WESTERN PIEDMONT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS NEWSLETTER

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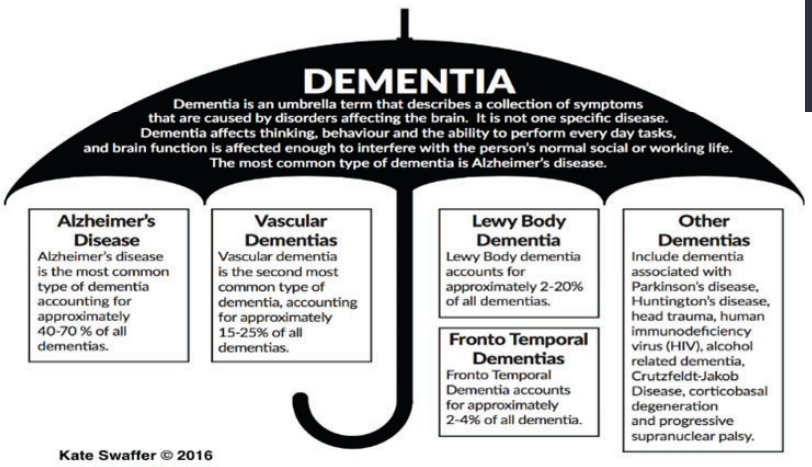
Types of Dementia

Article by Karen Phoenix



Many people assume Alzheimer's Disease is the only cognitive disease we face and believe all cognitive diseases are, in fact, Alzheimer's Disease. The truth is that there are many types of cognitive disorders, and the overarching diagnosis is dementia rather than Alzheimer's Disease. The pictograph of dementia shows there are many more types of dementia than many people know.

Additionally, it is commonly believed that dementia only affects memory. All functions of the brain can be affected, and these may include the following symptoms:

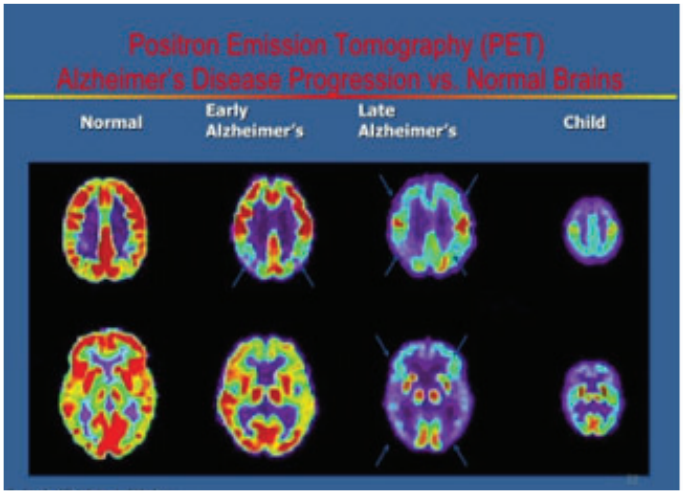
Disruption of time. Time is no longer consistent or important. It does not work to say, "I'll be back in five minutes." Persons with dementia may be unable to tell what time of day it is by the light or darkness.
Behavior changes: Lack of Compassion—They can't understand another person's viewpoint or feelings. A change in routine or environment is unsettling. Changes in gait and an increase in falls from sitting to standing are common. Inappropriate symptoms are not uncommon. Outside Noise is overwhelming and can sound like a continual buzzing sound.

Judgment change. They may often fail to recognize safe/unsafe situations. Loss of recognition of others leads to aggression or fear. They frequently lose distance awareness and fail to recognize their environment.
Psychiatric symptoms are frequent: You may see apathy, where they are disconnected from the world around them, and the mind is just blank. Delusions, delirium, hallucinations, and illusions can occur. They may see, hear, smell, and feel things we do not or feel differently. Depression and anxiety are common.

Visual perception can change. There may be changes in depth perception and distance. Colors can blend. They may have difficulty distinguishing items if everything in a room is white. Peripheral vision can change as well and may appear to be tunnel vision. Additionally, they may perceive themselves as younger.

