

Support Development of Dementia Services and Infrastructure in Northwest Wisconsin

THE CITIZENS OF NORTHWEST WISCONSIN REQUEST

That the State of Wisconsin support a higher reimbursement rate for facilities and services committed to and exercising competency in admitting and caring for individuals with challenging behaviors due to Alzheimer's disease and other like dementias. This, in turn, will help provide economic development opportunities and incentives for businesses wanting to create the needed facilities/services for individuals diagnosed with dementia in Northwest Wisconsin.

BACKGROUND

Northwest Wisconsin counties currently lack specialized resources, such as geriatric care for appropriate treatment or facilities capable of providing for long term needs of older adults and individuals with challenging behaviors, primarily related to dementia diagnoses. Low population density (10.2 people per square mile in Bayfield County) coupled with a stagnant economic base hinders development of resources warranting the appropriate care and attention necessary to allow for individuals to remain in their communities. In Bayfield County there are 65 nursing home beds available with no designated Alzheimer's Unit. In Ashland and Bayfield Counties there are 278 nursing home beds, 36 are within a designated dementia unsecured (unlocked) unit and 24 are in a dementia secured unit (locked). The current total census for individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's/Dementia in the two counties is 132, which is significantly higher than the total number of dementia-designated beds (60).

Area facilities now report concerns related to providing the level of care necessary to keep all residents safe. Individuals with dementia-related behaviors take much more time, energy and staff to accommodate, and the current rates received do not compensate fully for the needed one on one level of care. These individuals are at risk of harming themselves, other residents and staff. Outcomes from the Helen E.F. case do not allow for individuals with a dementia diagnosis to be admitted into a locked facility. This has eliminated Bayfield County's ability to work with the local hospitals, Memorial Medical Center Behavioral Health Unit to keep people safe in an emergency situation. The region is woefully lacking in long term residential resources for individuals diagnosed with dementia and exhibiting behaviors.

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