

ALZ COMPANIONS INTERN INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for selecting the ALZ Companions Internship! We are so excited to get to know and work with you. Through this experience you will learn about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias; get to directly help a local family in need; help educate and spread awareness about Alzheimer's disease; connect with other ALZ Companions interns; and potentially form a deep, special bond with an individual living with dementia.

Your internship will officially start once you are matched with a family. With the exception of the family matching process, you will need to take the initiative to begin all the activities listed below.

INTERNSHIP ACTIVITIES:

#1 – Be a companion to an individual living with dementia

Alzheimer's San Diego will guide you through the process of selecting a family and meeting them at the matching visit. Once the match is confirmed, you will schedule and visit on your own. It is expected that you are available to make 4-hour weekly visits to the best of your ability, barring vacations, sickness, emergencies, etc.

#2 – Attend a minimum of three education classes

You can choose from any of our free education classes, both live and recorded. However, there are a few that are great for establishing your foundation of Alzheimer's knowledge: Dementia 101, Adjusting to Life with Dementia, Communication Skills, Coping with Personality & Behavior Changes, and Maintaining Your Brain Health. Please review recorded and join live classes at www.alzsd.org/classes. For each class, write a summary and discussion of what you learned and email it to Adrianna at amccollum@alzsd.org.

#3 – Attend a minimum of one ALZ Companions Reflection & Discussion meeting

The Reflection & Discussion Group is a meeting just for ALZ Companions, both volunteers and interns. This is an opportunity for you to meet other companions to talk about your experiences, process challenging situations, share ideas, suggest activities, and more. It will be an opportunity to learn from, grow with, and help others who are on the same unique journey as you. (Zoom meeting)

#4 – Complete remote learning activities and projects

Interns will choose at least six learning activities and projects from the list that starts on Page 3 of this document. Topics include research and writing; social justice; cultural humility; policy and advocacy; and more. After you complete each activity, email a write-up to Adrianna at amccollum@alzsd.org. The activity may indicate what kind of write-up it is (i.e., reflection, outline, etc.) If not, write a summary of what you learned, your observations, etc.

#5 – Complete advocacy action plan worksheet

Alzheimer's is one of the most serious health issues today. That's why it is critical for individuals, groups, organizations, and businesses to advocate for public policies that increase essential funding and support for the millions of people who are either living with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia or caring for someone who is. Advances can only happen when people care about an issue. This exercise is designed to demystify how advocacy works and make it approachable and accessible for everyone. Once you have completed the activity, please email the completed worksheet to Adrianna at amccollum@alzsd.org.

#6 – Put your advocacy plan into action

Using your work on the advocacy plan worksheet, decide what action step you want to take. It's your choice! You may want to write a letter to a legislator, you may want to post about one of your key issues on social media, or you may want to do a presentation to your peers about why they should care and take action too. Email Adrianna at amccollum@alzsd.org if you want to discuss ideas or get more information. Screenshots of any social media posts, copies of letters, or any other completed advocacy projects can be sent to Adrianna as well.

#7 – Optional interview with an Alzheimer's San Diego staff member

If you are interested, you can meet one-on-one via Zoom with an Alzheimer's San Diego professional to learn more their job, career path/education, ask questions, get tips/insights, etc. You can choose from a staff member in any of these departments: Administration/ Business Office, CEO, Education, Volunteers, Supportive Services (largely made up of social workers), Fundraising/Philanthropy, and Marketing. Email Adrianna at amccollum@alzsd.org to set it up.

