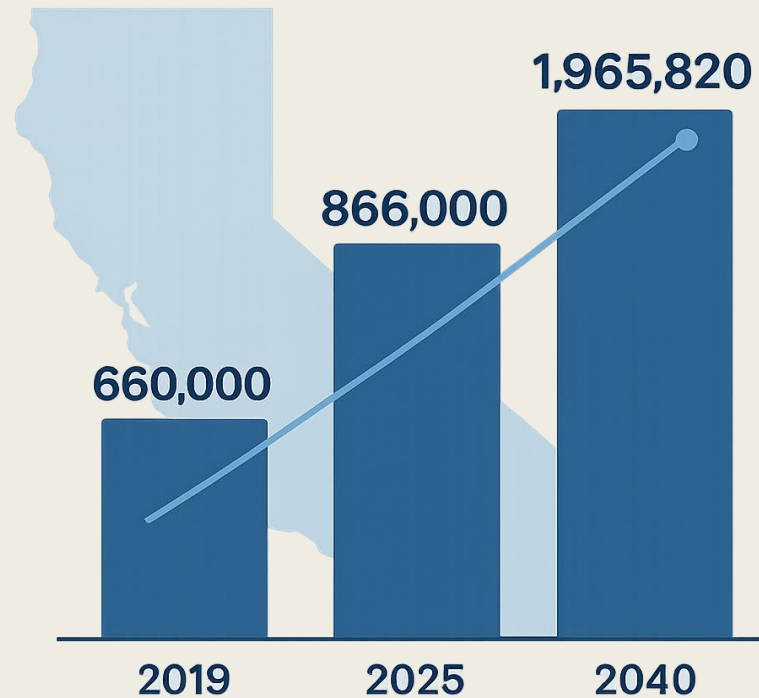
1 in 3
seniors dies
with Alzheimer's
/dementia

Source: Alzheimer's Association. 2026 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures. Alzheimers Dement 2026;22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.71345>.



Prevalence of Dementia

California



Source: Ross, L, Beld, M, and Yeh, J. (2021). Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Facts and Figures in California: Current Status and Future Projections. Report prepared for the California Department of Public Health, Sacramento, CA at the Institute for Health and Aging, University of California, San Francisco, CA.



Caregiving

Who Are the Caregivers?

- 1.4 million Californians providing care to people living with dementia
 - Spouses
 - Adult Children
 - Grandchildren
 - Parents



Caregiving

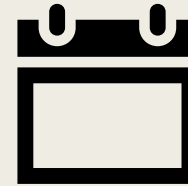
Who Are the Caregivers?



60% are women



60% are married, living with a partner, or in a long-term relationship



Average age is **49** years old.
1/3 are 65 years or older.



1/4 of caregivers are “sandwich generation”

Ross, L, Beld, M, and Yeh, J. (2021). Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias Facts and Figures in California: Current Status and Future Projections. Report prepared for the California Department of Public Health, Sacramento, CA at the Institute for Health and Aging, University of California, San Francisco, CA.



Caregiving

Overview

- Caregivers of people with dementia report providing 27 hours more care per month on average (92 hours versus 65 hours than caregivers of people without dementia).
- Compared with caregivers of people without dementia, twice as many caregivers of those with dementia indicate substantial emotional, financial and physical difficulties.
- **59%** of family caregivers of people with dementia rated the emotional stress as high or very high compared to 28% of non-dementia caregivers

Kasper JD, Freedman VA, Spillman BC. Disability and Care Needs of Older Americans by Dementia Status: An Analysis of the 2011 National Health and Aging Trends Study. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2014. Available at: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/disability-care-needs-older-americans-dementia-status-analysis-2011-national-health-aging-trends-1>

Role of MFTs in Supporting Dementia Families



Families

Relationship Changes

A therapist experienced in caregiving, aging, and dementia can help with:

- Emotional regulation and support
- Communication and behavioral therapy
- Family Systems and Structural Changes
- Support System Enhancement



Families

Relationship Changes

- Family-Centered Care vs Person Centered Care
- Assisting families across disease progression
 - Physical changes
 - Communication changes
 - Behavioral changes



