

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 living with dementia and their care partners live meaningful lives and reach their full potential.

# Ready to implement dementia friendly practices?

Follow these steps:

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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.

Learn

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

Respond

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

What is Dementia?

Dementia is a general term for a loss of memory and other thinking abilities that is serious enough to interfere with activities of daily life. Dementia has many causes. Alzheimer’s disease, the most common cause of dementia, is a disease of the brain that leads to problems with memory, thinking, and behavior. Alzheimer’s and other dementias are not a normal part of aging.

Signs of Dementia2

* Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
* Challenges in planning or solving problems.
* Confusion when completing familiar tasks at home, at work, and/or during leisure activities.
* Confusion with time or place.
* Challenges when attempting to understand visual images and spatial relationships.
* Challenges with words when speaking, writing, and/or reading
* Accidently misplacing items 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 Skills3,4

* + Greet the person living with dementia warmly even if you think they do not remember you. If they seem confused, remind them who you are.
  + Ask “yes” or “no” questions 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 living with dementia 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 living with dementia and your own body language: smile, make eye contact at eye level.
  + Enjoy spending time with the person living with dementia in the present moment.
  + Offer hugs or hand holding as appropriate.
  + Avoid arguing with or embarrassing the person.
  + Treat the person living with dementia with dignity and respect.

Community Based Provider Best Practices

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

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 living 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 living 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, driving, as well as caregiver education and training.

References

1. **Community Based Provider Practice Tool** <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

For additional resources related to the *Community Based Services and Supports* sector and a host of other community sectors, please visit [DFA's resource page](https://dfamerica.org/resource-listing/).

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Community based services and supports are just one important part of a community. Working together with other community 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.](http://www.dfamerica.org/)