Internship written assignment instructions

- Use a standard font like 12 pt. Times New Roman or 11 pt. Arial
- 1 inch page margins, text should be double spaced
- Cite any outside research or sources of information at the end of your paper
- All written assignments (class summaries, education activities, projects, etc.) **must be a minimum of 1 full page**
- When submitting assignments, please be sure to include on your paper or in your email how long it took you to complete (any time spent reading, writing, watching videos, doing research, presenting materials)

Remote Learning Activities and Projects for Volunteers & Interns

EDUCATION – training and videos

- Watch recorded and upcoming live dementia education webinars
<https://www.alzsd.org/services/education/>
- Watch Teepa Snow videos
<https://www.alzsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Teepa-Snow-Videos-on-YouTube.pdf>
- Watch UCLA videos for caregivers of individuals living with dementia
<https://www.uclahealth.org/dementia/caregiver-education-videos>
- Watch Alliance for Aging Research videos focused on navigating the challenges of dementia
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8DF36dW4q3hSMaD7E9V9G4T85LC_ds8J
- Take any of the Alzheimer's Association online classes
<https://training.alz.org>
- Watch the Caregivers Video Series from the Office of Rural Health
<https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/vets/resources.asp#dem>

EDUCATION – online research & writing

- Do a [literature review](#) of current Alzheimer's research that you are able to find online and/or in scholarly journals.
- Read and write a reflection on current literature related to Alzheimer's disease, Alzheimer's clinical trials, and/or another related topic that interests you.
- Read two articles about new Alzheimer's research, then write a summary about both and compare the two (targets, methodologies, results, etc.).

- Look up sites on the Internet where you can learn about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and explain what makes a trustworthy site versus one that is not reliable, cite examples.
- Is having experienced domestic violence a risk factor for developing dementia? Research and discuss your findings.

EDUCATION – creative thinking

- Watch “Still Alice,” “Away from Her,” “The Savages,” or “Iris: A Memoir of Iris Murdoch,” and write a reflection on what the movie got right *and* wrong about Alzheimer's disease.
- Watch [Taking Care](#) film and write a reflection and discussion about the impact of the disease on caregivers.
- Research the benefits of music with Alzheimer's patients and then watch “Alive Inside.” Write a paper on what you learned from your research and what you observed in the documentary and how they compare.
- Write about what you would do to prepare if you knew you would develop Alzheimer's disease as an older adult. What plans would you put in place with regard to your care, health, relationships, legal and financial matters, etc.?
- Identify Ted Talks, YouTube videos, and podcasts related to your role as a volunteer. Create a list and summarize how they are applicable to the volunteer role.
- Watch the 45-minute game walkthrough for [“Before I Forget”](#) and provide a written analysis of the game, its depiction of Alzheimer's disease, what they got right/wrong, and if you learned anything from it.

EDUCATION – social justice

- Research and write about social justice issues as it relates to Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.
- In writing, characterize the population Alzheimer's San Diego serves and identify ways the agency meets the needs of the client population and identify how this could be improved.
- Complete a writing assignment about strategies that promote social justice and human rights considering the mission statement and services of Alzheimer's San Diego.
- List the ways Alzheimer's San Diego could advocate for social, economic, environmental justice, and human rights in the organization's work.
- Explore local, state, and federal policies that impact Alzheimer's San Diego and/or individuals living with dementia and write a summary.
- Read at least chapters 1 & 2 in the [2019 World Alzheimer's Report: Attitudes to Dementia](#), paying special attention to what it discusses about stigma. What are some common misperceptions, beliefs, or attitudes towards those with dementia? What might be best practices for correcting those misperceptions?

EDUCATION – cultural humility

- Review literature about cultural humility and write a reflection on how it relates to your experience as a volunteer/intern.
- Read "The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures," by Anne Fadmin, and write a reflection about the issues raised in the book and discuss how they can be generally applied to your role as a volunteer/intern.
- Utilize self-reflection to think about personal identities and biases (including your own) and how this may show up in practice with the population served by Alzheimer's San Diego.

