



# How to Help

Restaurants and food establishments can help those living with dementia by implementing dementia-friendly practices and 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.



## 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. Restaurants and food establishments 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

## 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](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 Restaurants and Food Establishments

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



LIVE WELL  
SAN DIEGO

**Restaurants and food establishments can provide a higher level of customer service by learning ways to better assist those living with dementia.** Dining out is an important social activity for many people, but for someone living with dementia, it can be overwhelming. These customers have special needs and can require additional support to enjoy their dining experiences.



## 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



## Dementia-Friendly Communication Skills

- Greet people warmly and be aware of body language. Smile and make eye contact at eye level.
- Slow your pace slightly and allow time for person to process and respond.
- Speak clearly and calmly; be patient.
- Use close-ended questions and offer simple choices for answers (for example: "would you like ketchup for your fries" versus "any condiments?")
- Allow extra time for the ordering process.
- Avoid arguing with or embarrassing the person with dementia. Speak to them, not the care partner, as much as possible.
- Apologize for any perceived mistakes even if they are not your fault.
- Behavior of customers with dementia may be unfamiliar to you. Remain calm and flexible in these situations.
- People with dementia may have challenges understanding the bill, calculating gratuity, or remembering to pay. Discreetly hand the check to the care partner, when possible.

## Making Your Food Establishment Dementia-Friendly

- Remove non-essential items, such as flowers and promotional materials, from tables.
- Consider playing soothing music at mealtimes. This can help create a relaxing environment. Ensure tables are well-lit.
- Provide a quiet seating area away from noisy kitchens, lobbies, or street noise.
- When seating a client with dementia, position them facing away from reflective surfaces, glare, or visual stimulation.
- Font on menus and signage should be clear and large enough to read easily.
- Spills may occur – quietly and discreetly help clean them up. Wipe-clean table mats and covers may help.
- Include menu items that are easy to eat and offer them as suggestions.
- Have red dinnerware on hand. Dementia can cause visual difficulties, and vividly-colored dinnerware has been shown to help people with dementia eat and drink more.
- Some people with dementia have trouble chewing or swallowing. Be adaptable to unique dietary needs and textures. Food may need to be blended, thickened, pureed, etc.
- Encourage staff to wear nametags with large fonts.
- Restroom signs in different themes, such as roosters and hens rather than men and women, can be confusing.
- Make menus accessible online to provide customers with dementia the option to choose a meal ahead of time with the assistance of their care partner.