

## **Aging & In-Home Services of Northeast Indiana (AIHS) Impact Story**

Aging & In-Home Services of Northeast Indiana (AIHS) is an innovator in community-based comprehensive dementia care. AIHS has been serving older adults, people with disabilities and their family caregivers since 1974 beginning as a traditional home and community-based services provider, and now through integrated clinical and social care models. Throughout nine counties, AIHS is the region's designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC), working to ensure older adults and persons with disabilities have the supportive services to remain safe and independent in their own homes for as long as possible.

In recent years, AIHS expanded its impact through implementing a comprehensive dementia care program, utilizing the evidence-based model Aging Brain Care (ABC) Program developed at Indiana University School of Medicine. In 2024, AIHS was selected for participation in the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience (GUIDE) Model. Because of AIHS' experience with the ABC Program and IU staff, DR. Malaz Bustani and DR. Stephen Counsell, AIHS chose the ABC Program to support its implementation of GUIDE[GE1.1]. In this implementation, the ABC Program is referred to as "ABC Community." Chris Forcucci, RN, AIHS Senior VP, and Kelly Zolman, Nurse Practitioner (NP), are part of the GUIDE clinical team with ABC Community-GUIDE certified Care Navigator Amber Sizelove.

**"We have always found ABC Community to be an excellent evidence-based brain health management program. The caregivers love the home-based assessments of caregiver stress and patient status!" – Chris Forcucci, RN**

### **Addressing Crisis with Clarity and Compassion**

A recent patient story highlights the impact of comprehensive dementia care through the GUIDE Model and the ABC Community Program. During a routine monthly phone check-in, Care Navigator, Amber Sizelove, was able to identify high stress levels from a caregiver.

**The wife of a person living with dementia shared that her husband's agitation had increased significantly. His concerning behavior led her to fear she may no longer be able to safely care for him at home.**

Amber immediately notified Nurse Practitioner Kelly who conducted a tele-health visit the same day. Then, in collaboration with the GUIDE Medical Director, it was determined that a prescription intervention was appropriate. Kelly worked closely with the caregiver, explaining potential side effects, arranging for outpatient monitoring services, and setting expectations about what to look out for once starting the medication. Using tele-health was an effective means of diagnosis and intervention. It was also more immediate and less stressful for the patient and caregiver than an in-clinic visit.

**"The goal is to keep people safely at home for as long as possible." – Chris Forcucci, RN**

Like all evidence-based models in the National Dementia Care Collaborative (NDCC), the ABC Community- GUIDE Program incorporates consistent, proactive follow-up with caregivers. Kelly continued to check in with the caregiver on a weekly basis to provide additional symptom management and answer questions. With continued support, the person living with dementia improved from the initial behavior, did not experience side effects associated with the medication, returned to his baseline functioning without agitation, and had continuing monitoring regarding the use and potential discontinuation of this medication. A few weeks later, during a routine follow-up, the caregiver and patient shared that they were on their way to the grocery store and both felt great.

**“That’s the wonderful piece of this program -- it’s not just focused on the patient but equally on the caregiver.” –  
Chris Forcucci, RN**

### **Reducing the Burden Across Clinicians**

AIHS GUIDE clinical staff are an added benefit to the patient’s healthcare providers, including primary care providers (PCP) and specialists. Through ongoing check-ins with caregivers and inclusive decision-making, the program helps build stability for caregivers and patients. Staff communication with the patient’s healthcare providers links all areas of care, which reduces stress and can prevent unnecessary emergency room visits. By providing proactive clinical support and caregiver education, AIHS helps individuals living with dementia safely remain in their communities longer, often preventing premature transitions to higher levels of care throughout health systems.

**“I want other clinicians to understand that we can be their bridge to the patient and caregiver. We are in more frequent contact so can bridge the gap between visits. Kelly Zolman, NP**

While the GUIDE Model has proven to expand access to comprehensive dementia care for patients with traditional Medicare, the AIHS team shared they have a growing list of patients with other insurance such as Medicare Advantage that are not eligible for GUIDE. The AIHS team hopes to see expanded coverage to comprehensive dementia care programs so all those in need can benefit from the supportive services.

Through innovative and evidence-based care models like the Aging Brain Care (ABC) Community Program, Aging & In-Home Services of Northeast Indiana continues to show what’s possible when integrated care systems implement comprehensive dementia care. Thank you to Chris Forcucci, RN, Kelly Zolman, NP, and Amber Sizelove, and everyone involved with AIHS for their dedication to providing support to vulnerable community members.

Interested in learning more about AIHS’ GUIDE Clinic? Visit their website: <https://www.agingihs.org/>.

Interested in implementing the ABC Program? Contact Laura Gano.