

North Carolina Dementia Friendly Communities & Hospitals Network Toolkit



Explore More



NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Aging

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Foreword

We all experience moments of confusion and frustration in our daily lives, whether it's forgetting where we parked the car or dealing with a technology glitch on our phone or computer. Now, imagine facing these everyday challenges while living with dementia. The added confusion and stress can quickly become overwhelming and exhausting.

Unfortunately, we live in a world where most communities are not designed with people living with dementia in mind. Compounding this, ageism and the stigma surrounding cognitive impairment can turn everyday environments into inhospitable, even hostile, spaces for people living with dementia.

Thankfully, a growing movement across the United States and around the world is working to change this. The concept of “dementia friendly communities” is gaining momentum. A dementia friendly community is any place, whether an organization, business, town, city, county, or even state that actively takes steps to include and support people living with dementia.

In North Carolina, the Dementia Friendly Communities and Hospitals Network, spearheaded by the state's Division of Aging, is leading the charge to create environments that are inclusive and supportive of individuals living with dementia and their caregivers.

This toolkit offers information and resources to help communities and hospitals implement changes that can improve the experiences of Persons Living with Dementia (PLWD) and their caregivers.

We invite you to explore this toolkit, join the [NC Dementia Friendly Communities and Hospitals Network](#), and start a local movement toward inclusivity. Together, we can build a world where everyone, regardless of cognitive ability, can thrive, navigate daily life with dignity, and remain engaged members of their communities.



Start Here



Welcome to the Dementia Friendly Hospitals and Communities Network Toolkit! We're excited to have you here. Inside, you'll find key information and resources to help you launch a dementia-friendly initiative in your hospital or community.

- ✦ This toolkit offers practical information and resources to help your community or organization create a dementia-friendly environment. Explore the table of contents for specific topics, examples, and steps to get started.
- ✦ Throughout this toolkit, we use the term "care partner(s)" to reflect the collaborative effort between the person living with dementia and those supporting their well-being. In most cases, this is a spouse or adult child. We will also use the acronym, "PLWD" which is short for "persons living with dementia."
- ✦ This resource is designed to help your hospital or community launch its own dementia-friendly initiative. Please keep in mind, though, that using this toolkit does not grant an official Dementia Friendly designation from the state of North Carolina.
- ✦ Have additional questions? Reach out to Heather Carter, Dementia Services Coordinator, North Carolina DHHS, Division of Aging at heather.carter@dhhs.nc.gov.
- ✦ This toolkit was created by Cares at the UNC School of Social Work for the North Carolina Division of Aging.

North Carolina Dementia Friendly Communities & Hospital Network

Communities across North Carolina are embracing the Dementia Friendly movement. According to Dementia Friendly America (DFA), a Dementia Friendly Community is a village, town, city, or county taking action to ensure people with dementia can live independently for as long as possible. It is a community where people with dementia and their caregivers can engage in a variety of activities and be supported in these activities.

<https://www.dfamerica.org/>

The NC Dementia Friendly Communities & Hospitals Network, works to empower people with dementia and their care partners to live with greater inclusion & wellbeing in their communities.

Each quarter, the NC Dementia Friendly Network meets to share best practices, generate new ideas and collaborate with similar programs across the state and country. Contact us to learn more!

For more information on dementia friendly communities and definitions please reference the NC Dementia Friendly Communities Standards and Information document [here](#).



Section 1:

