Dementia Friendly Community Overview

Communities CAN Make a Difference with Alzheimer’s

* Alzheimer’s impacts and realities are moving communities to take action to support people living with the disease and everyone touched by it. Approximately 94,000 Minnesotans age 65+ are living with Alzheimer’s disease.
* One in ten people age 65 and older has Alzheimer's disease.
* About one-third of people age 85 and older have Alzheimer's disease.
* Almost two-thirds of people with Alzheimer’s disease are women.
* While 5.7 million Americans currently live with Alzheimer’s, the projection is for nearly 14 million by 2050. Every 65 seconds, someone in the U.S. develops the disease.
* Young onset Alzheimer’s, occurring in people under age 65, is also on the rise.
* Older African-Americans and Hispanics are more likely, on a per capita basis, than older whites to have Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

As more and more Minnesotans live with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, the costs and challenges can be overwhelming for them, their families, their communities and the state.

* The cost of caring for people with Alzheimer’s and other dementias nationwide is estimated at $277 billion for 2018, increasing to as high as $1.1 trillion by 2050.
* 254,000 Minnesotans care for family members with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. These caregivers provide 289 million hours of unpaid care, valued at $3.6billion yearly.

Note: All facts and figures presented are from *2018 Alzheimer’s Disease Facts and Figures* (Alzheimer’s Association). For up-to-date information, visit <https://www.alz.org/facts/overview.asp>

Dementia is a community crisis that must be addressed at a community level. To foster livability for all, communities must be equipped to support people with dementia and their family and friend caregivers by being “dementia friendly.”

What is a Dementia Friendly Community?

A dementia friendly community is informed, safe, inclusive and respectful of people living with dementia and their families, has supportive features across all community sectors, and fosters quality of life for everyone.

How Does a Community Prepare?

The ACT on Alzheimer's® Dementia Friendly Communities Toolkit guides communities through a research-informed process that fosters adoption of dementia-friendly practices in all parts of a community.  The toolkit is designed to be flexible and adaptable to a community’s needs.

It has four phases and processes aimed at community readiness:

1. Action Phase 1: Convene key community leaders and members to understand dementia and its implications for your community. Then, form an Action Team.
2. Action Phase 2: Assess dementia-related strengths and gaps in your community using questionnaires in the toolkit.
3. Action Phase 3: Analyze the community assessment findings and determine action priorities for your community.
4. Action Phase 4: ACT Together to pursue priority goals and take action community-wide to become dementia friendly.

How Do You Determine Community Readiness?

Convene a small number of key community leaders and community members, including people with dementia and their family and friend care partners, who recognize the impact of dementia in your community. As a group, complete the Community Readiness Questionnaire to determine whether you are ready to become an action community and form an action team.

What Does Being an Action Community Require?

An action community will ideally meet these criteria:

* Has a champion or group of motivated community members who are willing to endorse and kick off action team development and will help the broader community commit to using the Dementia Friendly Communities Toolkit.
* Has a strong interest in Alzheimer’s awareness initiatives and, ideally, has engaged in some awareness-building activities, including local or regional efforts.
* Has an existing coalition or an organization that could serve as a sponsor or convener for building an action team.
* Has an action team made up of people living with dementia, family and friend caregivers, and individuals from the health care, long-term care, community-based services, business, government and faith communities; the team is willing to commit to a dementia-readiness effort.

How Do You Form an Action Team in Your Community?

To form your action team, identify a community champion or group of motivated community members to convene the action team. Champions expressly sponsor/endorse the action team and work with their local Area Agency on Aging and the Alzheimer’s Association to invite and convene interested stakeholders and/or existing coalitions of community residents. Champions also assist in identifying an organization and person to assume a coordination role for the action team.