



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. As a community member, you can stay 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
- Signs of anxiety, depression, or confusion
- Unkempt living environment (e.g., clutter, overgrown yard, home in disrepair)
- 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
- Sudden concern about not having enough money to cover basic needs
- Wanders or paces the neighborhood
- Unsafe or reckless driving behavior

How to Help

Neighbors and community members 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. When in doubt, err on the side of caution and make a report. Trained staff will walk you through the situation and provide guidance on what to do next.

To learn more, visit:

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

Dementia-Friendly Tips and Elder Abuse Prevention for Neighbors and Community Members

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



There are actions we can all take as neighbors and community members to help people living with dementia and their care partners. The more we work together to increase our understanding of the disease, the more inclusive and supportive our communities become.



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 give one idea at a time.
- **Slow down:** Give them time to hear, process, and respond.
- **Be patient and kind:** Show that you're listening and that what they say matters.
- **Connect emotionally:** Stay with the person's feelings, even if the topic changes.
- **Be understanding of their expressions:** This may include talking to oneself, calling out, or repeating questions.

Communication can become challenging for persons living with dementia. Words or actions are often a way of expressing unmet needs or emotions. As neighbors, it helps to become a "gentle detective," looking beyond the surface to understand what a person might be trying to communicate.



Making Your Community Dementia-Friendly

Educate Yourself and Others

Help build a compassionate community

- Learn about dementia, the stigma that often surrounds it, and how it affects daily life.
- Become familiar with local services and resources in your community.
- Attend a Dementia Friends session and encourage others to join you! You can also request a free Dementia Friends session for your community:

☎ (858) 495-5500

✉ AISAlzheimer.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov

Engage with Your Community

Connection and inclusion make a difference

- Get to know your neighbors and check in with them regularly.
- Offer simple support, such as walking a pet, bringing in trash bins, or offering a ride.
- Include people living with dementia in neighborhood decisions or conversations, when possible.
- Create a neighborhood contact list for social connection and emergencies.

Empower Persons Living with Dementia

Promote dignity, purpose, and autonomy

- Focus on the person's strengths and abilities; not what they can't do.
- Listen to their voice and respect their opinions, choices, and preferences.
- Encourage participation in community life.
- Understand that persons living with dementia are more than their diagnosis.