

LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION

Advancing Quality, Dignity & Justice

CARE PLANNING FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITH DEMENTIA FACT SHEET FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING AT HOME OR IN ASSISTED LIVING

Effective care planning is essential to ensuring that individuals living with dementia receive the support they need to maintain their highest quality of life and well-being. A person-centered approach to care planning identifies an individual's unique needs, preferences, and goals while outlining the services and supports necessary to address them. For those with dementia, this process must consider cognitive, emotional, physical, and social well-being.

This fact sheet outlines strategies for implementing a respected, evidence-based framework to enhance person-centered care, address common challenges, and support the well-being of individuals with dementia and their caregivers. For additional resources and information, visit our website at <https://nursinghome411.org/dementia-care-in-the-community>.

What is Person-Centered Care Planning?

A **person-centered care plan** focuses on the individual's unique needs, preferences, and values. Understanding "what matters most" to the person living with dementia is the foundation of this care. The goal is to align care practices with their personal priorities—enhancing comfort, reducing stress, and fostering engagement in activities that are meaningful to them.

A Useful Foundation for Person-Centered Care Planning: The 4M Framework

Current professional standards for dementia care planning emphasize an approach that addresses what are called the "Four Ms": What **matters** to the individual, **medication** usage and management, **mentation** (mental health), and **mobility**.

This **4 M Framework** focuses on aligning healthcare decisions with what matters most to older adults:

1. **What Matters:** Focuses on understanding the individual's goals, preferences, and what is most important to them. This ensures that care plans align with the individual's priorities, improving quality of life.
 - **Example:** If an individual values routine and a quiet environment, the care plan would prioritize creating a consistent daily schedule and a calm, familiar setting.
2. **Medication:** Emphasizes safe prescribing practices, avoiding medications that may cause harm or interfere with the older adult's cognitive function, mobility, or overall well-being.
 - **Example:** An individual with dementia may be on multiple medications for chronic conditions. Regular medication reviews should be done to minimize polypharmacy and adjust medications that may interfere with cognitive function or mobility.

3. **Mentation (Mental Health):** Supporting cognitive and emotional well-being by preventing, identifying, and managing common conditions in older adults, such as dementia, delirium, and depression.
 - **Example:** If the individual enjoys music, incorporating music therapy sessions that reflect their taste can help stimulate cognitive engagement and emotional well-being.
4. **Mobility:** Encourages maintaining or improving physical function by promoting regular movement, which helps prevent falls, increase independence, and improve overall health.
 - **Example:** If an individual values their independence, the care plan may include daily walks or exercises that promote strength and balance, tailored to their mobility level.

Common Challenges in Implementing Person-Centered Plans:

Implementing person-centered plans can present challenges for individuals living with dementia, their families, and care providers. These challenges include insufficient meaningful activities tailored to individual needs, a lack of empowerment and support for care staff, limited opportunities to build strong relationships with caregivers, a shortage of tools to track care quality, and the emotional, physical, and financial burdens placed on unpaid family caregivers.

Tips for Addressing These Challenges:

1. **Advocate for meaningful activities.** Individuals, their families, and care providers can work together to ensure that engaging and personalized activities are incorporated into daily routines, based on the individual's interests and needs.
2. **Empower care staff.** Good training and supports, including opportunities to get to know the individual and become familiar with their unique preferences, needs, and abilities, can result in a better experience for the individual as well as their caregivers.
3. **Families can collaborate with providers** to ensure that reliable tools are used to assess and track care quality, identify practices that are – or are not – working, and make changes as necessary to meet the needs of the individual with dementia as they evolve.
4. **Families are encouraged to seek support for themselves** by utilizing respite services, joining caregiver support groups, and exploring financial assistance or counseling options to ease the emotional, physical, and financial toll caregiving can take.