

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026
STATE OF HAWAII

H.B. NO. 1976
H.D. 1
S.D. 1

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO DEMENTIA.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are an urgent and growing public health challenge in Hawaii. Between 2020 and 2025, the number of Hawaii residents living with Alzheimer's disease is estimated to have increased by 20.7 per cent. Approximately 31,200 Hawaii residents aged sixty-five years or older currently live with Alzheimer's. Long-term trends indicate that this figure could double to approximately sixty-two thousand individuals by 2050.

This significant growth in the number of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease is expected to increase emergency department utilization, hospital readmissions, and overall health care costs. Data show that individuals with dementia experience 1,248 emergency department visits per one thousand persons annually, reflecting a high rate of readmittance and frequent interaction with emergency medical services personnel.

The legislature further finds that six in ten people living with dementia will wander, often repeatedly, and may forget their name or address or become disoriented even in familiar places. When individuals with dementia are lost, they may exhibit anxiety, fear, or hostility, which may escalate into aggressive behaviors. As the disease progresses and societal norms are forgotten, incidents may include filing false police reports, victimization, indecent exposure, and shoplifting. People with Alzheimer's disease may appear uncooperative, disruptive, or combative if they have difficulty communicating and understanding what is happening. First responders often lack the training needed to effectively assist these individuals, which may lead to confusion and unnecessary escalation.

The legislature further finds that police, emergency medical services, and fire department personnel are frequently the first responders who encounter wandering individuals or respond to dementia-related incidents. In particular, fire department personnel are often the first on scene for medical emergencies and fires and may need to rescue individuals living with dementia who are uncooperative or disoriented. The importance of managing these situations appropriately will become even more critical as Hawaii experiences an increase in the frequency and intensity of wildfires that require rapid evacuations and specialized communication strategies for vulnerable populations.

The legislature finds that dementia-specific training for first responders is cost effective and readily available. For example, the Alzheimer's Association offers free, one-hour online trainings for first responders. The Hawaii chapter of the Alzheimer's Association has partnered with the Honolulu police department to provide in-person dementia training to new recruits at no cost. These resources enable agencies to build dementia capability without additional appropriations.

The legislature further finds that evidence-based dementia training improves recognition, communication, and de-escalation skills, reducing preventable hospitalizations, emergency interventions, and crises, while strengthening community safety and resilience.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to urge annual dementia-specific training for all first responders in Hawaii and to ensure that training content addresses recognition, assessment, and communication; abuse and neglect identification; caregiver

engagement; disaster response; and safe return.

SECTION 2. Chapter 127A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§127A- Dementia-specific training. (a) The director or the director's designee shall review the list of dementia-specific training options recommended by the executive office on aging pursuant to section 349- and make available at least one hour of dementia-specific training from that list to agency personnel. The dementia-specific training shall be accessible at no cost to the agency personnel. The director or the director's designee shall begin offering dementia-specific training to agency personnel by July 1, 2027.

(b) All agency personnel may complete a minimum of one hour of dementia-specific training annually.

(c) The dementia-specific training provided under this section shall not create or impose any civil or criminal liability upon any agency personnel, agency, or department.

(d) For purposes of this section, "dementia-specific training" means training curricula recommended by the executive office on aging for the purpose of first responder training pursuant to section 349- ."

SECTION 3. Chapter 132, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§132- Dementia-specific training. (a) Each county fire chief and the fire chief of the Hawaii state aircraft rescue fire fighting unit, or the respective fire chief's designee, shall

review the list of dementia-specific training options recommended by the executive office on aging pursuant to section 349- and make available at least one hour of dementia-specific training from that list to fire first responders within the fire chief's department or unit. The dementia-specific training shall be accessible at no cost to fire first responders. Each respective chief shall begin offering dementia-specific training to fire first responders by July 1, 2027.

(b) All fire first responders within the State and counties may complete a minimum of one hour of dementia-specific training annually.

(c) The dementia-specific training provided under this section shall not create or impose any civil or criminal liability upon any fire first responder, agency, or department.

(d) For purposes of this section:

"Dementia-specific training" means training curricula recommended by the executive office on aging for the purpose of first responder training pursuant to section 349- .

"Fire first responder" means first responder personnel employed by state and county fire protection agencies and departments."

SECTION 4. Chapter 139, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§139- Dementia-specific training. (a) The board or the board's designee shall review the list of dementia-specific training options recommended by the executive office on aging pursuant to section 349- and make available at least one hour of

dementia-specific training from that list to be provided to law enforcement officers. The dementia-specific training shall be accessible at no cost to law enforcement officers. The board shall require law enforcement agencies to begin offering dementia-specific training to law enforcement officers by July 1, 2027.

