

# Alaska Commission on Aging

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Jon Haghayeghi

November 15, 2023



# The Commission on Aging

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**“The mission of the Alaska Commission on Aging is to ensure the dignity and independence of all older Alaskans, and to assist them to lead useful and meaningful lives through planning, advocacy, education, and interagency cooperation.”**

Established by Alaska statute in 1981, the commission:

- *Advocates* for the needs and concerns of older Alaskans to the Governor, Legislature, Congressional delegation, and the public.
- *Advises* the Governor, Legislature, Congressional delegation and the public on current and potential programs and services for older Alaskans and their caregivers.
- *Provides recommendations* to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority on programs and services to improve the lives of senior Trust beneficiaries

The ACoA is comprised of eleven members:

- Seven public members of senior age who are appointed by the Governor to serve four-year terms.
- Four designated seats for the Department of Health, the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development, the Chair of the Pioneer Home Advisory Board, and a senior services provider.

# Commission Members

Bob Sivertsen, Public Member, Chair, Ketchikan

Paula Pawlowski, Public Member, Vice-Chair, Anchorage

Nona Safra, Public Member, Homer

Jan Engan, Public Member, Palmer

Bob Pawlowski, Pioneer Home Advisory Board Chair, Anchorage

Pamela Samash, Public Member, Nenana

Darlene Supplee, Senior Service Provider, Fairbanks

Anthony Newman, Department of Health, Juneau

Lisa Von Bargen, Department of Commerce, Anchorage

Cynthia Lovel, Public Member, Wasilla



# ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH

## NOVEMBER

STATE OF ALASKA



*Executive Proclamation*  
by  
*Governor Mike Dunleavy*

WHEREAS, Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia and is a progressive and degenerative brain disease that affects memory, thinking, decision-making, and behavioral processes, and hinders the cognitive ability to care for oneself, eventually leading to death; and

WHEREAS, over 8,500 Alaskans age 65 and older has Alzheimer's dementia and this number is projected to grow to 11,000 Alaskans by 2025; and

WHEREAS, Alzheimer's disease is difficult and expensive to manage, often requiring inpatient hospital care, skilled nursing facility stays, and home health care visits; and

WHEREAS, the assistance provided by family and other caregivers to those with Alzheimer's helps offset the impact of this disease on Alaska's budget. In 2021, approximately 12,000 Alaskans provided an estimated 21 million hours of unpaid care valued at \$409 million by helping with activities of daily living, giving medications and following medical treatment plans, managing behavioral symptoms, and coordinating decision-making regarding care, among other caregiving tasks; and

WHEREAS, Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month is an opportunity to raise awareness about this growing public health concern, its symptoms, and the importance of early detection so Alaskans can connect with resources and services that offer assistance, such as the Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska, adult day programs, family caregiver support programs, and related senior service providers.


NOW THEREFORE, I, Mike Dunleavy, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF ALASKA, do hereby proclaim November 2023 as:

*Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month*

in Alaska, and encourage all Alaskans to become educated about this disease, to personally engage in behaviors that promote brain health, to support those with the disease and their loved ones who care for them, and to remember those who have been lost to Alzheimer's disease.

Dated: November 1, 2023



  
*Mike Dunleavy, Governor*  
who has also authorized the  
seal of the State of Alaska to  
be affixed to this proclamation

November is Alzheimer's Awareness Month!

# Facts about Alzheimer's

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- 1. Non-Invasive Diagnosis Developments:** The advancement in non-invasive diagnostic methods, like sophisticated imaging and blood tests, is a promising area in Alzheimer's research. These techniques are aimed at making diagnosis more comfortable and accessible, potentially leading to earlier detection and treatment.
- 2. Growing Support Communities:** The increase in support communities and resources for individuals with early-onset Alzheimer's is empowering. These communities offer emotional support, practical advice, and a sense of connection, helping individuals and their families navigate the challenges of the disease.
- 3. Innovative Therapies:** Research in Alzheimer's disease is exploring innovative therapies, including immunotherapy and gene therapy. These cutting-edge approaches offer hope for altering the course of the disease and improving the quality of life for those affected.
- 4. Lifestyle Impact on Brain Health:** There's a growing body of evidence suggesting that a healthy lifestyle, including a balanced diet, regular physical activity, and mental stimulation, can positively impact brain health and may reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's.
- 5. Global Collaborative Efforts:** Alzheimer's research is a field marked by global collaboration, with scientists, researchers, and healthcare professionals worldwide working together. This collective effort is accelerating the discovery of new treatments and the understanding of the disease, fostering a global community dedicated to tackling Alzheimer's.