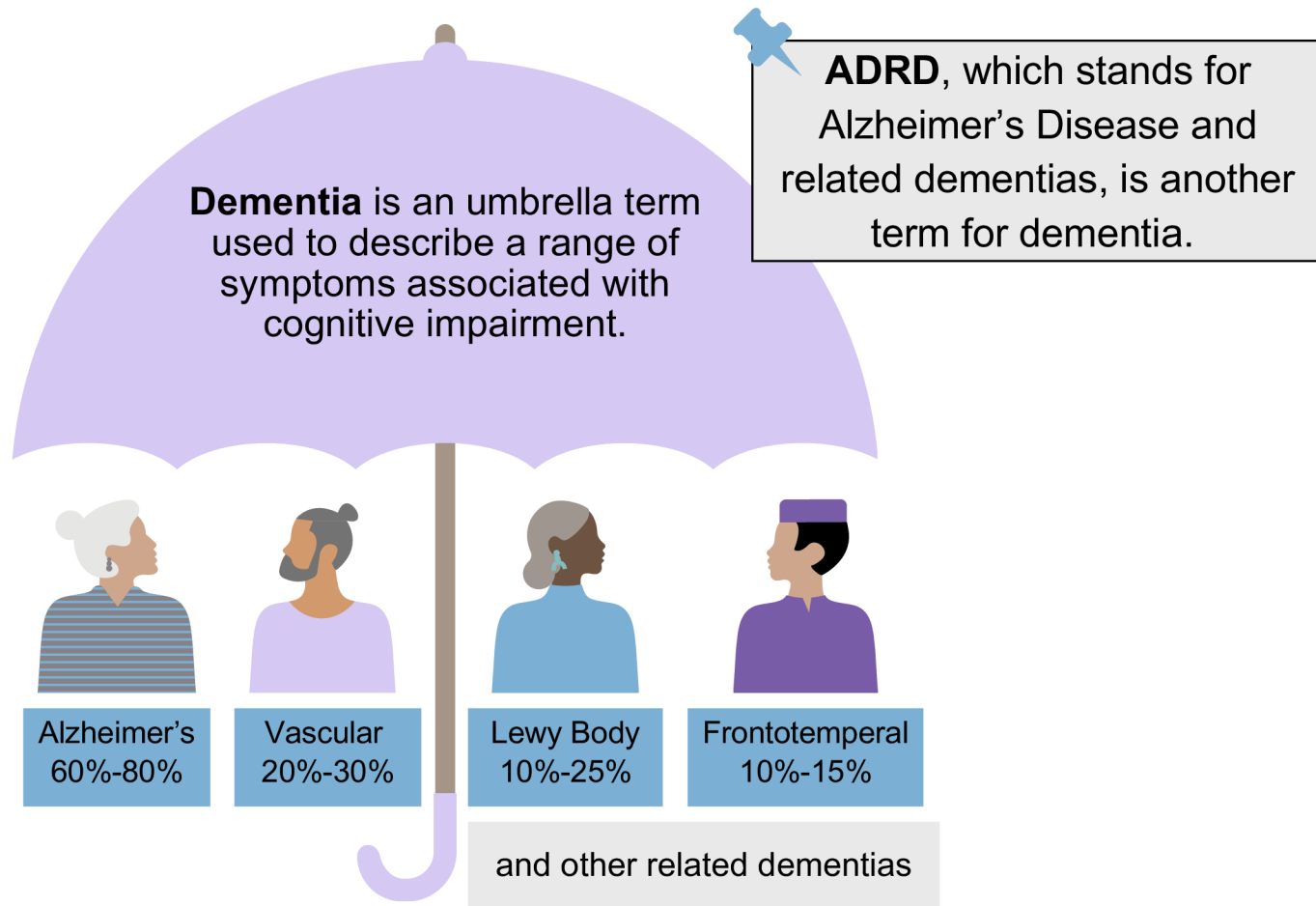
Understanding Dementia and Dementia Friendly Initiatives



What is Dementia?

Dementia is an umbrella term for conditions caused by different brain disorders. It refers to a set of symptoms caused by underlying brain malfunctions. Dementia typically includes memory loss, language difficulties, impaired judgment, and challenges with daily activities.

Alzheimer's Disease is the most common and well-known cause of dementia. Other types or causes of dementia include vascular dementia, Lewy Body dementia, frontotemporal dementias, and dementias such as those associated with Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, traumatic brain injuries, HIV, and alcohol use.



Dementia and Brain Health

Understanding dementia begins with brain health. Brain health refers to the brain's overall ability to function properly. Key indicators of brain health include mental sharpness, emotional stability, and the prevention of cognitive decline.

