

Dementia Friendly Community Services



People living with dementia may visit your business and other community settings. At times, they may need extra assistance.

Communication Tips for All Businesses

- **Speak clearly and be patient.** Use simple, short sentences and avoid direct questions. Keep choices to a minimum and don't raise your voice. When possible, use a quiet place to talk.
- **Listen closely** to what the person has to say. Encourage them and look for clues or suggest words on what they are communicating. Go at their pace and don't interrupt.
- **Smile warmly and make eye contact.** They may find it difficult to know what you are saying, but may quickly interpret the look on your face, your tone, and your body language.
- **Respond to a look of distress.** If someone looks lost and distressed, offer to help by asking if their address is on something in their pocket or bag. Contact police, if necessary.

Learn More:

LifeStream Services

800-589-1121 or lifestreaminc.org

Alzheimer's Association

800-272-3900 or alz.org

Communication Tips for Retail Businesses

- **Forgetting to pay.** People with dementia may forget to pay. Approach the person before they leave the store, ask if they are finished shopping, and tell them you would be happy to help them check out. Guide them to the checkout lane.
- **Forgetting and finding items.** A person with dementia may have forgotten what they came in to buy or have issues finding items they need. If they have a list, offer to help and assist in getting them the right amount if they seem to be buying a lot.
- **Making choices.** While having choices is good, for a person with dementia, too much choice can be confusing. Ask what the person would like, then describe a few options. Allow them to think and make a decision.
- **Handling money.** Counting money, calculating change, recognizing bills and coins, and knowing the value of money can be difficult for people with dementia. Offer to assist and be sure to provide a receipt.

Best practices to consider to improve access for those living with dementia.

- **Entrances** should be clearly visible and understood as an entrance. Make sure glass doors are easily marked.
- **Signage** for finding your way around should be clear, have bold type, and should have contrast between words and background. Signs should be mounted to the doors or spaces they refer to, not mounted on a nearby surface. Signs should be at eye-level and well lit. Avoid using highly stylized fonts, abstract images, and icons on signage. Place signs at key decision points to navigate premises, especially restrooms.
- **Lighting** at entrances should be high and include natural light when possible. Avoid pulsing bright light and deep shadows.
- **Flooring** should be plain, not shiny or slippery. Keep floor finishes flush rather than stepped—changes to surfaces can cause confusion. Pathways should be wide and clear of clutter.
- **Unisex restroom or changing facility** will allow someone to be assisted without causing embarrassment for users.
- **Seating** areas in large spaces, especially areas where people are waiting, can help someone relax before their next task.
- **Layout** of an area should be free of clutter and arranged to make it easy to move around. Passageways should be clear and product easy to see.
- **Quiet Areas** for someone who may be feeling anxious or confused can help them recover enough to independently complete what they are doing.