



Specific Strategies for Community Members

A dementia-friendly community initiative is an opportunity for people in all walks of life to learn about dementia and share their experiences of living with or caring for someone with dementia.

This section contains special challenges and specific strategies for community members to support a dementia-friendly community initiative in the following sectors: business, community organizations, health care and public services. This is not an all-inclusive list, but a collection of recommendations for the places and people that most commonly interact with individuals with dementia and/or play an important role in supporting these efforts in the community.

The suggestions described here are derived from best practices in effective communication with individuals with dementia and from consultation with a representative from each setting. Some areas include a description of what the special challenges may be in a particular setting, along with suggestions on how to address those challenges.

Business Sector

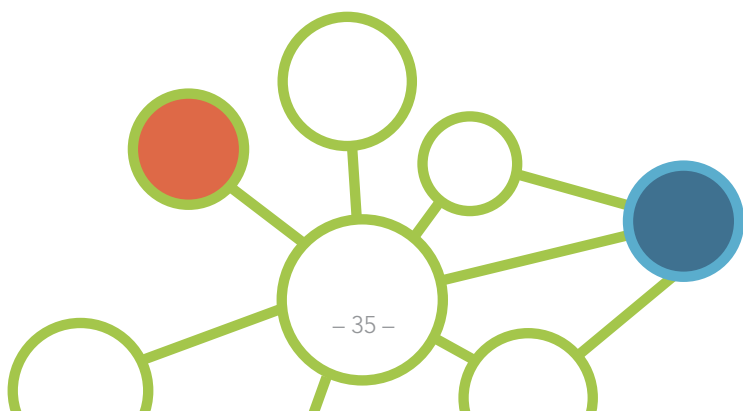
LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

A chamber of commerce can provide leadership in a dementia-friendly community initiative by encouraging its business members to participate in training staff on how to best serve an individual with dementia as their customer. Providing opportunities for discussion at chamber meetings and providing meeting space or materials for the initiative can greatly enhance the reach and effectiveness of a dementia-friendly community effort.

GENERAL BUSINESS SETTING

SPECIAL CHALLENGES The memory loss and confusion that can accompany dementia make it difficult for individuals to carry out daily activities such as shopping, banking and moving throughout the community. Misunderstanding prices and sales, forgetting to pay prior to leaving the store, difficulty with debit or credit cards and being unable to find the desired item or even come up with the name of the item are common problems that can result from dementia.

WHAT TO DO If an individual with dementia is having difficulty in a store or other business, having trained employees can greatly assist the situation. If an individual appears confused or is having trouble, employees can approach them and ask if they need any assistance. Speaking clearly and slowly and giving enough time for the customer to respond, helping them to find items, and helping them to complete their tasks one at a time are all very helpful approaches. Other strategies include providing easy-to-follow maps at key locations in the store, ensuring signage that is easy to see and unambiguous, and minimizing the number of questions asked at checkout. The *Building Dementia-Friendly Communities Tool Kit* has examples of training for businesses on how to provide dementia-friendly customer service.



BANKS AND CREDIT UNIONS

SPECIAL CHALLENGES Community banks and credit unions have a special role in assisting customers with dementia. Individuals with dementia are more vulnerable to scams and other types of financial exploitation. Financial abuse can come from family members or others close to the person, as well as typical online or telephone-based scams.

WHAT TO DO Being aware of a customer's spending habits can be very helpful in protecting the individual with dementia. Signs to look for can include frequent overdrafts, bounced checks, atypical mathematical errors, sudden changes in spending that are either significantly higher or lower each month and large sums of money being withdrawn or transferred to another person.


It is helpful to develop protocols for employees to handle situations that may arise regarding concerns about a customer who may no longer be able to manage their finances or may be the victim of financial abuse. The protocol may include speaking with the individual directly to determine an explanation for the behavior or to contact the local adult protective services agency to report a concern of financial abuse. Adult protective services agencies have the authority to investigate allegations of abuse, including financial abuse, and will look into possible abuse even when the amount of money involved may not rise to the level that law enforcement would investigate.

Bank and credit union staff can also attend county interdisciplinary team (I-Team) meetings, which are typically convened by adult protective services staff and include law enforcement, crisis workers and others. These meetings provide an opportunity for discussion of concerns and for various county services and stakeholders to assess how local systems could work more effectively to address community needs.



GROCERY STORES

SPECIAL CHALLENGES Grocery stores can be especially challenging for individuals with dementia because shopping for groceries is a complex task that requires memory for what is needed, what each item is called and where it is located in the store. Self-service can



be overwhelming as bulk food items must be labeled with the proper code and/or weighed and packaged prior to checkout. Having to recall special customer numbers or other discount code information can also cause anxiety at the checkout. It can be difficult for individuals with dementia to follow sets of instructions or directions containing multiple steps. Using debit or credit cards to pay often requires answering five or more questions on the payment keypad, which can be overwhelming and frustrating for someone with dementia.

WHAT TO DO The Middleton, Wisconsin dementia-friendly initiative promotes the concept of a relaxed lane for checkout. This lane is designated as one that provides additional time and assistance to customers. Other ways to assist individuals with dementia at grocery stores include the following:

- Clear signage with basic black letters on a light background in large font at the end of each aisle.
- Limiting how often items change locations in the store.
- Providing staff to assist and accompany customers to complete their tasks.
- Offering an order and delivery component.

RESTAURANTS

SPECIAL CHALLENGES Going out to eat is an important social activity for many people. Difficulty with memory can make ordering food, casual social conversation and finding and returning from the restroom challenging. Restroom signs in different themes, such as *roosters and hens* rather than *men and women*, can be confusing. The size and scope of the menu can be overwhelming, and individuals with dementia may forget what they have ordered. Difficulty in ordering and repeating questions and requests of wait staff can be frustrating for both staff and customers.

WHAT TO DO Training staff to provide dementia-friendly customer service and to understand the challenges facing individuals with dementia will help alleviate many issues. Wait staff can assist individuals with dementia by asking questions about the kinds of food they like to narrow possible options in ordering. Directional signage for the restrooms should be clearly placed in key visual areas and be easily understood. Restroom doors need to be clearly labeled with a sign placed directly on the door.