As we grow older, even a healthy brain undergoes changes that can impact its structure and function. However, dementia is not a normal part of aging. It is caused by diseases and injuries to the brain.

Changes in cognitive abilities vary among individuals and are influenced by genetics, lifestyle, and medical history. While these changes in brain health are normal and expected with aging, there are many things that we can do to maintain brain health and potentially slow down the progression of age-related changes.

To learn more about how brain health can impact your risk of dementia, check out the [NC Dementia and Brain Health Outreach and Awareness Toolkit](#).



Impact of Dementia in North Carolina

In North Carolina, about 1 in 7 people age 65 and older has dementia caused by Alzheimer's Disease. Alzheimer's contributes to 60-80% of dementia cases and is the 7th leading cause of death in the state. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic it was the 5th leading cause of death.

Both the number of older adults and the number of those with dementia are increasing in North Carolina. According to the Alzheimer's Association, by 2050, there will be 320,000 individuals (about half the population of Wyoming) living with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia in North Carolina.

However, not all people are affected by dementia equally. For instance, more than two out of three (68%) of all people living with Alzheimer's disease in North Carolina are female.

Fast Fact:

1 in 12 individuals living in North Carolina has dementia.



Impact of Dementia in North Carolina

The rate of dementia among African Americans in North Carolina is almost one third (29%) higher than that of Whites. Individuals with lower income levels in North Carolina are more likely to develop dementia than those with higher income levels. People living in rural areas of North Carolina are more likely to develop dementia than those living in urban areas.

These disparities in outcomes are due to a range of factors including differences in access to healthcare, stress, environmental factors, and hormones, among others.

The increase in numbers of PLWD also impacts the lives of care partners. For example, the Alzheimer's Association estimates that 356,000 North Carolinians provided \$7.3 billion dollars in unpaid care for people with dementia in 2021 and the estimated economic impact of lost productivity due to dementia caregiving was estimated at \$1.4 billion dollars. These costs are expected to increase as the population ages and the prevalence of dementia continues to rise.



Importance of Dementia Friendly Hospitals and Communities

Dementia friendly communities and hospitals offer many benefits for PLWD, their caregivers, and the broader society.



Improves the quality of life for PLWD by boosting their independence, confidence, and sense of belonging.



Supports caregivers, reducing caregiver stress and increasing access to support services.

Improves public health and safety by raising awareness around stigma and fostering compassionate support.

Reduces the need for expensive institutional care while boosting community engagement, benefitting local businesses and activities.

Builds resilient communities through inclusive design and improves accessibility for all.

Upholds the rights and dignity of PLWD by acknowledging their value in society, empowering everyone to live fulfilling lives.

Dementia-friendly practices bring major benefits, including improved quality of life for PLWD, support for care partners, enhanced public health and safety, economic perks, increased resilience, and the promotion of human rights.

We All Benefit

A dementia-friendly hospital or community benefits everyone, not just PLWD, by fostering a more inclusive, supportive and accessible environment for all.

Here are four examples of how.



Dementia-friendly initiatives promote the use of simple, straightforward language and signage, which can help all of us, especially those who may have language barriers, hearing difficulties, or cognitive challenges not related to dementia.

Dementia-friendly spaces are designed to reduce confusion, stress, and overstimulation through thoughtful layouts, lighting, and noise reduction. This can also create a more comfortable environment for people with anxiety, sensory sensitivities, or other health challenges.

Dementia-friendly communities prioritize accessibility, including easier-to-navigate spaces, clear signage, and public areas that are more welcoming for older adults, people with disabilities, and families with young children.

Dementia-friendly programs often encourage social interaction and community support, which can reduce isolation not only for PLWD but also older adults, caregivers, and anyone feeling disconnected from their community.

A Dementia Friendly Community

People living with dementia often experience stigma from strangers, friends, and family.

A dementia-friendly community “is one where people know about dementia; [and] persons living with dementia and their care partners feel included, involved, and supported in the community” (Agency for Integrated Care, Singapore).

A dementia-friendly community reflects the community’s culture as well as its built environment.