Decision-making and self-care can become issues. Persons with dementia may no longer think through a decision. They may have trouble figuring out what step of a task needs to happen next. Physical issues are not all in their heads, as their brain processing is slowed.

Language and forgetting are common. They may repeat words and phrases. It is common for a person with dementia to hear only three words if you say seven. It takes longer for a person with dementia to process your words. It can take up to 20 seconds for them to process what you are saying. They may not be able to understand words or to speak. They frequently forget people, places, and recent events. Short-term memory loss is common.



Aggression and agitation can occur. Often, it can be due to frustration at their disease and inability to be normal. It can be frustration towards others who can do it for them. It may also be frustrating for people who try to help or care for them.

On the left is a PET scan of a person the same age with progressing dementia. The final column is that of an 18-month-old child. The bright colors are brain activity. You can see how brain activity changes as the disease progresses.

For information on available resources for dementia patients and their caregivers, please contact Karen Phoenix, Project CARE Family Consultant, at 828-485-4267 or **karen.phoenix@wpcog.org**.

Fair Housing Month

Article by Paul Teague

The WPCOG Community and Economic Development staff, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), are prepping to mark Fair Housing Month in April. This is the 56th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act, which was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on April 11, 1968. The Act prohibits housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, and family status.

WPCOG staff members regularly work with counties and municipalities to update fair housing studies, promote fair housing education through advertisements and meetings, and work with lending institutions.

For more information about the Fair Housing Act, visit the HUD website at **www.hud.gov**.

NCWorks Success Story - Samantha

Article by Charity Patterson Hamber

As a single mother, Samantha was unemployed and unsure of her next steps. She met with a WIOA career advisor and discussed possibly attending CVCC for Dental Assisting. Samantha received an application and began working on getting her items together in the following weeks. Samantha was excited about this opportunity and confirmed she was eligible for services.

Samantha enrolled in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program in February 2023, but her classes started in August 2023. The Business Services Representative discussed the possibility of a Work Experience (WEX) with Samantha. She saw this as an opportunity to expand her skillset and prepare her for class. Samantha started her WEX at GHCCM in the dental clinic in May 2023 as an assistant making $16/hr. She was able to use the dental practice software, job shadow the dental assistants and dentists, and other skills she will need as she enters the dental career pathway. With class starting in August, Samantha completed her WEX hours during the Fall semester while attending classes and clinical. Now, almost a year later, Samantha will be completing her training at CVCC and finding full-time employment. Samantha has been the ideal NextGen participant, and we look forward to seeing what she achieves next!

New Capacity Building Tool

Article by Dallas Goodnight

Community Health and Disaster Mitigation Explorer (CHADME)

Finding statistics and maps to supplement grant applications can be difficult, as can sorting through the pile of information. With this in mind, the Western Piedmont Council of Governments developed a mapping and planning tool to make this data more accessible. The Community Health and Disaster Mitigation Explorer (CHADME) tool is designed for the region's mitigation, preparedness, and resiliency planning purposes.

