

LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION

Advancing Quality, Dignity & Justice

COMMUNITY-BASED DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY INITIATIVES

FACT SHEET FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING AT HOME OR IN ASSISTED LIVING

Living with dementia can present daily challenges, but communities can make a difference. Dementia-friendly initiatives (DFIs) are local efforts to create safer, more supportive, and more inclusive environments for people living with dementia and those who care for them. By raising awareness, improving access, and promoting dignity, these initiatives can help individuals stay connected, active, and valued in the places they call home. DFIs are transforming the way we think about dementia care—by focusing on dignity, inclusion, and support.

This fact sheet explains how dementia-friendly initiatives and other community supports can improve quality of life, reduce stress, and promote dignity and connection. For more resources, please visit our website, <https://nursinghome411.org/dementia-care-in-the-community>.

Why Dementia-Friendly Initiatives Matter

Dementia-friendly initiatives (DFIs) offer real benefits for individuals living with dementia and those who support them. Communities that adopt DFI principles often see:

- **Reduced Hospital Visits and Delayed Institutionalization:** Individuals in DFI communities often stay in their homes or assisted living settings longer and avoid unnecessary hospital visits.
- **Enhanced Quality of Life:** DFIs contribute to improved physical health, social interaction, and overall well-being.
- **Reduced Caregiver Stress:** By offering social support and resources, DFIs can help ease the emotional and physical demands of caregiving.

Key Elements of Dementia-Friendly Initiatives

- **Awareness and Education:** DFIs often include community training and education programs to increase understanding of dementia, enabling communities to recognize symptoms, respond supportively, and reduce stigma.
- **Supportive Environments:** DFIs work to create accessible, welcoming public spaces. This includes physical adaptations to make areas dementia-friendly, such as clear signage, safe walking paths, and accessible transportation.
- **Community Engagement and Social Inclusion:** DFIs foster social programs to reduce isolation for people with dementia and to support meaningful community involvement. Programs like [memory cafés](#), [adult day centers](#), and social groups provide safe spaces for socializing.
- **Caregiver Resources and Support:** DFIs offer resources to assist caregivers, including support groups, training, and respite services to help manage the emotional and physical demands of caregiving.

Examples of Dementia-Friendly Models & Resources

- **Dementia-Friendly Communities (DFCs):** These are towns, cities, or organizations that commit to becoming inclusive and supportive for people living with dementia. They may include training for public employees, adapting local businesses, or offering special community events.
 - **Memory Cafes** are a great example. These are social gatherings designed for individuals with memory or cognitive changes and their caregivers, providing a supportive environment to connect, socialize, and engage in fun, interactive activities like music, dance, or arts. [Find a Memory Cafe near you.](#)
- **Dementia Friendly Neighborhoods or Villages:** Some communities are designed specifically for people living with dementia. They provide safe, enclosed areas where individuals can walk freely, connect with others, and live independently as possible.

Examples of Community Resources

- **Adult day programs** offer structured activities, social engagement, and supervision in a safe environment—giving individuals stimulation and caregivers valuable respite.
- **Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)** connect families to local services such as transportation, meal delivery, home modifications, caregiver support groups, and care coordination.
- **In-home support services**, including personal care aides and skilled nursing, allow individuals to remain safely in their homes while receiving necessary assistance.
- **Memory cafés and dementia-friendly community initiatives**, promote inclusion, reduce stigma, and foster social connection.

Resources

- **[Adult Day Centers](#):** This resource from the Alzheimer’s Association provides information on the benefits of day centers, types of services offered, and tips on selecting a center.
- **[Federal Resources for People with Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias](#):** [Alzheimers.gov](#) provides information and links to a variety of resources, including “Tips for Living Alone With Early-Stage Dementia” and the Eldercare Locator to get connected to services in your community.
- **[Dementia Friendly America \(DFA\)](#):** DFA is a national initiative launched in 2015 that aims to foster communities across the U.S. that are informed, safe, and respectful for individuals living with dementia and their care partners. See [DFA’s Community Toolkit](#).
- **[Dementia Friendly Communities Guide](#):** This comprehensive guide is designed to assist communities in creating environments that support individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. It outlines a step-by-step approach to developing dementia-friendly initiatives, emphasizing the importance of community involvement, awareness, and tailored strategies to meet local needs.