



Dementia Friendly Salons, Barbershops and Wellness Services



Salons, barbershops and wellness providers help people feel comfortable, confident and cared for. This Dementia Friendly America Sector Guide outlines practical actions that stylists, barbers, receptionists and wellness practitioners can take to provide supportive and accessible services for people living with dementia and their care partners, with simple steps to strengthen communication, reduce sensory stress and support comfort and safety.

UNDERSTANDING DEMENTIA

Dementia is a general term used to describe a group of symptoms that affect memory, thinking, communication and decision-making in ways that interfere with 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 cause of dementia. Other types include Vascular Dementia, Lewy Body Dementia and Frontotemporal Dementia.

In personal care settings, dementia may make it harder to tolerate noise, tools, touch or bright lights.

BUILD DEMENTIA AWARENESS

Provide dementia-awareness training for all staff, e.g. stylists, barbers, receptionists, assistants, through programs such as Dementia Friends or invite local experts to lead educational sessions or workshops. Include real-life practice to help staff respond calmly to repeated questions, payment confusion or disorientation.

Integrate dementia awareness into staff onboarding.

Support staff 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

Greet the client warmly. Make eye contact, smile and use their name before starting. A friendly tone helps build trust and comfort.

Speak simply and clearly. Use short sentences and one idea at a time—for example, "First, I'll wash your hair. Then we'll start the cut."

Ask one question at a time. Offer easy choices such as yes/no or "Would you like a trim or a shampoo today?" Give extra time for answers and avoid rushing.

Use visual cues. Reinforce words with gestures—point to the clippers, comb or polish to show what you mean.

Reduce background noise. Lower music or pause dryers when speaking to help clients focus and feel at ease.

Welcome care partners and companions. Invite care partners to stay nearby and assist when helpful. Greet both warmly, but speak directly to the client to support their independence.

IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Provide large-print, high-contrast signs. Use simple words and familiar icons (e.g., restrooms and exits) placed at eye level to guide customers.

Keep floors safe and dry. Avoid shiny or patterned floors that can cause glare or confusion and mark stairs or ramps with bright, high-contrast tape or paint.

Keep lighting bright and even in all areas, especially hallways and restrooms. Reduce glare and shadows to help people see clearly and feel safe moving around.

Provide comfortable, stable seating that is easy to get in and out of. Place sturdy chairs with armrests in waiting areas and near exits. Offer quiet seating areas with soft lighting and low music to reduce overstimulation.

Make restrooms easy to find and safe to use. Post clear signs and maintain bright, even lighting. Install grab bars and offer single-use or family restrooms when possible.

Choose familiar, soothing décor. Avoid busy patterns and designs. Solid colors or plants can make the space feel welcoming and familiar.

Make staff easy to recognize. Name badges or matching aprons help clients quickly identify who to ask for help.

PROVIDE SERVICES WITH PATIENCE AND SUPPORT

Choose quieter times. Offer mid-morning or weekday appointments when the salon or shop is calmer and less busy.

Take your time. Match the pace to each client's comfort. Stay flexible if they move slowly, need a break or prefer to reschedule.

Explain before and during each step. Let clients know what will happen—"I'm going to tilt your chair back to wash your hair now"—so they feel comfortable and in control.

Check comfort throughout the service. Ask brief questions like, "Is the water temperature okay?" or "Would you like to rest your head for a moment?"

Respect personal style and preferences. Follow familiar hairstyles, grooming habits or routines. Ask care partners for input if helpful.

Promote confidence through small choices. Invite participation, such as choosing a nail color or holding a towel, offering help only when needed.

Respond calmly to confusion or distress. If a client becomes anxious or uncertain, pause, speak gently and involve a colleague or care partner if support is needed.

Set up the area in advance. Clear clutter, organize tools, and make sure everything needed is within easy reach.

Document what works well. Note communication tips, preferred styles, products, or comfort needs in the appointment system or staff log.

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



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