



How to Help

Legal professionals 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

Any person can make a report through this 24-hour reporting line for suspected elder or dependent adult abuse. The report can be made anonymously. Mandated reporters can file a report online at <https://sandiego.leapsportal.net/LEAPSIntake>. 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 Legal Professionals

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



Legal matters can be complex and overwhelming for people with dementia and their care partners, but planning is key. **Dementia-friendly legal and advance care planning services can help.** These services can bring peace of mind by helping vulnerable clients express their wishes early and avoid problems in the future, such as unpaid expenses, squandered resources, guardianship, financial abuse, neglect, or exploitation.



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



Guidelines to Addressing Legal and Advance Care Planning Challenges

- Meet with clients in a private setting.
- Involve care partners in discussions, as appropriate, who will assume greater responsibility over decision-making as the dementia progresses.
- Utilize the American Bar Association's (ABA) "Assessment of Older Adults with Diminished Capacities: Handbook for Lawyers" to assess client capacity
- Utilize the PRACTICAL Tool (ABA) which helps lawyers identify and implement decision-making options for persons with disabilities that are less restrictive than guardianship.
- Ensure that the client's preferences are captured in writing.
- Involve other parties in legal and advance planning discussions when possible, including the client's healthcare provider or geriatric care manager.
- Plan funeral and burial arrangements in advance, if possible, to provide peace and reduce anxiety for the person with dementia and their family.

Making Your Legal Practice Dementia-Friendly

- Recognize changing abilities when planning for legal and financial risks, such as potential abuse, undue influence, fraud, neglect, or exploitation.
- Promote the use of advance care planning documents, such as advance healthcare directives and Provider Order for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST), that specify who will make decisions and what values and wishes are most important.
- Consider planning for paying for long-term care in the care setting most desired by the client.
- Advocate for financial planning, power of attorney (created with capacity and protections against abuse), revocable living trusts for complex assets, and estate planning. Good advance planning generally can prevent the need for guardianship.
- Provide linkages to other community-based services that are dementia capable.
- Share learning experiences and spread best practices to promote dementia friendly principles within the field and community.
- Contact the County of San Diego's Public Administrator/Public Guardian Team at 800-339-4661 to discuss whether a particular case would be appropriate for the Public Guardian to investigate prior to making a referral.