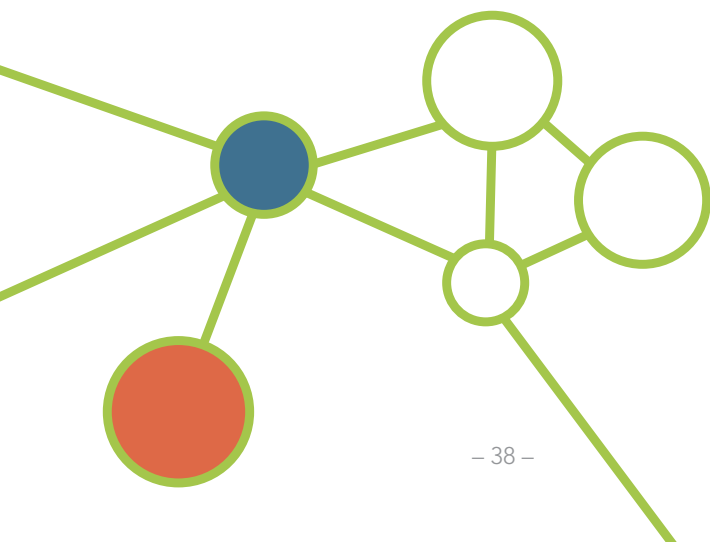


# Community Organizations Sector

## COMMUNITY, CIVIC AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Any community-based organization can become involved with a dementia-friendly community initiative. The Jaycees, Lions, Kiwanis, Elks, Rotary, YMCA, parent-teacher organizations, United Way chapters, AARP chapters and neighborhood associations are all examples of groups that would add value to any initiative. These organizations can assist with recruiting volunteers to assist the initiative, providing space for meetings, filling leadership roles for committees and volunteering to help individuals with dementia.

Community organizations may be able to provide a structure for fundraising, offer channels for communication and marketing to the community and donate materials and resources, such as binders for training. They may also experience benefits from involvement in the dementia-friendly community effort through promotion of their agency as a supportive member. Dementia-friendly community efforts should include education and training for community organizations.





## FAITH COMMUNITIES

**SPECIAL CHALLENGES** Attending a religious service can be challenging for the individual with dementia and their caregiver. Individuals may have difficulty finding selected pieces within larger books, such as hymns or scriptures, reading the signs that contain the references to each piece, and following the service, even if it has been a familiar service. A trip to the restroom may also be difficult for individuals with dementia as they may be searching for the correct door to use or have trouble finding the way back to their seats.

Individuals with dementia may say and do things that are not appropriate during a service, such as talking loudly during times of quiet and disturbing others around them. This behavior can be embarrassing for the family member who accompanies them and may prompt the family member to stop attending services. Finding transportation to a service may be an obstacle for those individuals who no longer drive, which may lead to isolation and a loss of connection with their faith community.

**WHAT TO DO** Dementia-friendly faith communities can improve the quality of life for those with dementia. Recognizing when someone stops attending services and asking why is the first step to helping individuals with dementia maintain a connection to their faith. Activities can include educating members about dementia, carrying out a review of changes that can be made in buildings, and holding a Dementia Day service of worship focused around those with dementia and their caregivers. When members of faith communities are educated on dementia, behaviors of individuals with dementia can be better accepted, and less stigmatization can result for the individual and his/her family.

A dementia-friendly worship is one that is inclusive and engaging for the individual with dementia. The service is short and simple and has a structure with a clear beginning and end. It is helpful if written materials, such as weekly bulletins, are in large print with black letters on white paper and are not overwhelming in content. Signs should be large enough to be easily seen with large black letters on a white background.



Volunteers can assist as buddies in the pew for members who may have difficulty in following the service or finding the proper passages in books. If someone is struggling, simply sitting near them and offering to let them follow along can be very helpful. The buddy can assist with finding and returning from the restroom. To address transportation issues for individuals with dementia, faith communities can identify volunteers who are willing to provide rides to services, or if a community owns a van or bus, it could be used for rides as well.

Restrooms that are close by and indicated by obvious signs can alleviate difficulty for individuals with dementia. If someone is unable to sit quietly, access to outside or garden space can be used to go for a walk or to converse. Aisles and walkways should be well lit and devoid of small rugs or complex patterns, as these may be perceived as holes or other obstacles by an individual with dementia.

Faith communities can play an important role in bringing joy to the lives of their members with dementia through engagement in music and art. A special chorus consisting of individuals with dementia and their caregivers or friends can be a way to allow these members to actively participate in services. The following link provides an example of a special chorus with individuals with dementia and their caregivers:

<http://aging.med.nyu.edu/research/chorus>.

Starting a memory café is another way to provide opportunities for joy. Memory cafés can take place in any comfortable setting where people can gather to have fun. They can include food and drink as well as someone knowledgeable about dementia to provide assistance and answer questions. A memory café is not a support group or educational program, but a safe place where individuals with dementia and their caregivers can go to engage socially without fear of embarrassment. Memory cafés can include music, art, games or anything of interest to the attendees.

Additional information and tips for faith communities are available on the following website:

[www.dementiafriendlychurches.com](http://www.dementiafriendlychurches.com).

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## SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

**SPECIAL CHALLENGES** Staying active and socially engaged is very important for individuals with dementia to maintain their abilities as long as possible. Aerobic exercise increases blood flow to the brain and has been shown to increase the size of the part of the brain responsible for memory. Engaging in conversation and other recreational activities helps individuals with dementia to avoid isolation. Sports leagues, fitness centers, bowling alleys, as well as card clubs, bird watching clubs, book clubs, knitting clubs and other recreational groups can support members within a dementia-friendly community.

**WHAT TO DO** Creating league play that is less competitive and more supportive can help individuals with dementia continue to play the game they love while getting exercise and staying socially connected. At golf courses, tennis clubs and other venues, providing a partner who is willing to provide support and encouragement to an individual with dementia will help that individual enjoy continued participation. This partner can help the individual with dementia navigate a course, keep track of the score and assist in other parts of the game where short-term memory may fail them.