PLWD and their care partners are the heart of a dementia-friendly community. Their experiences, perspectives, and needs guide our efforts to create inclusive and supportive environments.



Key Goals of Dementia Friendly Initiatives



Increase awareness and understanding of dementia and people living with dementia.

Increase awareness and understanding of brain health and risk reduction.



Collaborate with public, private, not-for-profit and health care sectors to better serve people living with dementia and care partners.

Address the changing needs of people living with dementia and their care partners.



Create social and cultural environments that are inclusive of people living with dementia.

Improve the physical environment in public places and systems so that they are dementia-friendly.



Dementia Friends

What is Dementia Friends and how does it differ from Dementia Friendly?

Dementia Friends provides information to help community members understand, support, and reduce stigma for PLWD. Dementia Friends encourages small actions that contribute to a more inclusive society. To become a Dementia Friend in NC contact your local Area Agency on Aging to find a Dementia Friends Information Session to attend.

Dementia Friendly Communities build on this by creating supportive environments and systems that enable PLWD to live well and participate fully in their communities.

Together, they represent a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges posed by dementia.

To learn more about Dementia Friends USA, click [here](#).



Section 2:

Building a Dementia Friendly Culture





Guiding Principles for Dementia Friendly Culture



Creating a dementia-friendly community requires ongoing, collective effort. Every person, business, organization, and sector play a crucial role in ensuring that people living with dementia and their care partners feel supported and included.

Social Inclusion

People should engage with social networks and maintain meaningful relationships.

Community Engagement:

Accessible and appropriate community activities for PLWD to engage in.

Support:

Access to early diagnosis, post-diagnostic support, and dementia-friendly strategies.

Accessibility:

For example, parking lots can be broken up with greenery and pedestrian paths to ensure safe and easy access.

Legibility:

People should be able to identify where they are and need to go. Sights, sounds and smell help orient PLWD.

Safety and Comfort:

People should feel at ease in their surrounding and the ability to move around without fear of harm.

Additionally, it's important to create familiar spaces, provide opportunities for solitude or social interaction, promote independence and well-being, and support meaningful tasks and participation in daily activities.

Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment

Safety Measures

Ensure physical spaces are secure with clear signage, good lighting, and barriers to prevent wandering.



Familiarity and Consistency

Environments should promote familiarity with consistent layouts, recognizable landmarks, and familiar colors or symbols to reduce confusion and anxiety.

Accessible Services

Services should be easily accessible and tailored for PLWD, including staff training in dementia awareness

Support Networks

Providing support networks for individuals living with dementia and their care partners is essential. This can include support groups, counseling services, and respite care options to help families manage the demands of caregiving.



Inclusivity is Community

A dementia-friendly approach enhances the quality of life for people living with dementia by supporting independence, meaningful activities, community resilience and cohesions. These initiatives boost local economies, reduce healthcare costs, and foster mutual respect between generations.



Benefits to a Dementia Friendly Approach



Social Inclusion

A dementia-friendly community promotes social inclusion by encouraging participation in activities and events, helping to reduce isolation and loneliness for those living with dementia.



Education and Awareness

Educating the community about dementia is key to fostering inclusivity. Awareness campaigns and training programs help dispel myths and reduce stigma.



Inclusivity

Inclusivity empowers people with dementia to take part in decisions affecting their lives, achieved through initiatives that involve them in planning and decision-making.



