

Public Services Sector

COUNTY AGENCIES

Office on Aging/Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC)

Offices on Aging and ADRCs have a substantial role to play in the development of dementia-friendly communities. They can partner with local public health departments to support dementia-friendly community development. A dementia-capable Office on Aging or ADRC has staff who are knowledgeable about dementia, offers cognitive screens and family caregiver supports and has information about all resources and programs available in the community for individuals with dementia and their families.

Offices on Aging and ADRCs can provide (1) meeting space and leadership, (2) support for coalition building with dementia service agencies, other local agencies, businesses and citizens and (3) important health promotion and falls prevention programs to the community. ADRCs with dementia care specialists act as catalysts in sparking interest and support for the development of dementia-friendly communities.



ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES (APS)

Adult protective services programs play a critical role in the community in helping both individuals with dementia and their caregivers. Often, APS workers become involved in cases with individuals with dementia after they have experienced a crisis. Other times, they may receive calls from concerned family or

friends about someone they feel is at risk of harm. In many APS cases, law enforcement, care facilities, hospitals and county crisis staff have been involved with the individual in question. Creating partnerships with these entities can help everyone understand and address concerns with how these services interact and, more importantly, how this interaction affects individuals with dementia and their families.


APS programs become dementia capable through educational programming for staff, assessing the outcomes for individuals with dementia and working to improve outcomes as needed. Development of policies and procedures that are dementia specific and ensuring that staff know when and how to use those policies will improve dementia capability.

COUNTY CRISIS RESPONSE

County crisis units respond to the immediate needs of anyone in their county at imminent risk of harm. There are a wide variety of situations where crisis workers must be able to navigate, from abuse to mental health issues to dementia. Understanding the special needs of individuals with dementia will improve the effectiveness of a crisis response program and will help identify the appropriate root cause of the crisis.

There are several things county crisis units can do to become dementia capable. The first is to ensure that all staff complete the required training that satisfies Chapter DHS 34, Wisconsin Administrative Code, requirements with an emphasis on dementia. Another way is to access regular and ongoing clinical supervision with a psychologist who can review medications and provide immediate feedback to the crisis team when working with someone they suspect has dementia. Regular attendance at the crisis network and regional crisis meetings where dementia issues are discussed can increase knowledge and lessons learned from others in the field.





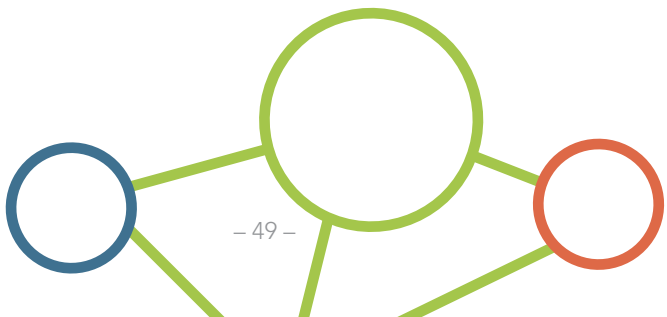
It is important for crisis programs to connect with the other agencies serving individuals with dementia in the community. Regular participation in the county I-Team improves dementia capability, as this venue allows for different agencies to discuss issues and cases in common. These meetings typically include the aging and disability resource center and aging office, adult protective services, law enforcement, hospitals and other care facilities, the county attorney and other community agencies or businesses involved in supporting people in crisis or at increased risk for crisis. Developing referral and communication protocols with dementia services organizations is helpful, as they are familiar with the unique characteristics and needs of the dementia population.

SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Most communities have senior nutrition programs that consist of Meals on Wheels programs to the homebound and locations in the community where meals are served to older adults on a donation basis. These programs provide a friendly face for the homebound or a chance to socialize and meet other people in the community.

Volunteers with Meals on Wheels programs have the opportunity to ensure individuals who receive meals are safe and provide a connection to help if needed. A training resource for Meals on Wheels volunteer drivers that provides tips and how to help is available on: <http://gwaar.org/for-professionals/transportation3/10-articles/aging-programs-and-services/219-for-home-delivered-meal-drivers.html>. Staff at senior dining centers should have an understanding of dementia and how to support the individual with dementia and his/her caregiver.

Dining centers are natural places to hold a memory café. Memory cafés are places in the community where individuals with dementia and their families and friends can gather for conversation and fun activities in a nonjudgmental social atmosphere. At the café, information and resources are available on dementia, with the focus being purely social and fun.






LAW ENFORCEMENT/FIRST RESPONDERS

SPECIAL CHALLENGES Individuals with dementia can easily become lost and unable to remember how to get home on foot, using public transportation or driving in a car. When someone with dementia is lost, they may be anxious, afraid, agitated and aggressive toward anyone unfamiliar who approaches them. Individuals with dementia may leave a place of business and forget to pay for their purchases. Store security or employees may detain them or call law enforcement to report a theft. When arriving at the scene, it may be difficult to determine whether someone may have a dementia or other condition, making it difficult to determine the best response.