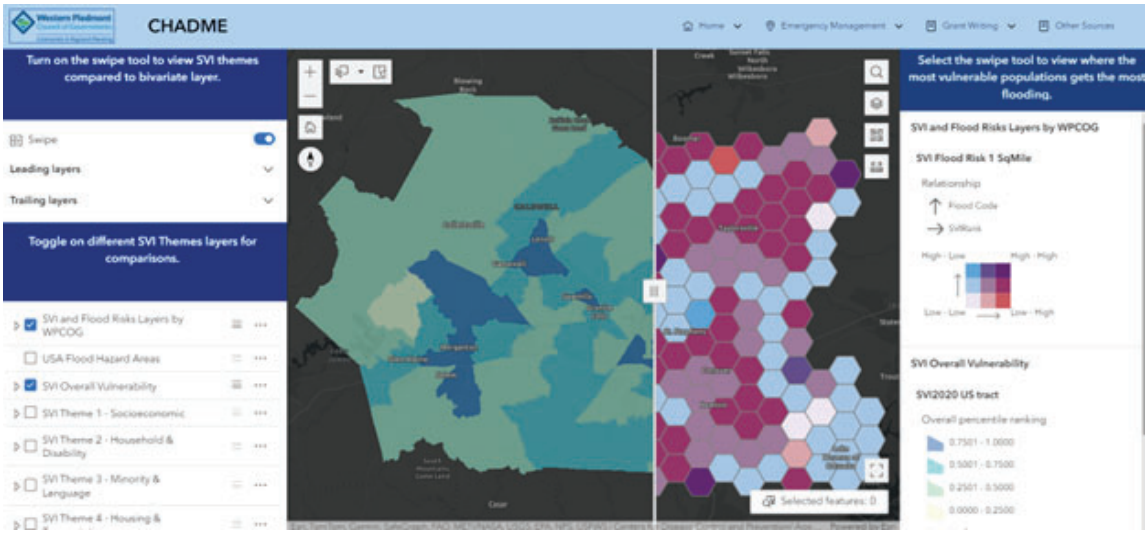
Combining local knowledge with nationwide datasets

To support the North Carolina Association of Regional Councils of Government's goal of improving regional resiliency and recovery efforts, the Community and Regional Planning GIS division designed CHADME as a user-friendly platform that explores 37+ layers of data relevant to our region. Data layers include:

- Emergency management and critical community infrastructure locations based on local input and other trusted sources.
- Social Vulnerability Indices (from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC) consider socioeconomic status, minority status, language barriers, housing characteristics, education, personal transportation access, and many other metrics in evaluating vulnerable populations by Census Tract.
- Environmental hazards such as flooding, drought, and landslide susceptibility.
- Live data layers from ESRI, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, and Duke Energy to help monitor the impacts of natural disasters.
- Embedded content from CDC's PLACES database that includes chronic disease and health maps at the county, tract, and zip code levels.
- Population characteristics from the most current US Census and American Consumer Survey datasets.

Supplement grants with ease

CHADME offers several methods for extracting key statistics for your grants, from interactive popups to county-metric indicators. The intuitive tool allows users to explore a wide range of data in one central location, streamlining and simplifying the grant writing process. CHADME is going through an internal WPCOG review and will soon be available to write grants, map, and explore.



Example of CHADME functionality. Here, one can easily compare SVI rankings to flood hazards using the swipe tool. The funding for this project was provided by the State of North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management in conjunction with the Department of Public Safety and the Office of Emergency Management.

RHA Begins Updating Landlord Payment Information on a Three-year Cycle

Article by Lisa Acuff

WPCOG's Regional Housing Authority staff guides tenants and landlords on all RHA paperwork they must complete to stay in good standing. After completing the required financial documents, RHA landlords receive their monthly payments via direct deposit. The RHA must have a W-9 form, a direct deposit form, and a copy of a voided check or statement from a landlord's bank to process housing assistance payments. The housing specialist who leads the landlord documentation process will collect each landlord's documents and enter the information in the RHA's software system.

Once landlord documentation is received and processed, another housing specialist will audit the information and forward the documents to WPCOG's finance department. The W-9 and direct deposit account owner information must match. All housing assistance payments are made through direct deposit to the respective accounts. In compliance with HUD regulations, RHA landlords must be paid within the first two business days of the month. However, a second check run takes place mid-month to accommodate special circumstances, such as new move-ins or needed changes and corrections.

Every three years, the IRS requires the RHA to obtain updated W-9 forms, direct deposit forms, and account verifications from its current landlords and owners. With the RHA providing payments to approximately 382 landlords, the project scope is extensive and time-consuming.

Beginning in January 2024, the RHA implemented a new three-year process for landlord financial document updates. The RHA alphabetically divided the requests for documentation for this project over three years and sent out one-third of the requests. In 2024, the RHA began working on updates for landlords with last names starting with A – H. In 2025, landlords in the I to P group will receive requests, and in 2026, Q – Z will be notified. A new additional step involves scanning the updated documents into the RHA's software system, which allows the RHA's staff and the finance department to share access to the information. The RHA will continue to maintain hard copies of the documents as well.

