



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. Transit drivers 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
- Symptoms of anxiety, depression, or confusion
- Care partner shows anger or indifference toward the person with dementia
- Hesitation 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

How to Help

Transit drivers can help those living with dementia by implementing dementia-friendly practices and by 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 an anonymous 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

To learn more, visit:

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



Dementia-Friendly Tips and Elder Abuse Prevention for Transportation Providers

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



Cognitive changes can make driving unsafe for persons living with dementia and others on the road. As a transit driver, you provide an essential service: safe, accessible transportation. Through dementia-friendly practices, transit drivers—including bus operators, medical transport providers, and volunteer drivers—can ensure that people with dementia remain independent and socially connected to their community.



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 image 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 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 kind:** Show you're listening and that what they say matters.
- **Connect emotionally:** Stay with their feelings, even if the topic changes.
- **Try not react to unusual behaviors:** Instead, stay calm, patient, and flexible. Consider what may have upset them, such as loud noises or sudden changes, and adjust when you can.
- **Allow additional time:** Tasks like boarding a bus or paying a fare may take longer for someone living with dementia.
- **Help make their ride feel safe and comfortable:** Treat every passenger with dignity and respect.

Making Your Rides Dementia-Friendly

Interaction & Support

- Identify yourself and your role.
- Give visual cues like pointing or gesturing.
- If a passenger yells or calls out, stay calm.
- Avoid arguing and respond with patience.

Transportation Environment & Routine

- Promote a calm setting; use soothing music.
- Offer clear reminders about where they're going and what to expect next.
- Avoid detours or unexpected changes.
- Ensure signage is easy to read with large fonts, high contrast, and clear icons.
- Use consistent drivers/staff when possible.
- If on a bus, direct the passenger to sit near the front of the bus, and let them know you will alert them when you arrive at their stop.

Safety & System

- Provide a higher level of service than curb-to-curb, such as door-to-door.
- Only release passengers at confirmed or scheduled destinations.
- Check that passenger seat belts are fastened properly and engage the "child lock" feature, when appropriate.
- Sign up for and pay attention to "Silver Alerts" and other missing person announcements.

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

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