WHAT TO DO Law enforcement officers and other first responders should be encouraged to receive dementia-specific training. There are many opportunities for training from local dementia agencies and online programs and through law enforcement associations. To prevent recurring incidents, communities should promote the existence of Silver Alert and connect with the aging and disability resource center, adult protective services agency and county crisis response agency to determine a follow-up protocol once an individual has been located and returned home.

Programs such as Project Lifesaver and Project Safe Return can be housed in the sheriff's office or local police department. These programs offer a means for faster recovery of someone with dementia who has been reported missing. A transmitter is provided for the person to wear that can be traced and located by mobile equipment housed with law enforcement.

Law enforcement can create a voluntary registry for individuals with dementia. The registry provides the name, home address and contact information for family members should the individual with dementia become involved with law enforcement.



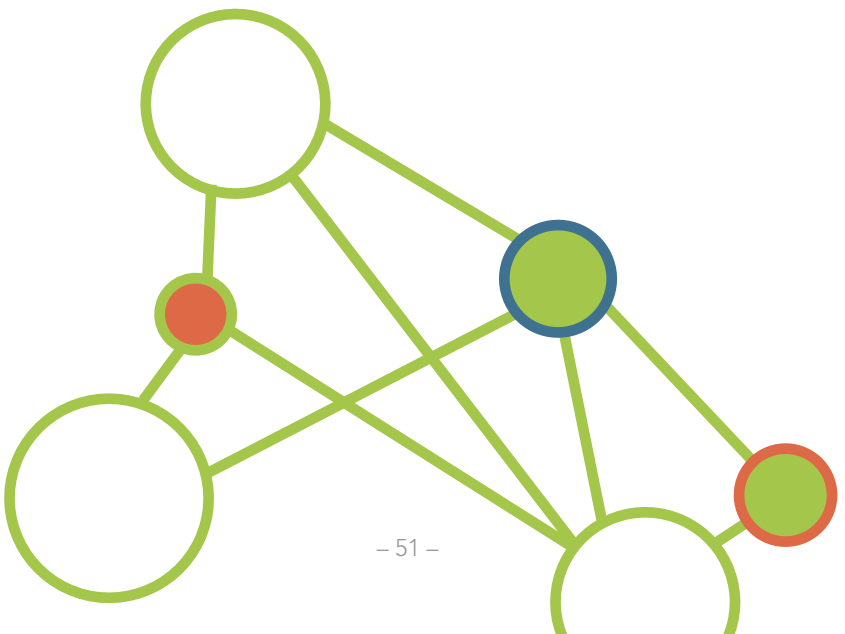
File of Life is a program that places a packet of information intended for use by first responders and other emergency personnel inside or outside the door of a residence or prominently displayed on the refrigerator. This file contains information critical to crisis response, including emergency contacts and important medical information. Individuals can also contact their 911 center and have information added to their residential file indicating to first responders that there is someone living at that residence with dementia or memory loss.

Additional information is available on the following websites:

- Law Enforcement Training from the Alzheimer’s Association
www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-safety.asp
- Project Lifesaver Home Page
www.projectlifesaver.org
- Safe Return Program
www.alz.org/care/dementia-medic-alert-safe-return.asp
- File of Life
www.folife.org/about.htm

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTS

SPECIAL CHALLENGES Individuals with dementia may suddenly feel lost when traveling to a familiar place whether on foot or by car. Signs can be difficult to understand, especially if they are highly stylized or designed to match the surrounding environment. Complex and non-standard intersections and one-way streets can be especially challenging.





CITY PLANNER/ARCHITECT

WHAT TO DO When looking to create something new or renovate an existing structure, it is important to keep age-friendly and dementia-friendly design in mind. A dementia-friendly community includes places and buildings that are established with obvious functions, changes that are small in scale and incremental, and designs for architectural features and street furniture that are familiar or easily understood by older adults. The environment also includes latent cues positioned where visual access ends, especially at decision points, such as junctions and turnings with entrances to places and buildings that are clearly visible and obvious. Dementia-friendly community design ensures that urban and building form is varied; there is a variety of landmarks, including historic and civic buildings, and there are distinctive structures and places of activity. In these communities, there is a variety of welcoming open spaces, including squares, parks and playgrounds, architectural features in a variety of styles, colors and materials, and a variety of aesthetic and practical features, such as trees and street furniture.



PUBLIC SIGNAGE

WHAT TO DO Being able to navigate in public areas can be difficult for individuals with dementia. In a dementia-friendly environment, signage is minimal, giving simple, essential information at decision points with large graphics and realistic symbols in clear color contrast to the background, preferably dark lettering on a light background. It is helpful if directional signs are on single pointers, signs locating important places and buildings are perpendicular to the wall, and signs have non-glare lighting and non-reflective coverings.



STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

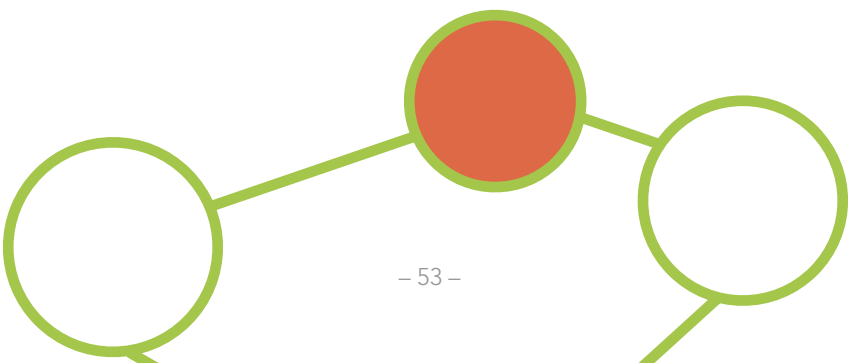
WHAT TO DO Becoming lost in familiar surroundings is a common symptom of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia. Street and sidewalk design that is dementia-friendly can help reduce confusion about current location and the route toward an individual’s destination. In a dementia-friendly community, there is a hierarchy of street types, such as main streets, side streets, alleyways and passages. Blocks are small and laid out on an irregular grid based on an adapted perimeter block pattern that has buildings on all sides surrounding an open central area with short and fairly narrow streets. In dementia-friendly design, streets are well connected and gently winding with open-ended bends to enable visual continuity. Forked and T-junctions are more common than crossroads.

Additional information is available on the following websites:

- Neighborhoods for Life
www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Other_reports_and_guidance/Neighbourhoods_for_Life_Findings_Leaflet.pdf
- Age-Friendly Cities
www.who.int/ageing/publications/Age_friendly_cities_checklist.pdf
- Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide
<http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/I0665/43755/1/9789241547307-eng.pdf>

MAYOR

The mayor of a city, town or other community is an important leader to include in dementia-friendly community initiatives. His/her support increases the opportunities for local public services to become dementia-friendly. These services include parks, public transit, libraries, senior centers, museums, community gardens and public events. The mayor can also assist in publicizing the initiative and creating awareness in the community.





PARKS

Including circular walking paths clearly marked with easy-to-understand directional signs can be a first step toward creating a dementia-friendly park. Providing maps in multiple places, ensuring walking paths are smooth and free from obstacles and providing multiple places to sit are other ways to incorporate dementia-friendly concepts. Shelters, restrooms and sports fields should be clearly delineated and marked with signs to be easily recognized and located. When developing programming for the park, include multi-generational events that engage individuals of all ages.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation is critical for adults who do not drive to carry out the necessary tasks of day-to-day living. For individuals with dementia, navigating public transportation can be very challenging. Operators and drivers need to be aware of the special challenges faced by individuals with dementia, as well as how to recognize the signs that someone may need help. A small amount of assistance can be the difference between someone getting lost or arriving safely at their destination. Individuals with dementia may need assistance in determining if they are on the correct route for their trip. Individuals with memory loss may forget their destination or the purpose of their trip and may need assistance.

LIBRARIES

Libraries are part of the heart of many communities and can provide support for dementia-friendly community initiatives. Libraries offer meeting spaces, a venue for public education and channels of communication with the larger community. They are locations for holding public awareness events, memory cafés and other events specifically for individuals with dementia and their caregivers and can help in the recruitment of volunteers and interested parties to join the initiative.

SENIOR CENTERS

Senior centers are places that provide communities with information and activities geared toward older adults. They are a natural partner in the development of dementia-friendly communities and can provide meeting space and materials, committee leadership and opportunities to share information on the initiative.



MUSEUMS

Special programs have been created to assist museums in the development of dementia-friendly programming for visitors. These programs provide an opportunity for arts appreciation and socialization for people with dementia who may not otherwise attend the museum.

Additional information on how a museum can develop a dementia-friendly program is available on the following websites:

- www.moma.org/meetme
- www.alz.org/sewi/in_my_community_I9695.asp
- www.mpm.edu/plan-visit/calendar/spark-programs

COMMUNITY GARDENS

A community garden can be dementia-friendly by ensuring the garden is physically accessible and has opportunities for individuals with dementia to contribute to the garden. Individuals with dementia are capable of doing many garden tasks and may bring experience and insight. Holding dementia-friendly community events can showcase the benefits of a community garden.

SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Providing dementia education in middle and high school health classes can help children understand how to have a meaningful and loving relationship with a family member who has dementia and can improve the quality of life for both the child and the individual with dementia. A curriculum on dementia will be available from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction for use in middle and high school health classes beginning in fall of 2015. Encouraging students to participate in dementia-friendly community initiatives can provide required service hours, offers the opportunity to learn more about dementia and makes a connection with the older generation.