# Fiscal Year 2023 - Outline

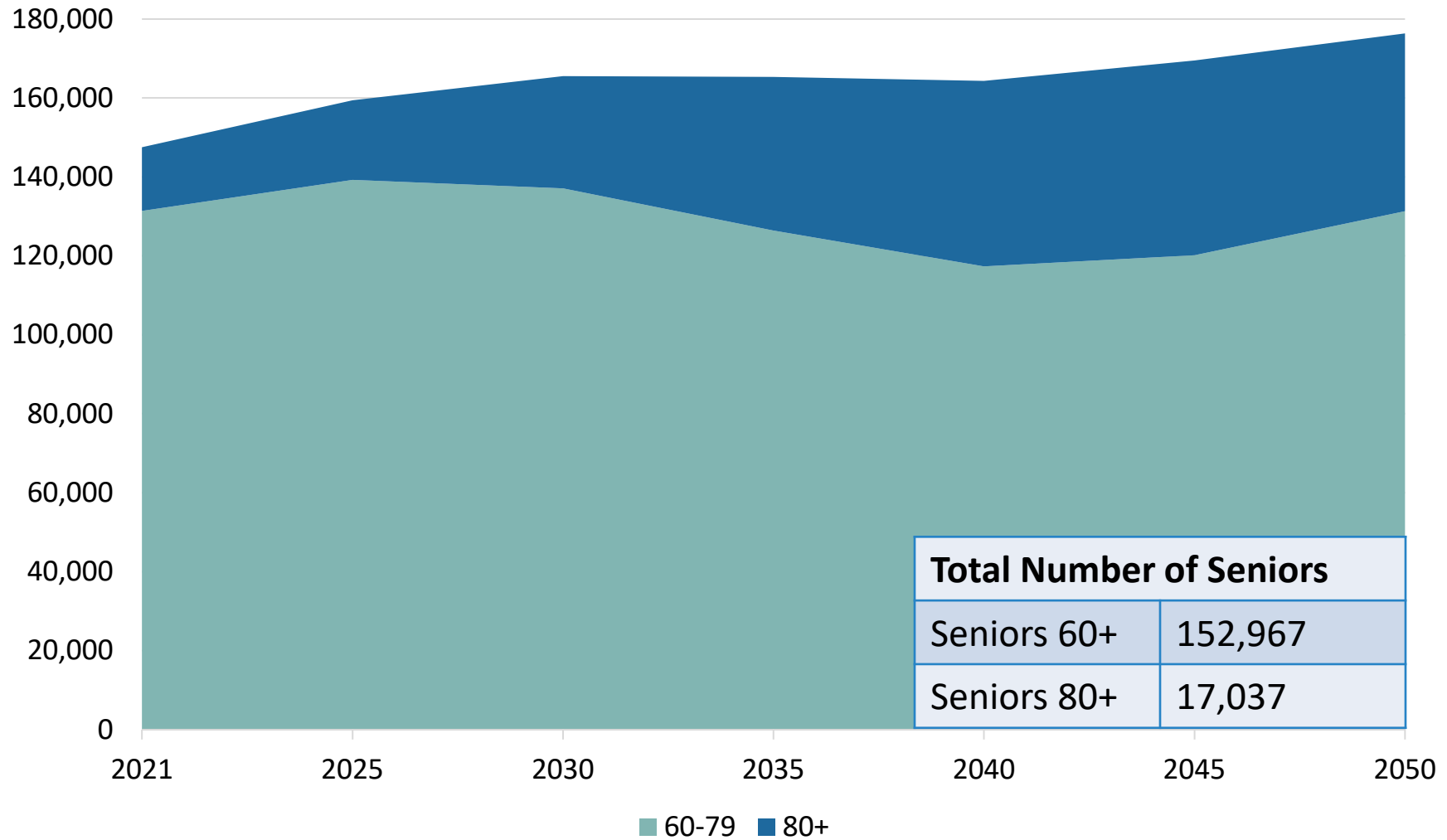
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## The Alaska Commission on Aging

- Mission
- Demographics and Projections
- Activities
- State Plan for Senior Services: 2024 – 2027
- The Road Ahead



# Population Forecast



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development Population Forecasts, 2021-2050

## Alaska's Senior Population Growth

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Alaska has the fastest growing senior population per capita in the nation.

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Alaska's senior population increased 68% between 2010 and 2022.

