



Growing Our Community of Support

2022 – 2023 First Link® Highlight Report

About First Link®

First Link® is a program of the Alzheimer Society that connects people with dementia and their families to:

LEARNING - Our education programs offer information about diagnosis and progression, day-to-day living, positive approaches to care, and strategies to prepare for the future.

SERVICES - Alzheimer Society programs and services, and information about other community and health-care services.

SUPPORT - Support groups and opportunities for individual support, including proactive and planned contact at minimum every six months.



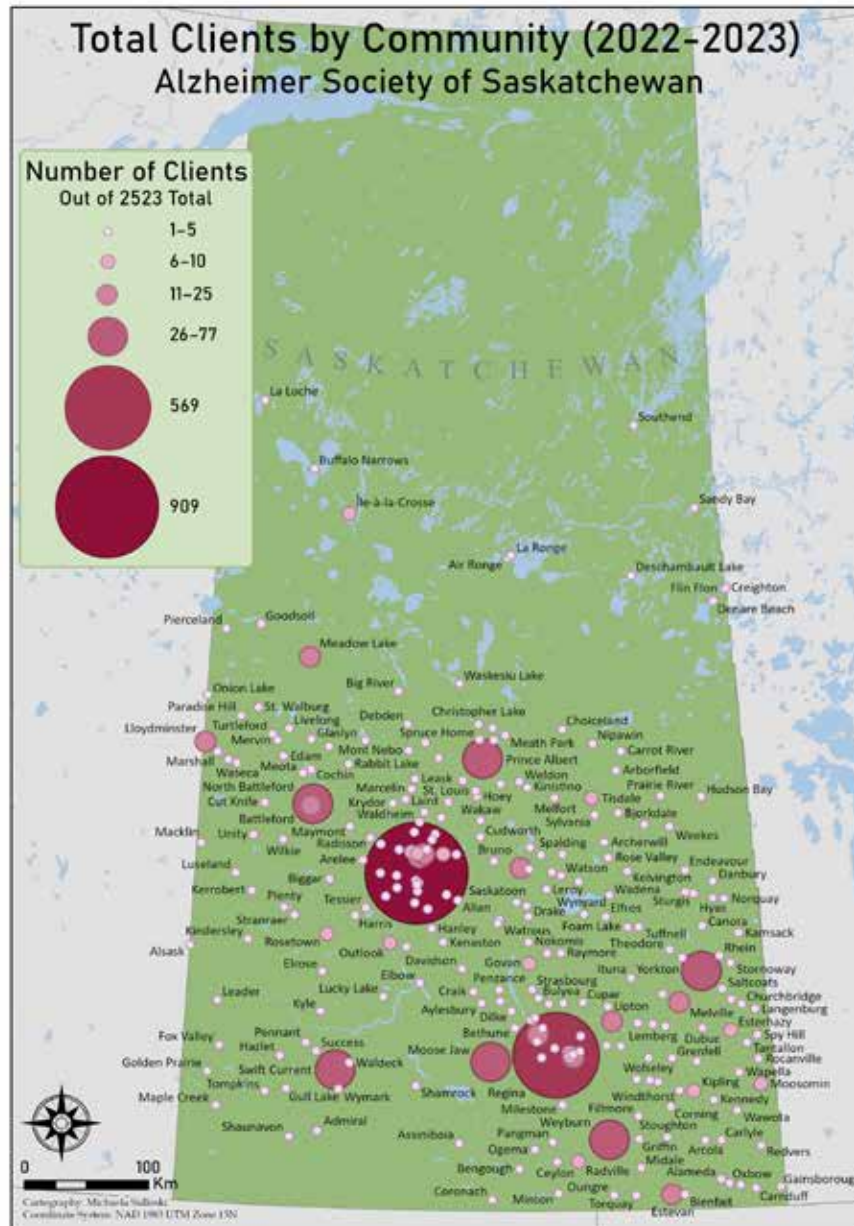
“Our patients and their caregivers are less isolated in rural Saskatchewan because of the services the First Link Program provides.”

- **Austin Little BMSc, MD, CCFP,**
member of the Southwest MINT
Memory Clinic Team

The people of the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan are privileged to live and work across the traditionally sacred land we now know as Saskatchewan. We recognize the enduring presence of the Cree, Dakota, Dene, Nakota, Lakota, Saulteaux, and Metis people, who are the original stewards of the rolling hills, rushing rivers, and living sky we all share today.

As an organization, we acknowledge the harms of the past and how Indigenous People are still impacted by the process of Colonialism. Through partnership, education, and collective action, we commit to honouring our relationship to the land, our Treaties, and each other as we journey towards Wakohtahisowin (reconciliation in Cree.)

Growing our Reach



In our 2022-2023 fiscal year, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan supported nearly 2700 individuals from 300 different communities across the province.

Growing our Resources



Our First Link® staff work with healthcare providers and community agencies to increase their capacity and capabilities in working with dementia, and to build awareness of the First Link® Program. Pictured above are Joanne Michael, our Director of Programs and Services, and Kaylee Elford, our Client Services Team Manager for Regina and Southern Saskatchewan, at the 2023 Family Medicine Conference in Regina.

Driving and Dementia

From January 2020 to March 2023, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan, with support from SGI and in partnership with Team 16 from the Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging, built a body of evidence around driving cessation and supported the development of the [Driving & Dementia Roadmap \(DDR.\)](#)

Every diagnosis package the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan provides First Link clients now includes a copy of the DDR.