PROJECTS – policy & advocacy

- Read and write a summary of the National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease – 2025 update
<https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/b285be4a31850170c2bcad19eb80ebe4/FINAL%20FINAL%202025%20National%20Plan%20to%20Address%20Alzheimer%20Disease%20%281%29.pdf>
- Read and write a summary of the [2026 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures Report](#)
- Read and write a summary of the World Alzheimer Report 2025 – Reimagining life with dementia—the power of rehabilitation. **Note:** you will need to download the PDF, the assignment is not based on the short summary page
<https://www.alzint.org/u/World-Alzheimer-Report-2025.pdf>

PROJECTS – related to care partners & individuals living with dementia

- Look up volunteer opportunities that individuals living with dementia can do in San Diego County (many people are early-stage and still want to contribute) and research if there is a model in the nation (or world) for such volunteer opportunities.
- Develop an early-intervention campaign to target younger people to improve brain health and begin planning for the future.
- Create videos demonstrating/explaining basic relaxation tips for care partners.
- Compile a list of resources that would help families find activities in the community that are dementia-friendly.
- Research intergenerational programming for people living with dementia and make recommendations for new ideas Alzheimer's San Diego can apply.

PROJECTS – training & education

- Create short instructional videos demonstrating/leading viewers through simple but engaging activities (easy art project, simple but fun game, etc.).
- Come up with a simple way to illustrate brain changes in Alzheimer's disease to use for educating clients (model, design, examples, etc.).
- Create a training for volunteers/interns about appropriate activities for people living with dementia, by stage of disease (early, middle, late).
- Research and create simple activities that could be used for teaching children about brain health and dementia.
- Create a training for volunteers/interns or clients about self-care.
- Keeping in mind volunteer/intern training, think of topics for a deeper dive and develop a presentation for it.

PROJECTS – social justice

- Research what resources are available in San Diego and nationwide for individuals living with dementia who live alone, identify the gaps between what's available and what's needed, and make recommendations for what could be provided.
- Research best practices for tailoring services and support for different socioeconomic statuses, cultures, religions, sexual orientation, etc. to create a cultural competence/humility guide or report.
- Research and develop best practices for reaching more at-risk groups who may be less likely to ask for help.

PROJECTS – marketing & social media

- Look up ads geared toward individuals who are unpaid caregivers for their loved one(s). What kind of messaging do companies tend to use? Are there popular colors or symbols? What kind of potential predatory practices are noticed?
- Compile a list of online junk science about Alzheimer's disease, with URLs (websites, headlines, interventions, promises of a cure/treatment, etc.).

PROJECTS – misc.

- Research best practices for memory screenings or community outreach and awareness.
- Research California RCFEs/SNFs regarding reform efforts, trends, etc.
- Create a plain-language document that discusses how to know if Alzheimer's research is valid/significant (sample size, replicated, etc.), especially when presented in the media.
- Choosing from this [LIST](#), watch any movie, explore any blog, read any book related to Alzheimer's or another form of dementia and write a description and summary (target audience, themes addressed, correct/incorrect information) for staff to reference.

Advocacy Action Plan Worksheet

Alzheimer's disease is one of the most serious public health issues today. This activity is designed to help you learn more about the local and national issues that are critical to changing perceptions about Alzheimer's disease; advocating for public policies for improvements in care and support; and fighting for funds to be directed toward research for a cure. This activity will walk you through the steps of creating an action advocacy plan. It will help you focus on the issues that are important to you, what steps you would take, how you would accomplish your goals, and how to ensure your timing is maximized for the best results.

Section 1: Setting Your Goals

What issues are important to you? What are your goals? Current key issues include:

- [Public policies to improve care and support](#)
- [Increase funding for research](#)
- Alzheimer's awareness
- ["Dementia Friends"](#)
- Elder abuse
- [National bills](#)
- [Local \(CA\) bills](#)

Action Step #1A:

Research local and national bills related to Alzheimer's and dementia. Write out the names and summaries of three bills (past or present) below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Action Step #1B: Determine your key issues.

List three key issues here and why they are important to you.

Action Step #2: Determine your goals.

What are your goals? What are the 1-2 most important goals to you?

Section 2: Strategies for developing your message.

Action Step #3A: Name your key audience(s).