The RHA plans to send out its landlord documentation requests every January with the expectation of completing the updates for that year's group of landlords by March 31.

For questions about landlord payment documentation, contact Lisa Acuff at **lisa.acuff@wpcog.org** or 828.485.4247.

Caldwell County Economic Development and CORI Work Sessions

Article by Charity Patterson Hamber

Workforce Development staff participated in a two-day work session hosted by Caldwell County Economic Development with the Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) and local education and tech leaders to develop a strategy designed to capitalize on Caldwell County's unique community assets. The work session was the second stage of the process. The first stage included an assessment of technology needs for the County. These sessions were part of a grant provided by local partner GOOGLE.

The two-day program focused on tech talent development (elementary through adult), industry engagement, and supporting tech startups - from recruitment and ideation to launch and scale - including access to capital for entrepreneurs and with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion to ensure maximum impact to the community.

WPCOG Assists City of Hickory with Grant for Steel Company

Article by Paul Teague

WPCOG staff has worked with the City of Hickory for a $240,000 N.C. Commerce Building Reuse grant to benefit a leading steel service center and distributor coming to the area.

Steel Warehouse Company has announced that it will open a facility in Hickory and invest $27 million over the next four years. The company plans to create 30 new, full-time jobs as part of the grant to renovate buildings. The jobs must be created and maintained per grant terms before any payments.

Steel Warehouse Company is a family-owned steel solutions provider and service center with a 75-year history in the steel industry. The company is headquartered in Indiana and operates 15 locations across the United States, Mexico, and Brazil.

Along with the City of Hickory, the WPCOG worked with the Catawba County Economic Development Corporation and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina to facilitate the grant.

OPT-IN Kickoff Event

Article by Charity Hamber Patterson

On March 7, 2024, OPT-IN held its 2024 Kickoff Event. The event was a success! This year, the program hosts 14 different employers from various sectors. Prospective interns from all public high schools in Burke County attended to learn about local companies and gain a new perspective on their possible placements for this summer.

Opportunity Internship (OPT-IN) is an 8-week comprehensive program designed for recently graduated high school seniors. Starting in June, right after high school graduation, this program offers a well-rounded experience with three key components: Work Experience, Mentorship, and Professional Development.

Caregiver Support Groups Matter

Article by Mary Mitchell

Providing care for a loved one can be a rewarding experience while being demanding and emotionally draining. Caregivers have an important role when caring for a loved one or friend and often take on countless essential and challenging responsibilities during any given day. Caregiving for a loved one can be overwhelming at times, and caregivers can naturally feel isolated, stressed, and often experience burnout. They may also not know where to find help.

During the season of caregiving, it is extremely important for caregivers to search for ways to help reduce stress, isolation, or burnout, and caregiver support groups can offer much-needed support. Caregiver support groups can make a difference for caregivers during uncertain times by offering an avenue of understanding, emotional support, and practical advice from other caregivers. By joining a caregiver support group, whether virtually or in person, individuals can find reassurance and guidance but also discover a community that understands their journey and helps enable the caregiver to face challenges that may be ahead.

Support groups offer a safe space to connect with others who understand and can share their experiences. Sharing experiences and frustrations with others who understand can be remarkably meaningful, reducing feelings of isolation and creating a sense of connection for caregivers. Learning from the experiences of others can help caregivers feel more empowered and equipped to navigate their role as caregivers.

Connecting with a Caregiver Support Group
Connecting with one of these caregiver support groups in our region offers caregivers a community of understanding individuals, a space to gain valuable resources, and ultimately, become a stronger and more resilient caregiver.

