
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

B.C. provides \$2 million to support people with dementia

VANCOUVER – Government today announced \$2 million to continue to support the First Link program operated by the Alzheimer Society of B.C. that provides services and supports to individuals and families affected by Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia.

“We value our partnership with the Alzheimer Society and are pleased to support First Link,” said Health Minister Margaret MacDiarmid. “It is a valuable early intervention program that connects people and families affected by Alzheimer’s disease, or another dementia, with supports and services.”

First Link offers customized information and access to services as soon as possible after diagnosis. The diagnosed individual and their family will continue to be supported by First Link, by receiving regular contact and access to education sessions, support groups and social programs, all designed to help manage and better understand dementia.

“This \$2 million in funding will allow the Alzheimer Society of B.C. to expand the First Link program to reach more individuals and families throughout the province,” said Larry Okotinsky, acting CEO of the Alzheimer Society of B.C. “By doing so, it also enhances the commitment the society makes to provide support, education and information for families impacted by dementia throughout their journey with the disease.”

The Province’s Dementia Action Plan commits government to supporting the expansion of community support programs, such as the Alzheimer Society’s First Link program and, together with physicians, refers people with dementia and their families to support services as early as possible.

Government is committed to improving the health and quality of care for people who have dementia and has provided \$1 million in funding every year since 2010 to support the Alzheimer Society of British Columbia. The \$2 million is being provided by government through the Provincial Health Services Authority.

First Link currently operates in a number of communities including North Fraser, Greater Victoria, North and Central Okanagan, North and Central Vancouver Island, northern Interior and Skeena, Richmond/South Delta and Vancouver. Since last year, more than 2,600 families have accessed First Link programs and services, with more than 1,200 new referrals in the past year alone.

Dementia is a progressive, degenerative condition that results in a gradual loss of brain function. It usually has symptoms such as loss of memory, confusion, problems with speech and understanding, changes in personality and behaviour and an increasing reliance on others for the activities of daily living.

There are an estimated 60,000 to 70,000 British Columbians living with dementia. Government's Provincial Dementia Action Plan and dementia guidelines outline collaborative actions that can be taken by health-care professionals and caregivers to support diagnosed individuals through person-centred care.

The Dementia Action Plan is available online at:

www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2012/dementia-action-plan.pdf

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