Diverse Perspectives

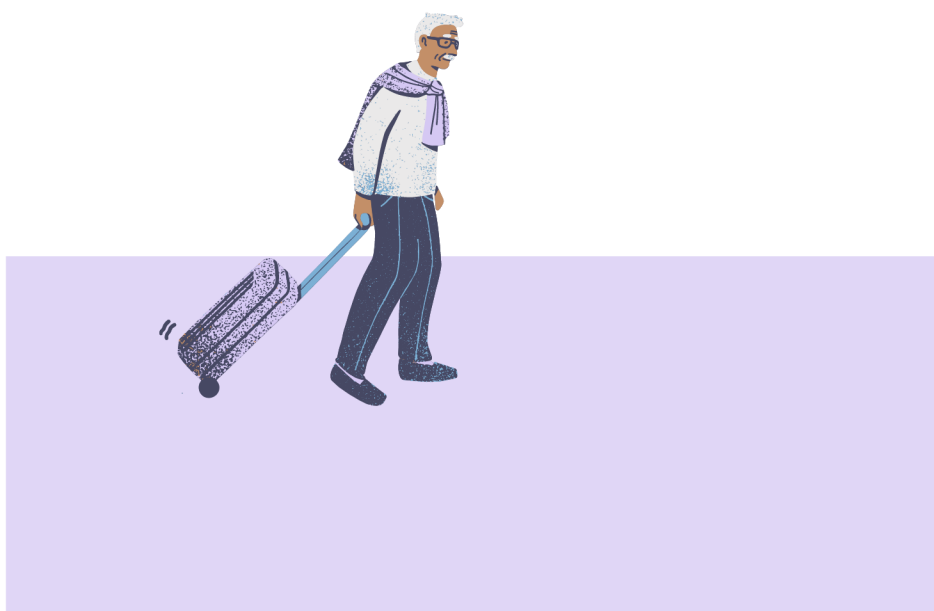
Embracing diversity and acknowledging the unique experiences of people with dementia enriches the community, fostering greater understanding and empathy.



North Carolina Minimum Standards

North Carolina has a set of minimum standards that can help guide the process of becoming dementia friendly. If you want to read those standards in more detail, you can follow the link below or scroll to the next page.

North Carolina Minimum Standards



NORTH CAROLINA

Dementia Friendly Communities

Standards & Information for those Interested in Starting or Growing a Dementia Friendly Community

1) What is a Dementia Friendly Community?

According to Dementia Friendly America (DFA), a Dementia Friendly Community is a village, town, city, or county taking action to ensure people with dementia can live independently for as long as possible. It is a community where people with dementia and their care partners will be able to engage in a variety of activities and be supported in these activities.

2) What Does a Dementia Friendly Community Look Like?

Dementia Friendly communities are places where people with dementia can live as independently as possible with value and with respect:

- Where they engage in activities that we all
- Where they are supported as these daily activities become difficult
- Where the changes in the person are noticed, understood, and accepted
- Where shops, restaurants, and streets are evaluated through a dementia lens

3) How do I find out if my community already has a Dementia-Friendly initiative underway? Call the NCDHHS Division of Aging at 919-855-3400 or contact us at Division of Aging's Dementia Capable NC webpage www.ncdhhs.gov/dementiacapablenc.

4) In North Carolina, Dementia-Friendly Communities are expected to adhere to the following minimum standards:

- a. Address the physical, social and environmental needs of people living with dementia by utilizing a person-centered approach.
- b. Include people living with dementia on their leadership team or steering committee. Include caregivers of people living with dementia on their leadership team or steering committee.

- d. Work in collaboration with and have representation from three or more sectors of the community such as:
 - i. Banks and Financial Services
 - ii. Neighbors and Community Members
 - iii. Legal and Advance Planning Services
 - iv. Local Government
 - v. Health Care
 - vi. Libraries
 - vii. Faith Communities
 - viii. Businesses
 - ix. Community-based services
 - x. Residential and Specialty Care
 - xi. Hospitals

For more information on sectors, visit Dementia Friendly America Sector Guides at www.dfamerica.org/sector-guides

- e. Prioritize awareness and education for all members of the community, including but not limited to the following key messages:
 - i. Dementia is not a normal part of aging. Not everyone who grows old will develop dementia.
 - ii. Dementia is caused by diseases and/or disorders of the brain. The most common is Alzheimer's.
 - iii. Dementia is not just about having memory problems. It can affect thinking, communication and doing everyday tasks.
 - iv. It is possible to have a good quality of life with dementia.
 - v. People with dementia are a valuable part of the community.
- f. Educational outreach to the community is expected to be ongoing and not a one-time effort. Communities that develop a local or regional dementia friendly business or organizational certification or designation must include criteria for onboarding of new employees or volunteers, and a plan for monitoring/maintaining this business or organizational local designation.

g. Every part of the community has a unique role in fostering meaningful access to and engagement in community life for people living with dementia and their family and friend care partners. As each sector of community takes its own steps to foster support, a community emerges that is informed, safe and respectful.