“This is one-of-a-kind Canadian resource that provides strategies to help individuals manage the emotional and practical aspects of the decision to stop driving.”

- Dr. Mark Rapoport, MD, FRCPC

Dementia Helpline

Shaelyn Serron is the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan's Dementia Helpline Coordinator. Below are a few frequently asked questions Shaelyn receives about the Helpline:



Who is the Dementia Helpline for?

Anyone who has questions about dementia can call the Dementia Helpline. I talk to people at all stages of the disease and even those who do not have a diagnosis.

How does someone get connected to Alzheimer Society programs and support groups?

You can refer yourself by calling the Dementia Helpline or our provincial office. You can also have your doctor, healthcare provider, or another community agency that you are working with complete a First Link Direct Referral form on your behalf.

When is the best time to call?

I encourage people to reach out and connect with our community of support any time you need - and as things progress - so you don't feel alone, stressed, or overwhelmed.

Our Dementia Helpline is available Monday to Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm. Call 1-877-949-4141 or email helpline@alzheimer.sk.ca

Supporting Families During End-of-Life Care

Members from our Programs and Services team formed a working group to review and enrich the content of our Care in the Later Stages Learning Series curriculum, which helps participants prepare for advanced stages of dementia and learn more about the process of grief and loss. Incorporating more culturally responsive resources and principles of Dialogue Education were identified as key priorities.

*Dialogue Education is based on the idea that people learn best when they get to talk about and try new ideas and skills, rather than just hear about them.

“The Alzheimer Society phoned me at home and was able to talk me through a lot of things my dad was saying and doing. They gave me information relating to his dementia that helped me cope a lot better.”

- Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan Client



On-Demand Learning Opportunities

Subscribe to our [@alheimersask](https://www.youtube.com/@alheimersask) YouTube channel for recordings of our educational events for people living with dementia, their care partners, and healthcare professionals.

Growing our Support

First Link® Enhancement Project

First Link® is currently undergoing an expansion to ensure the program can continue to improve and grow to meet the needs of all clients who want to work with the Alzheimer Society, and to evaluate the impact of the First Link® Program with the intention of generating national, long-term, sustainable funding for the program across the country. New developments within The First Link Enhancement Project include:

Client Wellbeing Indicators – First Link Coordinators are now completing the new client Risk Indicator Tool during each point of contact with an assessment to determine client emergency preparedness, care partner stress and well-being, and emergency room visits or hospitalizations for the person living with dementia.

The implementation of the Risk Indicator Tool has increased the frequency and number of follow-up calls to clients, while allowing us to connect more regularly and consistently with clients based on their needs.

Demographic Indicators – Through the First Link Enhancement project, new indicators were added to Alzheimer Society databases to enable us to collect more demographic information about each client we work with, including: gender identity, race/ ethnicity, language at birth for the person living with dementia, and sexual orientation. These indicators will help our team identify any gaps in service delivery and opportunities to further tailor our programs, resources, and outreach to be more inclusive of the different cultural and linguistic communities across the province and country.

Primary Health Care Memory Clinics

Primary Health Care Memory Clinics are becoming more prevalent in rural Saskatchewan which enable more individuals and families to access services in one location and receive a diagnosis closer to home. Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan First Link Coordinators are embedded in every clinic offered by Rural Action Dementia Research (RaDAR) and MINT Memory clinics for additional support and ongoing, planned follow-up.



“First Link Coordinators bring specialized information and expertise to the clinic that is necessary.”

- Dana Klapak, RD, CDE, member of the RaDAR Memory Clinic Team

Growing Community

A Year in Review



54%

More referrals received by healthcare professionals who diagnose and treat



\$1.5 Million

Invested into our Programs and Services

94%

Of our clients would recommend Alzheimer Society Programs and Services to family and friends



88%

Of our clients are satisfied with the information, education, and support they receive



35%

Between 2022 and 2023, we experienced a 35% increase in the number of new clients

"I tell people regularly how supportive and helpful the Alzheimer Society is, and that it is an empathetic resource for reliable information."

- Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan Client

**Expertise
Changes
Everything**



Dementia Helpline

Monday – Friday 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
1-877-949-4141 helpline@alzheimer.sk.ca

Cypress Resource Centre

Serving Swift Current and Southwest SK
Ph: 306-673-2685 cypress@alzheimer.sk.ca

Prairie North Resource Centre

Serving Battlefords and Northwest SK
Ph: 306-445-2206 prairienorth@alzheimer.sk.ca

Prince Albert Parkland Resource Centre

Serving Prince Albert and Northeast SK
Ph: 306-922-2296 paparkland@alzheimer.sk.ca

Regina Qu'Appelle Resource Centre

Serving Regina, Moosomin and surrounding areas
Ph 306-949-4141 regina@alzheimer.sk.ca

Saskatoon Resource Centre

Serving Saskatoon, Humboldt, and surrounding areas
Ph: 306-683-6322 saskatoon@alzheimer.sk.ca

Sun Country Resource Centre

Serving Estevan, Weyburn and Southeast SK
Ph: 306-634-4002 suncountry@alzheimer.sk.ca

Sunrise Resource Centre

Serving Yorkton and East Central SK
PH: 306-786-3600 sunrise@alzheimer.sk.ca



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