



Dementia Friendly Hotels and Accommodations

Hotels and accommodations play an important role in supporting people living with dementia and their care partners when they are away from home—whether traveling to visit family, explore new places or spend time together. This sector includes hotels, motels, resorts, inns, bed and breakfasts and vacation rentals.

This Dementia Friendly America Sector Guide outlines practical actions that hotels and other accommodations can take to build awareness, communicate clearly, create supportive environments and deliver services that are safer, easier and more welcoming for guests living with dementia and their care partners.

UNDERSTANDING DEMENTIA

Dementia is a term used to describe a group of symptoms affecting memory, thinking, communication and decision-making that are serious enough to affect daily life. It is not a normal part of aging. Common symptoms include memory loss, confusion, trouble finding words, difficulty planning or solving problems and changes in mood or behavior. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia. Other types include Vascular Dementia, Lewy Body Dementia and Frontotemporal Dementia.

In lodging settings, dementia may make it harder to navigate unfamiliar layouts, remember room numbers or use in-room features. Changes in routine and new environments can also increase confusion or anxiety.

BUILD DEMENTIA AWARENESS

Provide dementia-awareness training for all staff through programs such as Dementia Friends or invite local experts to lead educational sessions or workshops. Integrate this awareness into staff onboarding, ongoing training and guest service practices.

Help staff understand how dementia may affect a guest's stay by sharing practical examples, such as difficulty remembering room numbers, navigating hallways, using room controls or following multi-step directions.

Prepare staff to recognize common situations—such as a guest appearing lost, asking repeated questions or having difficulty navigating the property—and to respond with calm, supportive assistance.

Support employees who are providing care to someone with dementia by offering flexible scheduling, access to employee assistance programs or referrals to resources like the Eldercare Locator and the Alzheimer's Association Helpline.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND RESPECTFULLY

Engage the person before speaking. Make eye contact, face the person directly and use a friendly greeting so they know you are speaking to them.

Speak slowly and clearly. Use short, simple sentences with one idea at a time. During check-in or when giving directions, break information into steps rather than sharing everything at once. For example: "Your room is 214." "The elevator is to your left."

Use a warm, calm and respectful tone of voice. Friendly expressions and reassurance help guests feel safe and supported, especially in unfamiliar environments.

Ask one question at a time and offer simple choices. For example, "Would you like help getting to your room?"

Give the person extra time to respond. Pause and wait patiently—avoid rushing or finishing sentences.

Repeat or rephrase information. Use simple words or shorter phrases when explaining directions, room locations or hotel services again.

Use visual cues to support understanding. Point to room numbers, maps, elevators or key cards when giving directions, and offer written reminders such as a room number card if helpful.

Pay attention to non-verbal cues. Watch for signs of confusion, stress or frustration and respond calmly and supportively.

IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Provide clear, high-contrast signage. Use simple words and familiar icons (e.g., front desk, elevators, restrooms, exits) placed at eye level and at key decision points—such as entrances, elevator exits and hallway intersections—to help guests navigate.

Make room numbers easy to see. Ensure numbers are large, high-contrast and well-lit so guests can quickly identify their room.

Make staff easy to identify. Use uniforms or visible name badges so guests can easily recognize staff.

Reduce unnecessary noise and visual distractions in lobbies and common areas. Lower background music, limit announcements and reduce clutter to create a calmer, less overwhelming environment.

Provide comfortable, stable seating in waiting areas. Place seating near entrances, elevators or check-in areas so guests can rest if needed.

Keep pathways open and uncluttered. Maintain clear sightlines to key areas such as the front desk, elevators and exits to support easy navigation.

Maintain bright, even lighting throughout the property. Reduce glare, shadows and sudden changes in lighting to help guests see clearly and move safely.

Support wayfinding throughout the property. Use consistent signage and simple visual cues—such as color, artwork or landmarks—to help guests recognize different floors or areas.

Make elevator navigation easier. Clearly label floors and ensure directions are easy to follow when exiting elevators.

Avoid confusing patterns or flooring changes. Keep flooring simple and ensure transitions between surfaces are smooth and clearly visible.

Make in-room features easy to use. Provide simple instructions or labels for lighting, temperature and television controls so guests can use them more easily.

CREATE A SUPPORTIVE STAY EXPERIENCE

Support guests during check-in. Provide key information clearly and one step at a time to help guests feel oriented and comfortable.

Offer written reminders guests can refer to later. Provide a card with the room number or simple directions to help guests find their way and reduce confusion.

Allow extra time during check-in and service interactions. Give guests time to process information and complete tasks without feeling rushed.

Offer assistance proactively. If a guest appears unsure or hesitant, approach calmly and ask if they would like help.

Escort guests when helpful. Walk with guests to their room, amenities or other destinations rather than relying on verbal directions.

Check in during the stay. If a guest appears uncertain, returns repeatedly or seems lost, offer reassurance, repeat key information and provide calm assistance to help them reorient.

Assist with common situations. If a guest forgets their room number or becomes separated from a companion, provide discreet assistance and help reconnect them safely.

Ensure respectful housekeeping interactions. Knock, announce clearly and proceed with sensitivity if a guest appears confused or unsure.

Support care partners (guest companions or family). Recognize when someone is assisting a guest and offer patience, flexibility and support to both individuals.

FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Become a Dementia Friend
dfamerica.org/become-a-dementia-friend/

Alzheimer's Association Helpline
800-272-3900 | www.alz.org



Find or Start a Memory Cafe
dfamerica.org/

Eldercare Locator
800-677-1116 | eldercare.acl.gov



Scan or visit
dfamerica.org/resource-listing



Dementia Friendly America
is administered by **USAging**