

Limited Access to Memory Care Services in Assisted Living Communities in Rural Florida

BACKGROUND

With 21% of its population aged 65 and older, the state of Florida has the largest percentage of older adults in the country. Of this population, over half a million people are living with Alzheimer's disease (AD).¹ While most of these adults will try to age in place, many have to use long-term care services. The Alzheimer's Association estimates about 42% of people with AD using these services will live in an assisted living community (ALC).² Florida has 3,090 ALCs and can advertise memory care services if they comply with state requirements for a safe environment, nursing supervision, and AD staff training. Because Florida has the highest percent of older adults, and almost half of its counties are rural,³ this policy brief explores the access to ALCs with memory care services in Florida.

STUDY METHOD

Data about the Florida ALCs were collected from the Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA),* which has a legislative mandate, to provide information about ALCs and their services. For our analyses, we used the county-level addresses reported to AHCA for each ALC. Each county in Florida was then labeled as urban or rural based on the 2010 U.S. Census. A county is considered rural if there are 100 people or less per square mile.³ Additional data were collected from the Florida Department of Health that included information on the number of older adults residing

in each county in Florida, as well as the number of people with probable AD.¹

FINDINGS

There are 683 ALCs (22%) offering memory care services in Florida (see Figure 1). The 37 urban counties have more than 3.2 million adults that are 65 and older, with approximately 428,000 of these adults having probable AD. All 37 of these counties have at least one ALC, and a total of 666 (97.8%) ALCs have memory care services. The 30 rural counties of Florida account for almost 1 million people that are over the age of 65, with about 125,000 older adults having probable AD. However, there are no ALCs in nine rural counties (Dixie, Franklin, Gilchrist, Glades, Jefferson, Levy, Taylor, Union, and Wakulla). Additionally, Baker, Bradford, Calhoun, DeSoto, Gulf, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Monroe, Okeechobee, Suwanee, and Washington counties have at least one ALC, but none provide any memory care services.

Overall, 881,020 adults 65 and older, or 21.0% of Florida's older adult population, that reside within 24 (35.8%) counties have no access to an ALC with memory care services.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study indicate there is a clear need for ALC services within rural Florida, and a need for the state to promote the implementation of memory care services within the ALCs that are

*Data was collected on February 6, 2020

already in rural areas. Previous studies indicate that as people age, they are more likely to move out of urban areas into more rural settings,⁴ and one can expect the number of older adults in these communities to grow rapidly in the near future.⁵ Living in rural areas can exacerbate symptoms of AD as these adults are more likely to live alone with little social interaction, have lower levels of education, and have severe or complete impairment in their ability to do their activities of daily living. With Florida continuing to have the highest percent of older adults in the country, and the recent identification of AD as a top health priority in this state, it is essential that policy makers develop services for this clearly underserved population in an attempt to alleviate the associated burden.

REFERENCES

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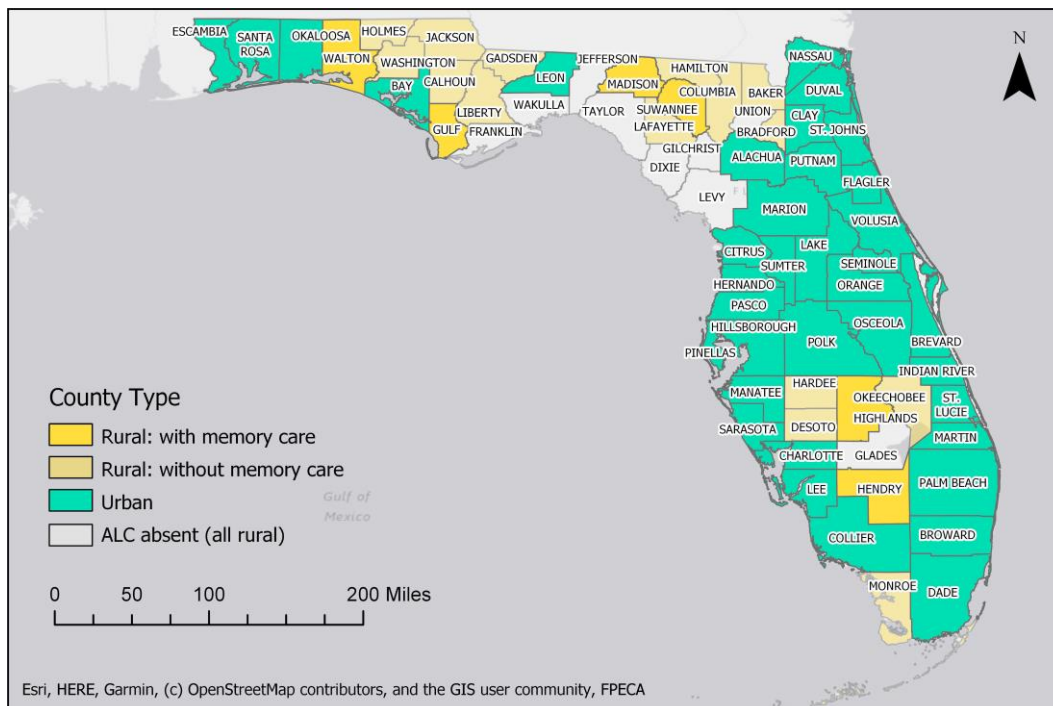


