



# How to Help

Faith communities and places of worship can help those living with dementia by implementing dementia-friendly practices and by reporting suspected elder or dependent abuse to **Adult Protective Services (APS)**. APS is a program administered by Aging & Independence Services (AIS), a department of the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency.

APS serves older adults age 60 and older, as well as dependent adults age 18-59, who are being harmed, or threatened with harm, to ensure their right to safety and dignity.

Contact APS (see below) if you observe, suspect, or have knowledge of physical abuse, financial abuse, abduction, isolation, abandonment, neglect by others, or self-neglect. Anyone can report suspected abuse, not just legally mandated reporters.

## Make a Report

**Call AIS at (800) 339-4661**

Members of the public can make an anonymous report through this 24-hour reporting line for suspected elder or dependent adult abuse.

Mandated reporters, including pastors and clergymen, are required to file a report by phone or online at **[www.sandiego.leapsportal.net/LEAPSIntake](http://www.sandiego.leapsportal.net/LEAPSIntake)**

To learn more, visit:

- **National Center on Elder Abuse**  
**[www.ncea.acl.gov](http://www.ncea.acl.gov)**



## Dementia-Friendly Tips and Elder Abuse Prevention for Faith-Based Communities

For more resources and information for older adults, call (800) 339-4661 or visit **[www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov](http://www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov)**



## People Living with Dementia are at Risk for Abuse

Older adults who live alone, are socially isolated, or are in fragile health may be more susceptible to experiencing abuse. A person living with dementia can be especially vulnerable to someone who takes advantage of them. Members of faith-based communities can help by being alert to indicators of abuse or neglect:

- Physical injury, such as bruises, burns, skin tears, or broken bones
- Appearance of being malnourished or dehydrated, or unusual weight loss
- Poor hygiene, appear unkempt, body odor
- Symptoms of anxiety, depression, or confusion
- Care partner shows anger or indifference toward the person with dementia
- Hesitation or appears fearful to talk openly in the presence of a care partner
- Clothing that is inappropriate for the weather, dirty/torn, or ill-fitting
- Frequently missed services or unexplained withdrawal from activities
- Talks about giving money or valuables away
- Sudden concern about not having enough money to cover basic needs

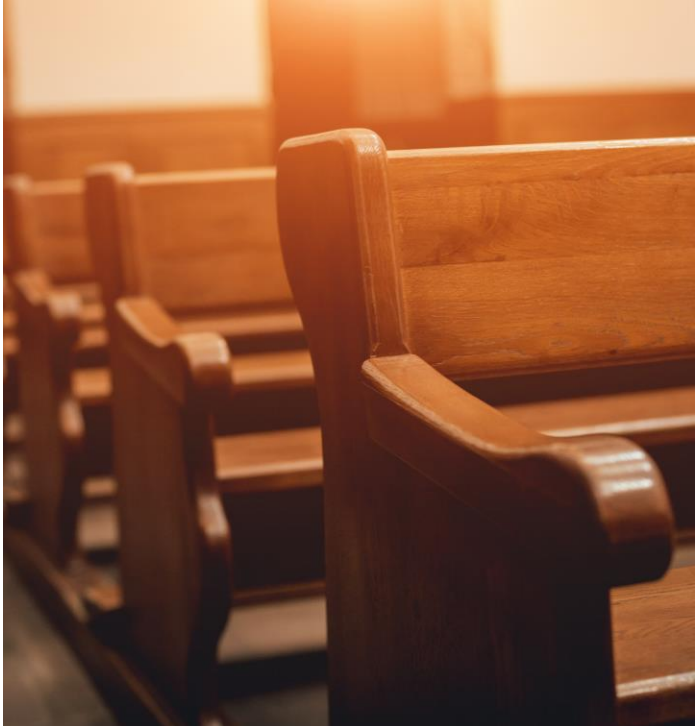
*Faith-based communities can provide important spiritual respite. As welcoming, compassionate environments, they offer people affected by dementia opportunities for meaningful engagement and spiritual connection. Through dementia-friendly practices, entire faith communities can uplift people living with dementia and their care partners.*



## 10 Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD)

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life
2. Challenges in planning or solving problems
3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks
4. Confusion with dates, time, or place
5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
6. New problems with words
7. Misplacing objects; unable to retrace steps
8. Decreased or poor judgment
9. Withdrawal from work or social activities
10. Changes in mood or personality

To learn more, visit [alz.org/10signs](https://www.alz.org/10signs) for a detailed overview of the signs and symptoms.



## Dementia Friendly Communication Skills

- **Approach gently and from the front:** Say who you are and greet the person warmly.
- **Use positive body language:** Smile, make eye contact, and stay at their level.
- **Speak clearly and calmly:** Use a warm, steady tone of voice.
- **Keep it simple:** Ask one question or share one idea at a time.
- **Slow down:** Give them time to hear, process, and respond.
- **Be patient and supportive:** Show that you're listening and that what they say matters.
- **Connect emotionally:** Stay with their feelings, even if the topic changes.
- **Be understanding of expressions:** This may include talking, calling out, or walking around during the service.

# Making Your Faith-Based Community Dementia-Friendly

## Inclusion Strategies

- Encourage the use of name tags.
- Share materials and information on dementia, brain health, and clinical trial opportunities in newsletters.
- Focus on strengths/abilities, not limitations.

## The Environment

- Designate quiet spaces.
- Display signs to clearly identify areas.
- Use soft lighting, be aware of glares.

## Community Connection

- Get to know members and keep track.
- Consider a prayer chain and check-in program for families and caregivers.
- Facilitate a physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness program in support of holistic care of body, mind, and spirit.
- Offer live-stream service options.
- Organize a support group.
- Offer to assist with transportation.

## Education & Resources

- Refer to groups like Alter ([alterdementia.co](https://alterdementia.co)) and FaithUnitedAgainstAlzheimer's Coalition ([usagainstalzhimers.org/networks/faith](https://usagainstalzhimers.org/networks/faith)) for more guidance on how to make your faith community more dementia-friendly.
- Request a free Dementia Friends session for your staff or community to learn practical ways to support individuals living with dementia and their care partners:

☎ (858) 495-5500

✉ [AISAlzheimer.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:AISAlzheimer.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov)