

Community Based Services & Supports

In a dementia friendly community, people living with dementia have autonomy, a high quality of life, and are engaged with the community. The right community services and supports make this possible by taking a “whole person” or person-centered approach that helps people with dementia and their care partners live meaningful lives and reach their full potential.



Ready to implement dementia friendly practices? Follow the steps:

1

Prepare

- Use best practices for community-based service providers.
- Promote financial, legal and care needs planning.
- Build awareness of home-based programs and services to address independence and home and personal safety.

2

Learn

- Educate community about the signs of dementia.
- Learn to use dementia friendly communication skills to increase support and reduce stigma.

3

Respond

- Support people with dementia and their care partners and families to help them continue in their roles and develop strengths.
- Encourage opportunities for people with dementia and their care partners to connect with others by participating in engaging activities and health and wellness activities.

Community Based Provider Best Practices

- Use the Community Based Provider Practice Tool.¹
- Raise broader awareness of dementia by promoting training across the community.

Signs of Dementia²

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
- Challenges in planning or solving problems.
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure.
- Confusion with time or place.
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships.
- New problems with words in speaking or writing.
- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps.
- Decreased or poor judgment.
- Withdrawal from work or social activities.
- Changes in mood or personality.

Dementia Friendly Communication Skills^{3,4}

- Greet people warmly even if you think they do not remember you. If they seem confused, remind them who you are.
- Slow pace slightly and allow time for person to process and respond.
- Speak clearly and calmly, be patient and understanding.
- Keep communication simple; ask one question at a time.
- Listen with empathy and seek to understand the person's reality or feelings.
- Connect on an emotional level even if conversation topics shift or do not make sense to you.
- Be aware of the person's and your own body language: smile, make eye contact at eye level.
- Enjoy spending time with the person in the present moment.
- Offer hugs, hand holding as appropriate.
- Avoid arguing with or embarrassing the person.
- Treat the person with dignity and respect.

Resources for People with Dementia and Care Partners

- Develop local resource guides, make them widely available, and encourage people to seek out what works best for or could benefit their individual situation.
- Financial, legal, and care planning.
- Engagement and connection opportunities: share positive qualities, creativity, and strengths and connect across generations through meaningful, stimulating activities such as art, music, or storytelling that are tailored to or inclusive of people with dementia.
- Health and wellness activities and connection with others may help reduce the severity or slow the progress of dementia.
- Home based services such as chore services, meal delivery, and home care can help people with dementia adjust to changing needs.
- Services to address home and personal safety: ask for physician referrals to an occupational and/or physical therapist who could help with home and personal safety such as fall risk, sensory/ mobility aids, medication management, home modifications, and driving.

References

1. **Community Based Provider Practice Tool (needs update for DFA)**
<http://www.actonalz.org/provider-practice-tools>
2. **Alzheimer's Association, Know the 10 Signs**
http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp
3. **Alzheimer's Society – Communicating**
https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/info/20064/symptoms/90/communicating_and_language
4. **Home Instead Business Training – Alzheimer's Friendly Business online course**
<http://www.helpforalzheimersfamilies.com/alzheimers-care-training/alzheimers-friendly-business-training>

Additional Resources

Dementia Friendly America

- **DFA Sector Video – In Your Community**
<http://www.dfamerica.org/sector-videos/>

Others

- **24/7 Helpline, 1-800-272-3900**
<http://www.alz.org>
- **Eldercare Locator**
<https://eldercare.acl.gov>
- **Living Well with Dementia in the Community**
<https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Resources/Brochures/Documents/Living%20Well%20with%20Dementia%20in%20the%20Community.pdf>
- **Dementia and Driving Resource Center**
<http://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-and-driving.asp>
- **Dementia Initiative, Dementia Care: The Quality Chasm**
<http://www.nursinghometoolkit.com/additionalresources/DementiaCare-TheQualityChasm-AWhitePaper.pdf>
- **The King's Fund, Developing Supportive Design for People with Dementia**
http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/enhancing-healing-environment/ehe-design-dementia?dm_i=21AC,2WEIH,GTHKYS,AHKU0,1#tool
- **MedicAlert® and Safe Return®**
<http://www.alz.org/care/dementia-medic-alert-safe-return.asp>
- **Memory Cafe Toolkit by Jewish Family and Children's Services (in English and Spanish)**
www.jfcsboston.org/MemoryCafeToolkit and www.jfcsboston.org/GuiaCafeDeMemoria
- **Social isolation – AARP Foundation**
<https://connect2affect.org/>

Community based services and supports are just one important part of a community. Working together with other sectors, service providers can help make the entire community more dementia friendly. Learn more about the process and help your community and others become more dementia friendly at www.dfamerica.org.



Adapted from ACT on Alzheimer's® developed tools and resources.