Figure 1. Florida Counties With and Without Assisted Living Communities with Memory Care

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Table 1. Florida Assisted Living Communities By County (2020)

County	Rural (Y/N)?	ALC (Y/N)?	Memory Care (Y/N)?	# of people 65+	% of people 65+	# probable AD cases for 65+	% of probable AD cases for 65+
Alachua	N	Y	Y	35,866	21.61	4,387	12.23
Baker	Y	Y	N	3,807	21.31	432	11.35
Bay	N	Y	Y	30,643	21.15	3,837	12.52
Bradford	Y	Y	N	5,030	20.49	654	13.00
Brevard	N	Y	Y	136,070	20.91	18,190	13.37
Broward	N	Y	Y	309,167	21.22	41,598	13.45
Calhoun	Y	Y	N	2,722	21.12	338	12.42
Charlotte	N	Y	Y	69,190	21.17	9,304	13.45
Citrus	N	Y	Y	52,130	20.52	6,746	12.94
Clay	N	Y	Y	32,528	21.59	3,596	11.06
Collier	N	Y	Y	115,680	21.72	16,297	14.09
Columbia	Y	Y	Y	12,827	21.18	1,559	12.15
De Soto	Y	Y	N	447,396	21.25	61,531	13.75
Dixie	Y	N	N	7,823	21.89	1,064	13.60
Duval	N	Y	Y	3,927	21.11	462	11.76
Escambia	N	Y	Y	130,488	21.55	15,575	11.94
Flagler	N	Y	Y	52,242	20.95	6,395	12.24
Franklin	Y	N	N	32,598	21.70	3,951	12.12
Gadsden	Y	Y	Y	2,822	22.11	298	10.56
Gilchrist	Y	N	N	8,266	21.36	990	11.98
Glades	Y	N	N	3,586	21.35	466	12.99
Gulf	Y	Y	N	3,571	20.28	448	12.55
Hamilton	Y	Y	N	3,366	21.58	394	11.71
Hardee	Y	Y	N	2,596	21.70	306	11.79
Hendry	Y	Y	N	4,414	21.03	575	13.03
Hernando	N	Y	Y	5,272	20.99	682	12.94
Highlands	Y	Y	Y	51,160	20.56	6,730	13.15
Hillsborough	N	Y	Y	35,942	20.68	5,243	14.59
Holmes	Y	Y	N	198,970	21.78	24,261	12.19
Indian River	N	Y	Y	4,020	20.79	506	12.59
Jackson	Y	Y	N	49,033	21.61	6,866	14.00
Jefferson	Y	N	N	9,671	20.92	1,226	12.68
Lafayette	Y	Y	Y	3,354	21.93	403	12.02
Lake	N	Y	Y	1,346	21.48	168	12.48
Lee	N	Y	Y	90,800	21.25	11,834	13.03
Leon	N	Y	Y	201,800	21.84	26,079	12.92
Levy	Y	N	N	37,473	21.88	4,356	11.62
Liberty	Y	Y	N	10,158	21.37	1,167	11.49
Madison	Y	Y	Y	1,269	23.28	147	11.58
Manatee	N	Y	Y	3,881	21.56	465	11.98
Marion	N	Y	Y	102,252	21.91	13,662	13.36

Martin	N	Y	Y	101,739	20.80	13,003	12.78
Miami-Dade	N	Y	Y	47,402	21.00	7,003	14.77
Monroe	Y	Y	N	16,595	20.92	1,888	11.38
Nassau	N	Y	Y	17,950	22.19	1,987	11.07
Okaloosa	N	Y	Y	31,139	20.90	3,779	12.14
Okeechobee	Y	Y	N	8,522	22.50	1,115	13.08
Orange	N	Y	Y	160,006	22.38	19,327	12.08
Osceola	N	Y	Y	46,646	22.29	5,393	11.56
Palm Beach	N	Y	Y	339,885	21.11	52,092	15.33
Pasco	N	Y	Y	116,794	20.77	15,145	12.97
Pinellas	N	Y	Y	235,341	21.07	32,825	13.95
Polk	N	Y	Y	137,262	21.36	17,187	12.52
Putnam	N	Y	Y	16,550	21.05	2,025	12.24
Santa Rosa	N	Y	Y	47,791	22.83	5,643	11.81
Sarasota	N	Y	Y	71,952	21.26	9,442	13.12
Seminole	N	Y	Y	27,454	21.95	3,077	11.21
St. Johns	N	Y	Y	150,135	21.55	21,671	14.43
St. Lucie	N	Y	Y	70,106	21.21	8,833	12.60
Sumter	N	Y	Y	71,624	21.97	7,930	11.07
Suwanee	Y	Y	N	9,453	21.14	1,203	12.73
Taylor	Y	N	N	4,391	21.05	513	11.68
Union	Y	N	N	2,263	22.22	248	10.96
Volusia	N	Y	Y	128,412	21.00	16,716	13.02
Wakulla	Y	N	N	4,885	22.24	507	10.38
Walton	Y	Y	Y	13,447	22.17	1,502	11.17
Washington	Y	Y	N	4,431	20.41	492	11.10

Source: Florida Department of Health; Licensing and Surveying Agency for Healthcare Administration

Note. ALC= Assisted living community; AD= Alzheimer's disease.