Determine who your audience is. What groups or individuals are currently most supportive of Alzheimer's advocacy efforts? What key decision-makers would you like to have on your side? What other groups would you like to reach with your message?

Suggestions:

- [California Senate members](#)
- [California State Assemblymembers](#)
- [Find your California Senator and Assemblymember](#)
- [Find your US Representative](#)
- Local businesses & organizations
- Local colleges & universities
- Philanthropists

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Action Step #3B: Why are/should your issues be important to them?

List three supporting points (arguments/statements).

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Action Step #4A: Determine your key messages.

What is the most important thing you want others to know? This is your key message, one that you will repeat over and over. This message should be something you can say in conversation, in interviews, or to presentations to groups. It should be short and easy to say and remember. It may be as simple as:

“More than six million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia. Their families can’t fight for better care and support alone; they need your help.”

“Every 67 seconds, someone in the United States develops Alzheimer’s. The only way to slow or stop this deadly disease is more funding for research for a cure.”

Your key message should be used consistently in news releases, letters-to-the-editor and other communications. It may also be distilled into a succinct campaign slogan.

In developing your message, think first about your audience. What do you want them to think? Feel? Do? Feelings are what motivate people to act. That feeling may be compassion,

concern, anger, or joy. One of your goals in delivering your message should be to spark a feeling, whether it's pride, frustration, or outrage.

What are your top three messages?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Action Step #4B: Develop your talking points.

What stories or examples support your key message? You will need at least three talking points, stories, or examples that support your key message. Using descriptive, local examples is an effective way to get the attention of decision-makers. These may change based on the needs and interests of your audience. Examples include the following:

“Although a decline in memory is the most commonly understood impact of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, over 97% of people living with a dementia will also experience mental or behavioral health issues. By having mental health professionals trained to serve our senior population, we can better serve those living with or caring for someone with dementia. Increasing access to mental health services can help better manage mental and behavioral

health issues for those living with dementia, and potentially decrease utilization of costly emergency room care and nursing home placement.”

“Access to Long Term Services and Supports are essential for people living with Alzheimer’s and other dementias. As the disease progresses, the need for care increases as do the costs for that care. In addition to increased health care costs, families can have costs for home care, assisted living, nursing homes, and adult day care. This is why Alzheimer’s is a more expensive disease for families than any other.”

“The Housing Plus Services: Nursing Pilot program in affordable housing provides an innovative model to help older adults age in place. Older adults living with dementia can often safely remain in their homes and continue to be active members of their community. In fact, an estimated 70% of older adults with Alzheimer’s or other dementias live in the community, of which 26% of those are living alone. Having access to health education and support in addition to affordable housing, can help people avoid more costly housing alternatives such as nursing homes.”

Tips for Telling an Effective Story*

Effective stories:

- ✓ are simple, brief, and personal;
- ✓ have a beginning, middle, and end;
- ✓ have a “punch line”;
- ✓ do not use real names unless you have been given permission;
- ✓ have a message;
- ✓ are appropriate;
- ✓ are specific;
- ✓ are personal;

**Adapted from Tips for Telling an Effective Story by Patricia Glass Schuman.*

Bridge, Hook, and Flag

These are three techniques for controlling the conversation or interview so that you are sure to get the main point(s) that you want remembered across to your legislator or funder.

Bridge. This technique will allow you to move from an area in the conversation that you don't want to discuss or that has the potential to sidetrack the issue, and get the conversation back to your message. If the legislator says, for example, "Why shouldn't we be supporting policy that will help hospitals? Doesn't that help people with Alzheimer's too?" Rather than getting into a discussion about hospitals, you can use this as a platform for your point by saying: "I think the real question is..." and go back to your main point.

Hook. This is a technique that can lead your listener to follow up on your first point, allowing you to get a second point in. For example, you can say, "There are two very important considerations that must be taken into account before you support this proposed policy. The first is..." then expand on that point. It is likely that the legislator or staff person will then ask you (or allow you) to follow up with a second point. This keeps the conversation ball in your court longer and gives you the opportunity to make both (or all) points.

Flag. This technique is the easiest and most people use it unconsciously all the time. Flagging alerts your listeners to what you consider most important. It's a good way to emphasize the key point(s) you want the audience to remember. Flagging is simply giving your audience a verbal clue about what is important: "The most important thing to remember is..." or "If you remember nothing else, please remember these two points..."

Write out your story/talking points for one of your key messages (you may need to do a little bit of research first):

Section 3: Strategies to get the message out.

There are a wide variety of avenues to use in getting your message out, including the following:

Social media: Using social media for advocacy provides a massive platform that is virtually free. It can connect you with any lawmaker who uses social media, as well as reporters and other key audiences.

Website: Be sure to have a visible list of ways that supporters can help on your homepage. These can include volunteering to help with the campaign; writing letters to the editor of local newspapers; and calling local representatives.

General promotional materials: Postcards, flyers, and bookmarks. You can try asking local coffee shops and grocery stores to post flyers; leaving bookmarks at doctors' offices or other places where people sit and wait; or posting at university locations and websites.

Letters to the editor: Many people in the key demographic read letters to the editor. A good way to “hook” Alzheimer’s advocacy into a letter is to respond to a big issue that the press is covering and relate it to one of your points. For example, a current issue could be about the cost of living increasing, and you could write about how expensive it is to care for someone living with Alzheimer’s or a related dementia and if there were legislation for increased care and support options, it could make it more affordable.

Op-Ed pieces: It can be harder to get your local paper to print an op-ed piece. Here is what will help you get some excellent press coverage via this more in-depth citizen editorial: have a well-known citizen write it; tie it into a major issue (see Letters to the editor above); and call the editor to talk to him/her about writing an op-ed piece and find out what topic is likely to be printed and how you can increase your chances.

Radio: Develop radio spots for airing on local channels. Visit your local radio station and ask them if they would create some Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for free, or as a donation to a local organization that you’re affiliated with. If not, ask if they would be willing to do so at a discounted price.

Television coverage: Talk to a local news station manager about what kinds of programs are most likely to get some airtime. Organize an event and try to hook your local news stations into covering it. Another television avenue – and one that is easier – is to get time on a local noon show or on public access television. This will give you an opportunity to really get your message across, whereas coverage of an event is likely to last no more than 10 seconds. Call the station manager to see about being a guest on a local show.

Presentations: Nothing is more effective than personal contact. That's the upside. The downside is you can't reach as many people at once with your message. You'll need to create and train lots of volunteers to get the message out in person. Civic organizations such as the Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, etc. always welcome guest speakers, as do universities. Make a list of all the opportunities there are in your community to get some "face time" and begin scheduling speaking engagements to get your message out.

Remember to "know your audience." Make sure when you talk about the importance of the issues, you are tailoring your comments to what is of interest to your audience.

Consider the following when deciding which strategies to use:

WHO is your audience?

WHAT is the best way to convey the information to the target audience – radio, TV, direct mail, other? What kind of image do you want to project? Will it be an effective part of your total communication effort?

WHEN is the deadline? Will your message be distributed in time to be effective?

HOW much will it cost? Is this the most effective use of your funds?

WHY is this the best strategy for this audience?

Strategies Checklist

How will you deliver your message? What public relations tools (brochures, fact sheets, etc.) will you need to help you build your case?

Action Step #5: Strategies

What three strategies would you use, and why?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Section 4: Team-building

Action Step #6: Name your network

Who are the individuals, groups, and organizations you'd want to add to your team?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Action Step #7: Staying connected

Write down three things you would do to strengthen relationships with the members of your network named above?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Section 5: Putting it all together

What are your goals?

Who is your audience?

What are your key messages?

Who comprises your team?

What committees and task forces will have to be created?

What strategies will you implement?

Notes: _____

Adapted from The Advocacy Action Plan Workbook – ALA Advocacy Institute
[American Library Association](#)