

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

This glossary includes commonly used terms in brain health, dementia care, and public health initiatives referenced throughout the Healthy Brain Community Toolkit and the CDC Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map.

ADRD (Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias): A general term describing Alzheimer’s disease and other conditions that cause dementia, including vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia, and frontotemporal dementia.

Age-Friendly Communities: Communities designed to support healthy aging by creating environments where older adults can live safely, stay active, and remain engaged in community life.

Alzheimer’s Disease: The most common cause of dementia. It is a progressive brain disease that gradually affects memory, thinking, and behavior.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS): A national health survey conducted by the CDC that collects data about health behaviors, chronic conditions, and preventive practices among U.S. adults.

Brain Health: The ability to think, learn, remember, make decisions, and carry out everyday activities. Brain health is influenced by lifestyle, physical health, mental well-being, and social connections.

Built Environment: The physical spaces where people live, work, and gather—such as neighborhoods, parks, transportation systems, and public buildings—that influence health and well-being.

Caregiver: A person who provides care or assistance to someone with a health condition, disability, or cognitive impairment. Caregivers may be family members, friends, or professionals.

Caregiving Burden: The physical, emotional, financial, and social challenges experienced by individuals providing care for someone with chronic illness or cognitive impairment.

Cognitive Decline: A noticeable worsening in memory or thinking abilities that may occur with aging or conditions such as dementia.

Cognitive Health: The ability to clearly think, learn, remember, and make decisions.

Community Assessment: A process used to gather information about community needs, resources, and service gaps in order to guide planning and decision-making.

Community Engagement: Activities that involve residents, organizations, and local leaders in identifying needs, planning programs, and supporting community initiatives.

Cross-Sector Collaboration: Partnerships among organizations from different sectors such as healthcare, public health, education, businesses, faith groups, and community organizations to address community needs.

Dementia: An umbrella term used to describe a group of symptoms affecting memory, thinking, and daily functioning caused by diseases that damage brain cells.

Dementia-Friendly Community: A community that supports individuals living with dementia and their caregivers through awareness, inclusive environments, accessible services, and supportive practices.

Evaluation: The process of measuring participation, outcomes, and impact of programs or initiatives to determine effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement.

Evidence-Informed Strategies: Programs, policies, or practices that are based on the best available research, public health guidance, and practical experience.

Healthy Brain Community: A community that actively promotes brain health, increases dementia awareness, supports caregivers, and implements strategies aligned with public health recommendations.

Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI): A national public health initiative led by the CDC that promotes cognitive health and addresses Alzheimer's disease and related dementias through coordinated state and community action.

Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map: A framework developed by the CDC and the Alzheimer's Association that outlines public health actions to improve cognitive health and address Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

Implementation Plan: A structured plan outlining the actions, timeline, responsibilities, and resources needed to carry out a program or initiative.

Modifiable Risk Factors: Health behaviors or conditions that can be changed or improved to reduce the risk of disease, including factors linked to cognitive decline.

Priority Populations: Groups within a community that may have greater health risks, fewer resources, or higher need for services. Identifying priority populations helps communities focus efforts where they are most needed.

Public Health Approach: A method of improving population health by focusing on prevention, education, community engagement, and policies that influence health outcomes.

Respite Care: Short-term relief for caregivers that provides temporary care for a person living with dementia or another condition, allowing caregivers time to rest or attend to personal needs.

Social Determinants of Health: The conditions in the environments where people live, learn, work, and age that influence health outcomes.

Social Isolation: A lack of regular social contact or meaningful relationships that can negatively affect mental, emotional, and physical health.

Surveillance (Public Health): The ongoing collection, analysis, and interpretation of health data used to guide public health planning and interventions.

Sustainability: The ability of a program or initiative to continue over time by maintaining partnerships, resources, and community support.