If your community wishes to pursue Dementia Friendly America designation, visit the DFA website www.dfamerica.org. Then under the “Communities” tab, click on “Overview and How to Join.” Dementia Friendly Community Readiness and Recognition Criteria. Benefits of this DFA designation include participation in a national movement, access to webinars and listservs, technical assistance by DFA staff team, monthly newsletter, and access to DFA logo.

The Division of Aging can provide a required letter of support for this DFA application for communities that meet these baseline standards.

5) Dementia Friends vs Dementia Friendly Communities



- Dementia Friends USA is part of a global public awareness movement with the goal of changing the way people think, act, and talk about dementia. Dementia Friends is about individual impact.
- Dementia Friends is an Information Session, not a training. It is not intended to be used as a complete dementia friendly business, dementia friendly hospital, or direct care worker training for people who provide care to individuals with dementia.
- The Dementia Friends Information Sessions can be part of a much wider/larger Dementia Friendly Community strategy.
- Dementia Friends is a licensed program. In North Carolina, NC4A (the Area Agencies on Aging) and Division of Aging co-own the Dementia Friends Sub-License. This means only these two organizations are permitted to train Dementia Friends Champions to offer in-person or live virtual Information Sessions. NC's license applies to in-person and live virtual Information Sessions.

- Anyone can become a Dementia Friend online through the national Dementia Friends link. The material varies somewhat from the live experience.
<https://dementiafriendsusa.org/become-a-dementia-friend>

6) Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly Collaboration

Some communities may choose to incorporate age friendly and dementia friendly initiatives simultaneously or work on each effort separately. For a step-by-step guide to becoming an age- and dementia friendly community, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/AFDFguide>.

7) Dementia Friendly Hospitals

The overall goal of the Dementia Friendly Hospitals' movement is to improve the care of patients with dementia while they are hospitalized. Since patients with dementia are at increased risk for complications, prolonged stays, falls, and readmissions, dementia friendly hospitals strive to ensure that hospital staff are trained to recognize dementia, meet the unique and complex needs of patients with dementia, improve communications, and provide better care. Additionally, hospitals may make environmental changes to improve care. In some cases, individual hospitals undertake efforts to become dementia friendly; in others, an entire health care system may work to accomplish that goal. Currently, numerous dementia friendly hospital models are available using different training courses and techniques, and there is currently no credentialing body or set process for hospitals to become accredited or officially designated as being “dementia friendly.”

8) Opportunities to Get Involved with other North Carolina Communities

- Join the Dementia Friendly Communities & Hospitals Network. This is a statewide group that meets virtually three or four times per year. Representatives who are in a leadership position and working to start or grow a dementia friendly community or hospital effort are welcome. For more information, contact Heather Carter at NCDHHS Division of Aging at heather.carter@dhhs.nc.gov.



Section 3:

