

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. Members of the library community, staff, and volunteers can help by being alert to indicators of abuse or neglect (listed below):

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, indifference, or aggressive behavior toward the person with dementia
- Hesitation to talk openly in the presence of a care partner
- Conflicting explanations of incidents by the family or caregivers
- Clothing that is inappropriate for the weather, dirty/torn, or ill-fitting
- Care partner makes criticizing, mocking, or demeaning remarks
- Unexplained withdrawal from activities

How to Help

Library staff and volunteers 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 division 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

Any person can make a report through the 24-hour reporting line for suspected elder/dependent adult abuse. You can call anonymously, or your identity can be held in confidence.

To learn more, visit:

- **Aging & Independence Services** (www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov)
- **National Center on Elder Abuse** (www.ncea.acl.gov)



Dementia-Friendly Tips and Elder Abuse Prevention for Libraries

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



*In dementia-friendly communities, more people understand dementia, there is less fear and avoidance of those with dementia, and people living with dementia are included and feel supported to live independently for longer. Libraries can be a key part to creating a dementia-friendly community because they are respected public institutions that **facilitate access to resources** for people with dementia and their families.*



Making Your Library Dementia-Friendly

- Entrances should be clearly visible and glass doors clearly marked.
- Signage should be clear and bold with contrast between the words and background.
- Lighting should be high-powered and include natural light, when possible.
- Provide an environment that is safe and accessible with quiet places to sit and relax, well-lit hallways, uncluttered spaces, and pictures and signs that identify areas, such as restrooms.
- A family/unisex restroom will allow a person with dementia to be assisted by their care partner.
- Open up your community room for educational programming on dementia, Alzheimer's disease, and brain health, or support groups for care partners.
- Organize a book club or create a book club kit that includes a book on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, as well as a flyer listing community resources (**refer to www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov for resource information**).
- Host a Memory Café where people with dementia and their care partners can get together and socialize in a comfortable, supportive space (learn more at www.memorycafedirectory.com).

Dementia-Friendly Communication Skills

- Greet people warmly even if you think they do not remember you. If they seem confused, offer a reminder.
- Slow your pace slightly and allow time for person to process and respond.
- Speak clearly and calmly; be patient.
- Keep communication simple; ask one question at a time.
- Listen with empathy and seek to understand the person's feelings.
- Connect on an emotional level even if the conversation topics shift.
- Be aware of body language; smile, make eye contact at eye level.
- Treat the person with dignity and respect.

10 Warning Signs & Symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD)

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life
2. Difficulty planning or solving problems
3. Forgetting how to do familiar tasks
4. Confusion with dates, time, or place
5. Trouble with spatial relationships
6. New problems with words in speaking or writing
7. Misplacing objects and the inability to retrace steps
8. Altered decision making and poor judgment
9. Withdrawal from work or social situations
10. Mood swings and changes in personality