Care for the Caregiver Support Group
Alexander Senior Center
4th Thursday of each month (April, May & June 2024)
2:00pm (For additional information contact Alexander Hospice 828-632-5026 or 828-485-4256)

PACT (Partnering Adult Caregivers Together) Caregiver Support Group
Burke Senior Center, Morganton
3rd Monday of each month
5:30 pm (Sign-up to attend call 828-430-4147 or 828-485-4256)

Care for the Caregiver Support Group
Caldwell Senior Center
3rd Thursday of each month
2:00pm (to sign-up to attend call 828-758-2883 or 828-485-4256)

Care for the Caregiver Support Group
YMCA of Conover
4th Tuesday of each month
1pm (For additional information contact 828-485-4256)

Surviving to Thriving Caregiver Support Group
Appalachian State Hickory Campus
4th Monday of each month
2-3:00pm (For additional information contact 828-485-4256)

Catawba Valley Parkinson's Support (for caregivers and Parkinson's patients)
YMCA C.O. Miller Teen Center, 701 1st St. NW, Hickory
1st Sunday of each month
3:30-4:30pm (For additional contact or to be added to email list contact **cvpark.group@gmail.com**)

To learn more about these support groups or other caregiver resources, please contact the Family Caregiver Support Administrator, Mary Mitchell at 828-485-4256 or **mary.mitchell@wpcog.org**.

RHA Completes Annual Updates to Its Administrative Plans

Article by Elizabeth Moncrief & Kim Duncan

At the beginning of each year, WPCOG Regional Housing Authority (RHA) staff begin reviewing their plans for new regulation and policy updates that need to be made. WPCOG has two plans: the RHA's Administrative Plan and the Family Self-Sufficiency's Action Plan. Both plans contain US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations along with agency policies. These plans are crucial to the operation of both programs because they serve as the guidebooks on how the RHA implements HUD's regulations.

WPCOG completes its policy revisions in the first quarter each year and presents the changes to its Policy Board every March. A public hearing is held to give tenants and members of the community the opportunity to ask questions about any of the upcoming changes, followed by the Policy Board granting its approval of the changes. This year the public hearing was held on March 25, 2024, and Policy Board approval followed the next day. The newly approved changes always become effective on July 1 each year. However, if minor modifications are needed throughout the year, they can be made at any point.

For the RHA's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Administrative Plan, most of the changes for 2024 are inspection-related. New federal regulations for inspections from HUD called the National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE) went into effect on April 1, 2024, and the RHA began implementing them at that time. NSPIRE requires that each area of a unit - inside and out - be free of health and safety hazards that pose a danger to residents. These hazards include, but are not limited to, carbon monoxide, electrical hazards, extreme temperature, flammable materials, garbage, handrail hazards, infestation, lead-based paint, mold, and structural soundness.

More changes will go into effect on January 1, 2025, with Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA). HOTMA, a new law that Congress signed on July 29, 2016, that made numerous changes to statutes governing HUD programs, was expected to roll out this year. Even though the timelines for HOTMA implementation continue to change, PHAs are still required to create a plan with the new regulations. Recently HUD extended the mandatory HOTMA compliance date to January 1, 2025, so those new plan policies cannot be implemented yet. In other words, agencies must have a plan ready to put into effect when HUD gives the go-ahead. As required, the RHA completed a second administrative plan that includes the HOTMA rules.

WPCOG's RHA also offers a Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program called REACH, which has its own action plan. This year many of the plan's policy modifications primarily came from regulation changes that were initially implemented in June 2022. Since the summer of 2022, the HUD FSS team has held regular training webinars to share updates and implementation guidance. As the regulations are explained more thoroughly, agencies can create better policies to administer them. In addition to the annual FSS program data updates, the major policy changes to this year's plan included a more detailed program non-compliance policy, financial procedural clarifications, and portability policies related to FSS participants.

The WPCOG Administrative Plan and the FSS Action Plan are available at **www.wpcog.org** For more information, please contact Elizabeth Moncrief, RHA Housing Manager, at 828.485.4244 **elizabeth.moncrief@wpcog.org** or Kim Duncan, FSS Coordinator, at 828 485 4299 **kim.duncan@wpgcog.org**.

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