



How to Help

Faith communities and places of worship can help those living with dementia by implementing dementia-friendly practices and by reporting suspected elder or dependent 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 age 60 and older, as well as dependent adults age 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. Members of faith-based communities 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 the 24-hour reporting line for suspected elder or dependent adult abuse. The report can be made anonymously, or your identity held in confidence. Mandated reporters can make an online report at www.aiswebreferral.org. To learn more, visit:

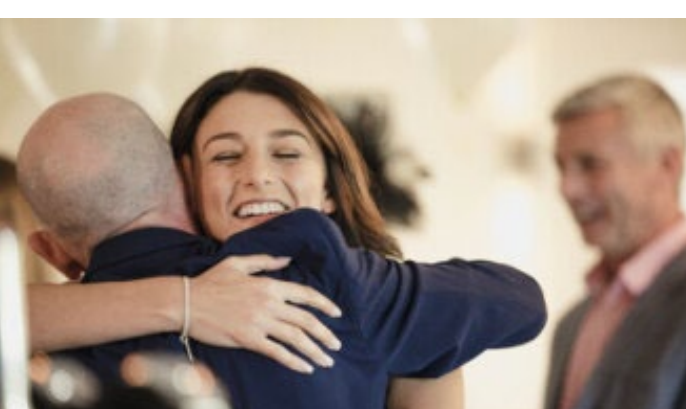
- **Aging & Independence Services**
(www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov)
- **National Center on Elder Abuse**
(www.ncea.acl.gov)

Dementia-Friendly Tips and Elder Abuse Prevention for Faith-Based Communities

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



Faith-based communities and organizations can provide important spiritual respite. As welcoming, compassionate environments, they offer people affected by dementia opportunities for meaningful engagement and spiritual connection. Through dementia-friendly practices, entire faith communities can uplift people with dementia and their care partners.



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

- Slowly come from the front and identify yourself. Greet people warmly even if you think they do not remember you. If they seem confused, offer a reminder.
- Slow your pace slightly and allow time for person to process and respond.
- Speak clearly and calmly.
- Keep communication simple; ask one question at a time.
- Be patient and supportive. Let the person know that you are listening and trying to understand. Show that you care about what they are saying and be careful not to interrupt.
- Connect on an emotional level even if the conversation topics shift.
- Be aware of body language; smile, make eye contact at eye level.
- Treat the person with dignity and respect.

Making Your Faith-Based Community Dementia-Friendly

- Encourage the use of name tags.
- Consider a prayer chain and check-in program for families and caregivers of those who have dementia.
- Be positive and focus on strengths and abilities rather than limitations.
- Be sensitive to difficult behaviors, such as talking, calling out, or wandering.
- Provide an environment that is safe and accessible with quiet places to sit and relax, well-lit hallways, uncluttered spaces, and pictures and signs that identify areas, such as the restroom.
- Share materials and information on dementia, brain health, and clinical trial opportunities in newsletters.
- Invite a person living with dementia or a caregiver to share their experience living with the disease.
- Offer to help a person get ready for worship services or assist with transportation.
- Offer live-stream service options for those who find it difficult to attend in person.
- Share materials about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, brain health, and clinical trial opportunities.
- Organize or host a support group for caregivers using Seasons of Caring: Meditations for Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregivers and its companion Leader's Guide by Clergy Against Alzheimer's.
- Facilitate a physical, emotional and spiritual wellness program in support of holistic care of body, mind, and spirit.