



How to Help

Healthcare workers 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 healthcare providers and staff, are required to file a report by phone or online at **www.sandiego.leapsportal.net/LEAPSIntake**

To learn more, visit:

- **National Center on Elder Abuse**
www.ncea.acl.gov



Dementia-Friendly Tips and Elder Abuse Prevention for Healthcare Settings

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

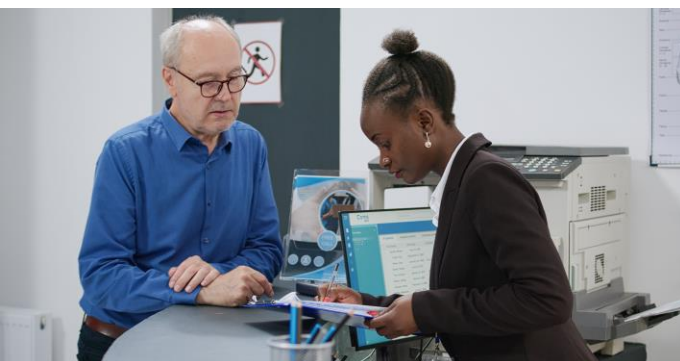


People Living with Dementia are at Risk for Abuse

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. Healthcare workers can help by being alert to indicators of abuse or neglect:

- Physical injury, such as bruises, burns, skin tears, broken bones, or ulcers
- Appearance of being malnourished or dehydrated, or unusual weight loss
- Poor hygiene
- Signs of anxiety, depression, or confusion
- Care partner shows anger or indifference toward the person with dementia
- Hesitation or fear to talk openly in the presence of a care partner
- Clothing that is inappropriate for the weather, dirty/torn, or ill-fitting
- Frequent visits to a healthcare offices or settings
- Unexplained withdrawal from activities
- Frequently missed medical appointments
- Poor medication management

Healthcare is an essential service for all. For people living with dementia and their families, it can be a complex system to navigate. Receiving a diagnosis and discussing treatments can be daunting and stressful, but it is possible for people living with dementia to have a good quality of life. All healthcare workers, from administrative staff to providers on the frontlines, can help make the experience of visiting healthcare offices and settings more comfortable.



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 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 them 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 give one idea at a time.
- **Slow down:** Give them time to hear, process, and respond.
- **Be patient and do not interrupt:** Show you are listening and that what they say matters and has meaning.
- **Connect emotionally:** Stay with their feelings, even if the topic changes.
- **Involving the care partner is important—but always speak to the person with dementia first:** Remember: “Nothing about me, without me.”

Making Your Healthcare Setting Dementia-Friendly

Environmental Design

- Use calming colors and soft lighting.
- Minimize background noise and chatter.
- Avoid shiny floors or patterned carpets.
- Clearly label doors and rooms with large text and pictures.
- Designate a quiet room or area.

Patient Support

- Display flyers and information for local dementia resources.
- Offer double appointments and telehealth.
- Send day-of appointment reminders and follow up on missed appointments.

Care & Communication Practices

- Use a “This is Me” form to capture patient personal history, culture, preferences, interests, routines, and triggers.
- Avoid medical jargon; use simple language.
- Offer consistent providers when possible.
- Encourage involvement in research.
- Promote healthy lifestyle choices that help with symptom management.
- Install computer flag-up alert systems that display a patient's dementia diagnosis.

Education & Resources

- Explore webinars and provider resources at championsforhealth.org/Alzheimers.
- 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

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