Families

Grief and Ambiguous Loss

Person is physically present, but psychologically or relationally changing¹

- Grieving the loss of shared memories, conversation, personality, or roles
- Feeling isolated because others don't fully understand the ongoing nature of the loss
- Experiencing “mini-griefs” each time abilities decline

1. Knight, C., & Gitterman, A. (2019). Ambiguous Loss and Its Disenfranchisement: The Need for Social Work Intervention. *Families in Society*, 100(2), 164–173.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1044389418799937>



Families

Managing Role Reversal

- Gender Roles
- Adult children caregivers
- Grandchildren



Couples

Intimacy Challenges

- Many couples report a loss of intimacy due to less emotional connection, more conflict, and sexual dysfunction
- Romantic interests w. other people (a new relationship could be started by the person living with dementia or the care partner)
- Individuals living with dementia can lose interest in sex or become “hypersexual.”



Resources

Alzheimer's Disease

- [Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Facts and Figures in California: Current Status and Future Projections, January 2021](#), CA Dept. of Public Health
- [Alzheimer's Facts & Figures 2026](#), Alzheimer's Association

Dementia and Social Work

Cox, C. B. (2007). *Dementia and social work practice: Research and interventions*. (C. B. Cox, Ed). Springer Publishing Company.

Family Centered Care

Hao, Z., & Ruggiano, N. (2020). Family-centeredness in dementia care: what is the evidence? *Social Work in Health Care*, 59(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00981389.2019.1690089>

Kokorelias, K. M., Markoulakis, R., & Hitzig, S. L. (2023). Considering a Need for Dementia-Specific, Family-Centered Patient Navigation in Canada. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 42(1), 19-27.

Ramachandran, M., Bangera, K., Anita Dsouza, S., & Belchior, P. (2023). A scoping review of family-centered interventions in dementia care. *Dementia (London, England)*, 22(2), 405–438. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14713012221144485>



Resources

Changes in Family Roles

Cooper, R. A., & Segrin, C. (2024). Acknowledging dementia as an actor in the relationship: A facilitating mechanism promoting dementia family caregiver resilience. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 41(10), 2802–2823. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075241254860>

Esandi, N., Nolan, M., Alfaro, C., Canga-Armayor, A., & Bowers, B. J. (2018). Keeping Things in Balance: Family Experiences of Living With Alzheimer's Disease. *The Gerontologist*, 58(2), e56–e67. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnx084>

Holdsworth, K., & McCabe, M. (2018). The Impact of Dementia on Relationships, Intimacy, and Sexuality in Later Life Couples: An Integrative Qualitative Analysis of Existing Literature. *Clinical Gerontologist*, 41(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07317115.2017.1380102>

Holdsworth, K., & McCabe, M. (2018). The impact of younger-onset dementia on relationships, intimacy, and sexuality in midlife couples: a systematic review. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 30(1), 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1041610217001806>

Kin, A. L., Griffith, L. E., Kuspinar, A., Smith-Turchyn, J., & Richardson, J. (2024). Impact of care-recipient relationship type on quality of life in caregivers of older adults with dementia over time. *Age and Ageing*, 53(6), Article afae128. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afae128>

Levenson, R. W., Merrilees, J., Henry, M. L., & Dronkers, N. F. (2025). Associations between dementia symptoms and caregiver and relationship health: A prominent role for speech and language. *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, 106(1), 206–217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13872877251340578>

O'Shaughnessy, M., Lee, K., & Lintern, T. (2010). Changes in the couple relationship in dementia care: Spouse carers' experiences. *Dementia (London, England)*, 9(2), 237–258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1471301209354021>



Resources

Grief

Boss, P. (2010). The Trauma and Complicated Grief of Ambiguous Loss. *Pastoral Psychology*, 59(2), 137–145. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-009-0264-0>

Knight, C., & Gitterman, A. (2019). Ambiguous Loss and Its Disenfranchisement: The Need for Social Work Intervention. *Families in Society*, 100(2), 164–173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1044389418799937>

Nathanson, A., & Rogers, M. (2021). When Ambiguous Loss Becomes Ambiguous Grief: Clinical Work with Bereaved Dementia Caregivers. *Health & Social Work*, 45(4), 268–275. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hsw/hlaa026>