



## 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. Healthcare workers 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
- Unexplained withdrawal from activities

# How to Help

Healthcare workers 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**

Any person can make a report through the 24-hour reporting line for suspected elder or dependent adult abuse. Mandated reporters can file a report online at <https://sandiego.leapsportal.net/LEAPSIntake/>. To learn more, visit:

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



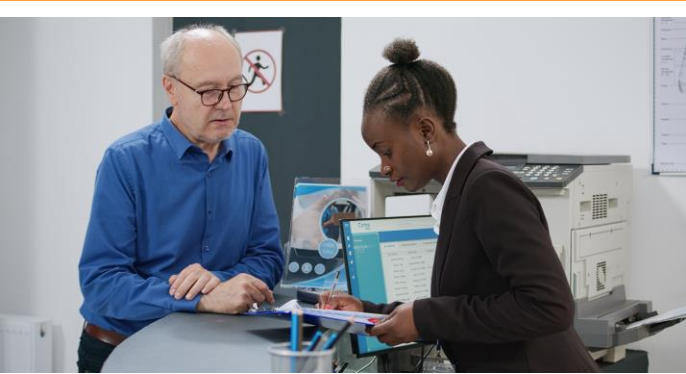
## Dementia-Friendly Tips and Elder Abuse Prevention for Healthcare Settings

For more resources and information for older adults, visit [www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov](http://www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov) or call (800) 339-4461



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Healthcare is an essential service for all. For people living with dementia and their families, it can be a complex system to navigate. For those in the early stages of dementia, receiving a diagnosis and discussing treatments can be daunting and stressful. **All healthcare workers, from administrative staff to providers on the frontlines, can help make the experience of visiting healthcare offices and settings more comfortable.**



## Making Your Healthcare Setting Dementia-Friendly

- Ensure clear signage, well-marked restrooms, and quiet waiting areas. Office staff should be trained on dementia-friendly communication skills.
- In patient waiting areas, place local dementia and caregiver resources, including those developed by Champions for Health and the San Diego Caregiver Coalition.
- Ask patients and caregivers for feedback, such as “what can we do for you?” and “what can we do better?”
- Learn about each patient’s cultural and spiritual background, interests, routines, and sources of anxiety and comfort.
- Arrange a Dementia Friends Information Session for staff and upon completion, display the certificate of completion in the lobby. To request a session, please email [AISAlzheimer.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:AISAlzheimer.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov).
- Offer double appointments or telehealth, when appropriate.
- Offer day-of appointment reminders and follow-up on missed appointments.
- Promote patient involvement in dementia research and clinical trials.
- Promote healthy lifestyle choices that may reduce disease symptoms or slow their progression.
- Install computer flag-up alert systems that display a patient’s dementia diagnosis.
- When appropriate, conduct mental capacity assessments to support decision-making.

### Dementia-Friendly Communication Skills

- Slowly approach from the front and identify yourself. 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.
- Keep communication simple; ask one question at a time. Use short and clear sentences when discussing treatment options.
- Be patient and supportive. Offer comfort and encouragement. Listen carefully and allow them to speak without interruption.
- Be aware of body language; smile, make eye contact at eye level.
- Don’t use “baby talk” or endearments such as “sweetie” or “baby.”

### 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 judgement
9. Withdrawal from work or social situations
10. Mood swings and changes in personality