Institutional racism leads to multiple factors that put African Americans at risk for Alzheimer’s and other dementias, including:

- Education and income inequalities
- Limited or no access to health care
- Increased stress and heart problems
- Untreated high blood pressure and diabetes

The number of older African Americans in Washington is growing. By 2040, this population is estimated to increase from about 43,000 to about 80,000 (83%).

African Americans are 2 to 3 times more likely to have Alzheimer’s disease than the non-Hispanic white population.

African Americans are more likely to be misdiagnosed or diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in the later stages of the disease.

Certain factors may impact diagnosis and treatment of African Americans, such as:

- Perceptions about what is normal aging and what is not
- Mistrust of the health care system due to past mistreatment, which may delay access to care and assessment
- Cognitive screening tools that are not culturally appropriate

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE: A Call to Action for Organizations

The African American community is strong and resilient. Institutionalized racism drives the unequal distribution of power and resources, resulting in health, social, economic, environmental, and structural disparities for people of color. Among those disparities is the disproportionate occurrence of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias.

Established in 2016, the Dementia Action Collaborative is a group of public-private partners committed to preparing Washington state for the growth of the population living with dementia. For more information and to access resources on dementia, visit: dshs.wa.gov/altsa/dementia-action-collaborative
WAYS YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN HELP

Health, civic, faith, and social organizations in Washington play a critical role in improving the brain health of African Americans. Here are a few strategies and example action steps. The icons direct you to useful resources below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Increase public awareness about disparities in Alzheimer’s disease, risk factors, and impact. [C] [D] [G]</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Promote healthy aging and brain health. [B] [C] [G]</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Provide guidance and support for dementia caregivers in navigating service systems. [C] [F]</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Promote health care access for early detection, diagnosis, and treatment. [A] [C] [G]</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Educate about the connections between chronic disease (diabetes, heart disease, hypertension) and dementia and help people manage such conditions. [B] [C] [F] [G]</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Include Alzheimer’s, dementia, and healthy aging in organizational, state, and local government plans. [B] [C] [F]</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Encourage African Americans to participate in dementia-related research studies. Information from research can help find better treatments for Alzheimer’s and identify culturally tailored strategies to address Alzheimer’s and other dementias. [E]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Examine your organization’s protocols, policies, and procedures for conscious and unconscious bias. [H] [I]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**RESOURCES**

- **A** Screening Diverse Populations
  https://www.actonalz.org/screening-diverse-populations
- **B** Administration for Community Living, Brain Health
  acl.gov/brain-health
- **C** Alzheimer’s Association
  alz.org
- **D** The Balm in Gilead, Inc. – Memory Sundays
  brainhealthcenterforafricanamericans.org/about-memory-Sunday/
- **E** Participating in Alzheimer’s Research: for yourself and future generations
  order.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2017-07/Participating_Alzh_Research_508_0.pdf
- **F** Community Living Connections
  memorylossinwowa.org
- **G** Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Alzheimer’s Disease and Healthy Aging Program
  cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/Alz-Greater-Risk.html
cdc.gov/aging/healthybrain/issue-maps/early-detection.html
- **H** Human Impact Partners Project
  healthequityguide.org
- **I** Foundational Practices for Health Equity – Learning and Action Tool
  astho.org/Health-Equity/Documents/Foundational-Practices-for-Health-Equity/

*Updated January 2021*