



# How to Help

Restaurants and food establishments can help those living with dementia by implementing dementia-friendly practices and reporting suspected elder or dependent adult 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 aged 60 and older, as well as dependent adults aged 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 a report through the 24-hour reporting line for suspected elder or dependent adult abuse.

Those considered mandated reporters 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 Restaurants and Other Food Establishments

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 who 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. Restaurants and food establishments 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
- 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
- Strained or tense relationships or frequent arguments between the care partner and person with dementia
- Unexplained withdrawal from activities

**Restaurants and food establishments can provide a higher level of customer service by learning ways to better assist those living with dementia. Dining out is an important social activity for many people, but for someone living with dementia, it can be overwhelming. These customers have special needs and can require additional support to enjoy their dining experiences.**



## 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://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.
- **Slow down:** Give them time to hear, process, and respond.
- **Keep it simple:** Ask one question at a time; offer choices: "Would you like ketchup or ranch with your fries?"
- **Be patient while they order:** Repeat or rephrase if needed.
- **Apologize for perceived errors:** Do not argue, even if it's not your fault.
- **Discreetly hand the check to the care partner:** An individual with dementia may have challenges understanding the bill, calculating gratuity, or remembering to pay.
- **Try not to react to unusual behavior:** Instead, respond with respect and stay calm, patient, and flexible. A kind, thoughtful approach can help create a safe and welcoming dining experience for everyone.

# Making Your Food Establishment Dementia Friendly

## Staff Interaction

- Wear name tags with large fonts.
- Learn the person's name and use it to make them feel recognized and respected.
- Check in with them gently without pressure.
- Offer quiet areas or seat in areas with less noise and distractions.

## Environment & Atmosphere

- Keep tables free of non-essential items, such as flowers and promotional materials.
- Avoid patterns and busy wallpaper.
- Play soft, calming music.
- Avoid seating near mirrors or glare.
- Use brightly colored utensils, plates, cups.
- Use clear restroom signs like "men" and "women" instead of themes.

## Menu & Mealtime Support

- Offer easy-to-eat food options.
- Be flexible with food textures (e.g., soft, pureed, thickened) for those with chewing or swallowing difficulties.
- Use visual menus with photos of food items
- Provide menus online
- Help guide decision-making (e.g., "Would you like a hot meal or a cold meal?" or "Would you like chicken or fish?").

## Education & Resources

- 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)