(b) All law enforcement officers within the State and counties may complete a minimum of one hour of dementia-specific training annually.

(c) The dementia-specific training provided under this section shall not create or impose any civil or criminal liability upon any law enforcement officer, agency, or department.

(d) For purposes of this section, "dementia-specific training" means training curricula recommended by the executive office on aging for the purpose of first responder training pursuant to section 349- ."

SECTION 5. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to part XVIII to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§321- Dementia-specific training. (a) The director of health or the director's designee shall review the list of dementia-specific training options recommended by the executive office on aging pursuant to section 349- and make available at least one hour of dementia-specific training from that list to emergency medical services personnel and first responder personnel. The dementia-specific training shall be accessible at no cost to emergency medical services personnel and first responder personnel. The director of health or the director's designee shall

begin offering dementia-specific training to emergency medical services personnel and first responder personnel by July 1, 2027.

(b) All emergency medical services personnel and first responder personnel may complete a minimum of one hour of dementia-specific training annually.

(c) The dementia-specific training provided under this section shall not create or impose any civil or criminal liability upon any emergency medical services personnel, first responder personnel, employer, agency, or department.

(d) For purposes of this section, "dementia-specific training" means training curricula recommended by the executive office on aging for the purpose of first responder training pursuant to section 349- ."

SECTION 6. Chapter 349, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to part I to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§349- Dementia-specific first responder training curriculum content review. (a) The executive office on aging or the office's designee shall review and recommend a list of dementia-specific training curricula for agencies that employ first responders to ensure statewide consistency and alignment with best practices. The dementia-specific training shall address the recognition of and response to persons having Alzheimer's disease and related types of dementia. The executive office on aging shall make available a list of recommended dementia-specific training curricula options that meet the requirements of this section.

(b) The executive office on aging shall seek low- to no-cost dementia-specific training curricula. The executive office on

aging shall identify whether each training option has an associated fee or is available at no cost when developing the curriculum list.

(c) The dementia-specific training curricula may include:

- (1) Strategies for recognizing key signs of Alzheimer's disease and related types of dementia;
- (2) Strategies for assessing cognition;
- (3) Best practices for interacting with persons having Alzheimer's disease or related types of dementia, including during disaster response;
- (4) Strategies to identify and intervene in situations in which persons having Alzheimer's disease or related types of dementia may be at risk of abuse or neglect; and
- (5) Best practices to ensure the safe return of persons having Alzheimer's disease or related types of dementia.

(d) All dementia-specific training curricula recommended by the executive office on aging shall include at least one hour of instruction time.

(e) The executive office on aging may coordinate with other agencies to review and recommend dementia-specific training curricula developed by a first responder department or agency.

(f) The executive office on aging may use educational and training resources made available in the public and private sectors to develop dementia-specific training curricula that meet the requirements of this section."

SECTION 7. Section 321-229.2, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is repealed.

~~["~~§321-229.2~~ ~~First responder personnel; dementia training.~~~~

~~(a) The employers of first responder personnel may obtain dementia training for first responder personnel, which may include:~~

- ~~(1) Recognizing the key signs of Alzheimer's disease and related types of dementia;~~
- ~~(2) Strategies for assessing cognition;~~

(3) ~~Best practices for interacting with persons with Alzheimer's disease and related types of dementia; and~~

(4) ~~Strategies to best identify and intervene in situations where persons with Alzheimer's disease and related types of dementia may be at particular risk of abuse or neglect.~~

~~(b) The training shall be offered at no cost to the applicable first responder personnel and shall be funded by private contributions from relevant non-profit organizations.~~

~~(c) The executive office on aging may coordinate the training schedules and standards, as necessary, with all public and private entities and agencies responsible for services provided by first responder personnel, including entering into agreements or memoranda of agreement with nonprofit organizations to provide funding pursuant to subsection (b).~~

~~(d) The employers of first responder personnel may utilize existing educational and training resources available in the public and private sectors when developing the training required under this section."]~~

SECTION 8. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 9. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.

Report Title:

DOH; HIEMA; Dementia; Alzheimer's Disease; First Responder Training; Executive Office on Aging; Counties; Law Enforcement Standards Board

Description:

Requires the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, fire chiefs, Law Enforcement Standards Board, and Department of Health to make available at least one hour of dementia-specific training for first responders, including law enforcement officers, fire first responders, and emergency medical services personnel. Requires the Executive Office on Aging to take certain steps when reviewing and recommending dementia-specific training curricula. Effective 7/1/3000. (SD1)

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