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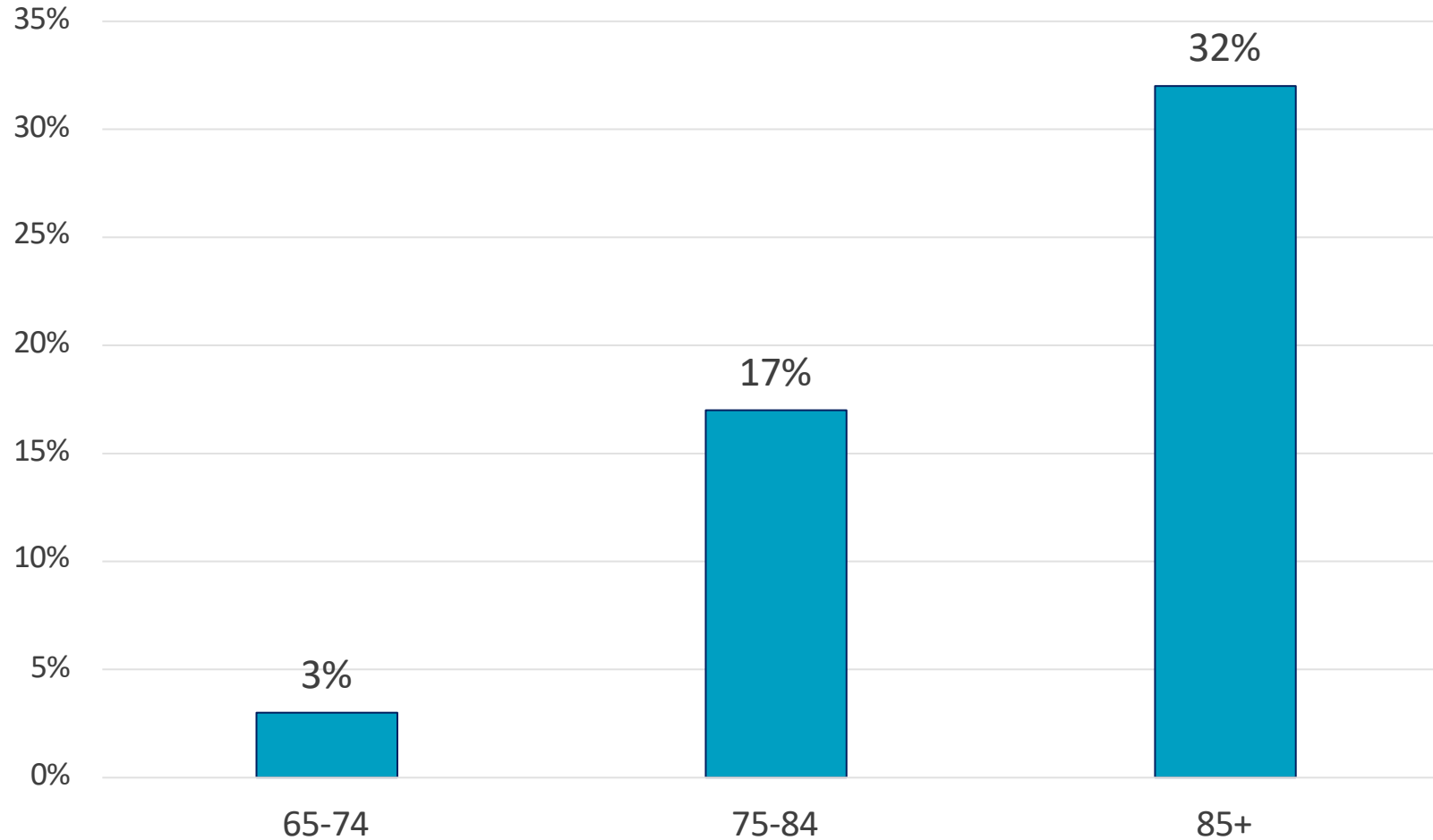
20% of Alaskans are aged 60 and over.

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The proportion of Alaskan's 85+ years is expected to grow 500% between now and 2040.



# Rates of Alzheimer's Disease Increase with Age

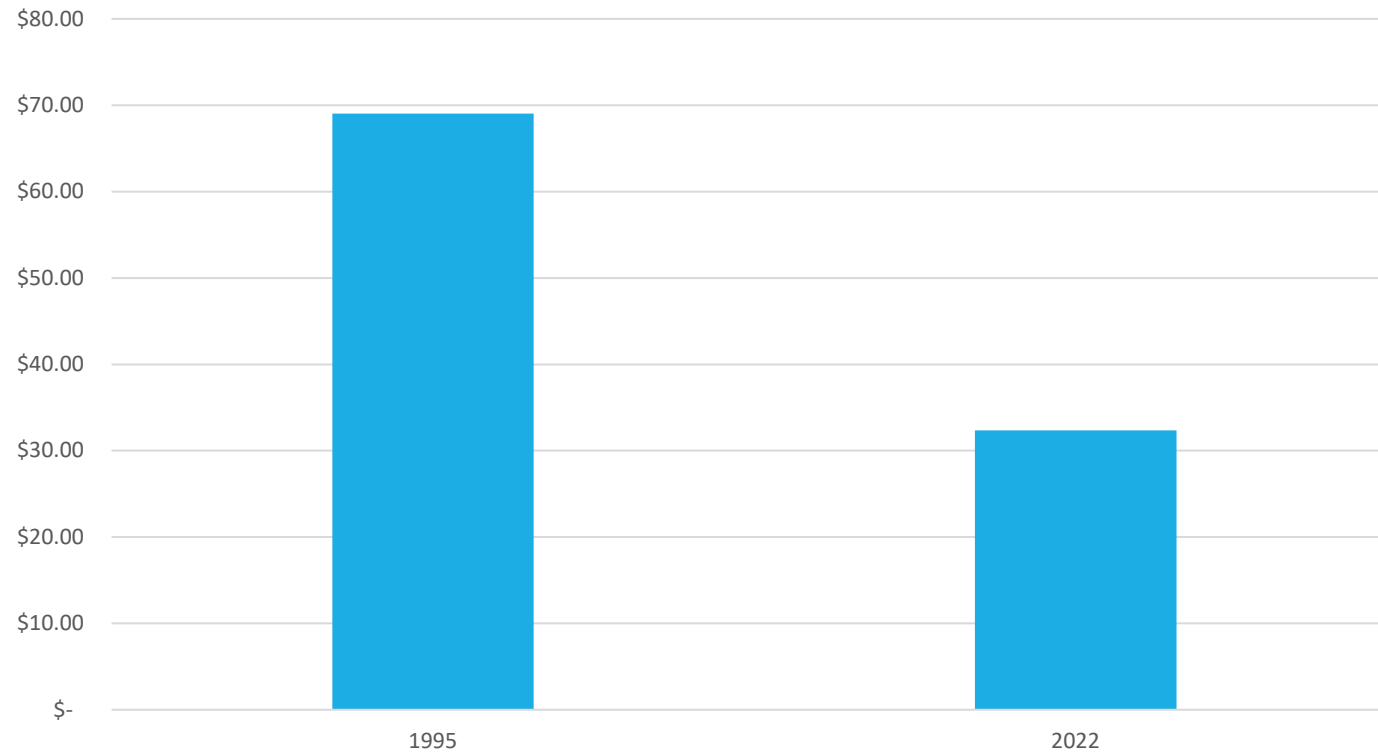


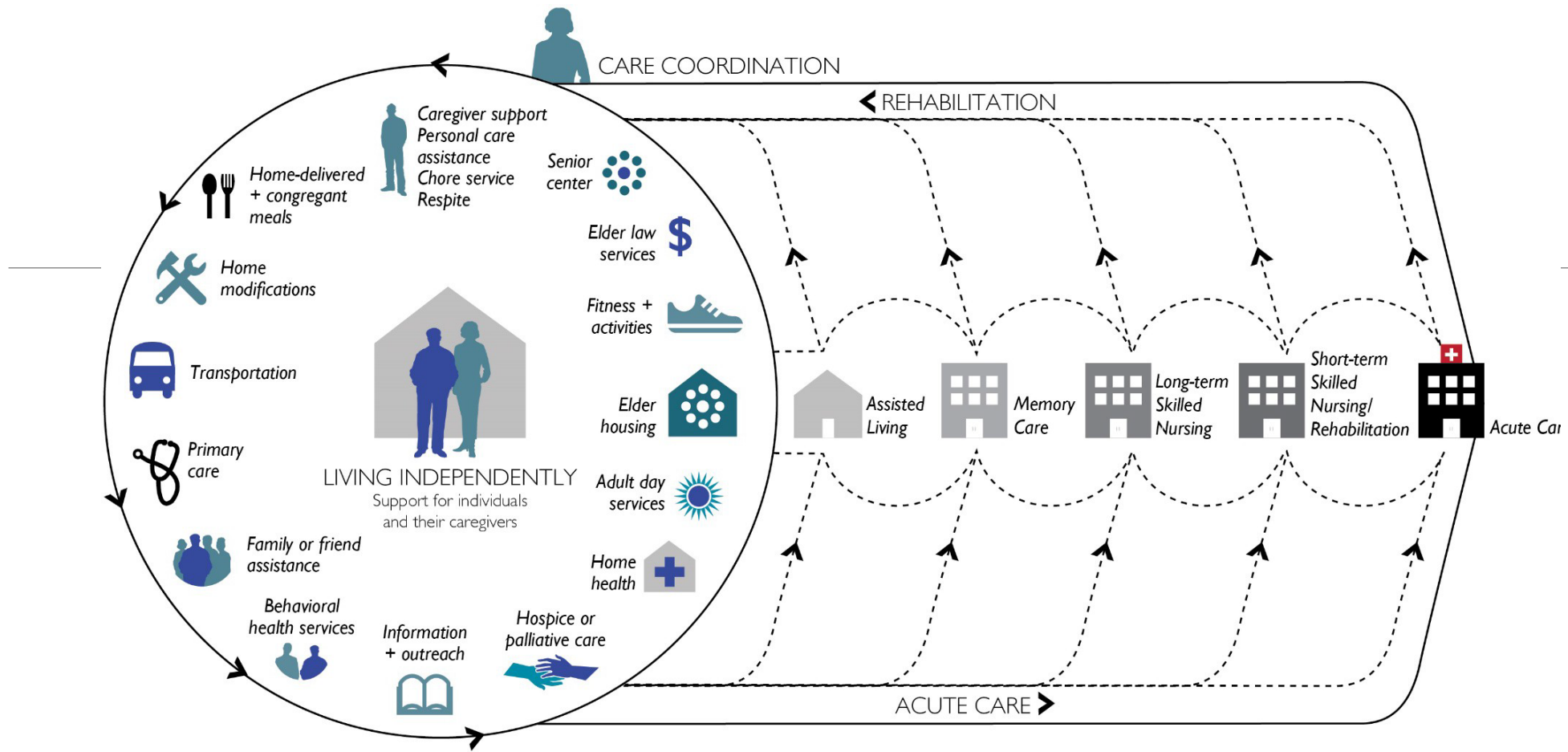
Source: Alzheimer's Association, 2019 Alzheimer's Statistics Facts and Figures Report. Projections. Note: Estimates do not include the related dementia that is not considered Alzheimer's.

# Reduced Spending Per Senior

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Inflation Adjusted: NTS Funds Per Alaska Senior: 1995 vs 2022





Goal is to move back to lowest level of care possible

Living independently

Level of care/need = **LOW**

Level of care/need = **HIGH**

# Long-term Continuum of Care for Seniors

# Recent Activities

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Legislative Audit  
Complete

ACoA Board Meeting -  
December 4, 2023  
(virtual)

Implemented State Plan  
for Senior Services:  
FFY2024 to FFY2027

Second Quarterly  
Teleconferences on  
Senior Issues

ACoA Podcast: Alaska  
Wisdom and Wellness

Legislative Priorities  
and Recommendations  
to the Legislature and  
Governor

Senior Snapshot and  
Annual Report

Q3 Travel to Wainright,  
Anchorage, Wasilla,  
Palmer, Kodiak, Seward

# State Plan Final Steps (now complete)

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- May 19<sup>th</sup>-June 19<sup>th</sup>: The State Plan was noticed for public comment.
- May 31<sup>st</sup>: Meeting for public comment
- June 5<sup>th</sup>: State Plan Advisory Committee Meeting
- June 9<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>: All public comments organized, reviewed, and incorporated as necessary.
- June 30<sup>th</sup>: Signed submission to ACL and incorporation of feedback / clarification from ACL
- October 1st: Plan was implemented

# Overarching Goals for FY2024 – 2027

1. Promote healthy aging in place and provide access to comprehensive and integrated health care.
2. Encourage seniors to be financially secure.
3. Foster the protection of vulnerable seniors from abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation in home, community, and long-term care facilities.
4. Promote improved access for seniors to quality, affordable, accessible, safe, and appropriate housing, including senior housing, across the continuum of care.
5. Promote opportunities for meaningful aging, intergenerational connectivity, and civic engagement and address the impacts from social isolation, particularly due to COVID-19.
6. Promote person-centered, quality and affordable home-based and community-based long-term support services to provide seniors with the highest quality of life, targeted to individuals with the greatest economic and social need.
7. Promote opportunities to support family caregivers to provide care and support to seniors without putting their own physical, emotional, and financial well-being on hold and at risk.



# The Road Ahead

- Continue topic-centered teleconference
- Fill vacancy in rural outreach position
- Distribute advocacy information to legislature and governor
- Produce the first five podcast episodes before going live
- Monthly tracking state plan measurables
- Filling vacant commissioner seats





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Thank you!