Getting Started

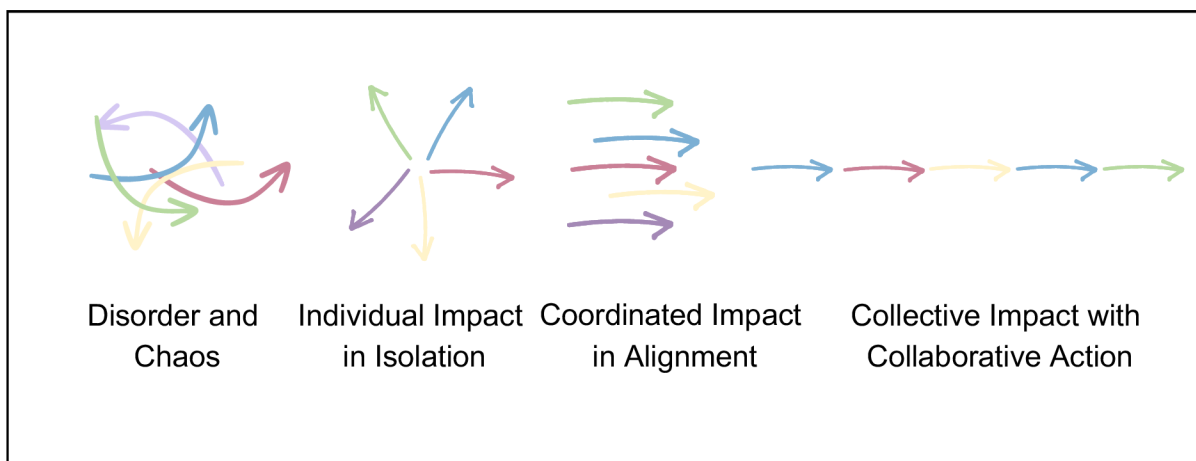


Collective Impact Framework

Developing a dementia friendly culture in your community or hospital is an ongoing process that unfolds over time. This section of the Toolkit describes the phases and steps that make up this process and refers to resources for collective impact.

Collective impact is a framework for solving complex social problems through structured collaboration among diverse stakeholders. It emphasizes the importance of bringing together different sectors to work toward a common goal.

The approach is useful because it leverages the strengths and resources of multiple organizations and individuals to achieve large-scale social change. Continue reading on the next page for the five key components of collective impact.



The Five Components of Collective Impact

Common Agenda

All participants have a shared vision for change, including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it.

Shared Measurement Systems

Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures that efforts remain aligned, and participants hold each other accountable.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Each participant's activities must be coordinated as part of the overall plan of action.

Continuous Communication

Frequent and open communication is necessary to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and appreciate common motivation.

Backbone Support Organizations

Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative.

The Value of Collective Impact for Dementia Friendly Communities

Complex Needs: Dementia friendly communities require the coordination of a wide range of services, including healthcare, social support, and community infrastructure, which makes the collective impact approach ideal for addressing these multifaceted needs.

Shared Goals: By establishing a common agenda, communities can focus their efforts on improving the quality of life for individuals living with dementia, ensuring their safety, inclusion, and respect within the community.

Collaboration Across Sectors: Collective impact encourages collaboration among healthcare providers, local government, non-profits, businesses, and residents, fostering a comprehensive approach to creating environments that are supportive of people with dementia.

Sustainable Change: Through shared measurement and continuous communication, communities can track progress, learn from successes and challenges, and adapt strategies to ensure ongoing improvement and sustainability.

Empowering Individuals and Families: By engaging multiple stakeholders, collective impact empowers individuals living with dementia and their families to be active participants in shaping the services and support they receive.

Collective Impact Resources

Overall, the collective impact framework helps dementia friendly communities organize their efforts, maximize their resources, and create more comprehensive support systems for individuals living with dementia and their care partners.

You can find many useful resources for each phase at the following:

[Dementia Friendly America Toolkit](#)

[Collective Impact Forum](#)






Section 3, Phase 1:


Assessment and Planning



Forming a Dementia Friendly Taskforce

Who should be at the table?

-  Start by identifying key stakeholders, including local government officials, healthcare providers, community organizations, businesses, and individuals affected by dementia (both people living with dementia and care partners). These stakeholders will form the core task force responsible for leading the initiative.
-  Ensure the task force includes diverse representation from different sectors and community groups to provide a comprehensive perspective on the needs and resources available.
-  Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each member to facilitate effective collaboration and decision-making. Designate a leader or coordinator to oversee the task force's activities and maintain momentum.



Check out [The Community Toolbox](#) for more resources on establishing and maintaining a task-force.

Establishing Values, Guiding Principles and an Evaluation Plan

Core Values: Create core values that reflect the community's dedication to inclusivity, respect, and support for individuals with dementia. These values will guide all actions and decisions.

Guiding Principles: Set principles for how the community will create a dementia-friendly environment, focusing on collaboration, empowerment, and ongoing improvement.

Vision Statement: Develop an inspiring vision statement outlining the community's goals for becoming dementia-friendly, serving as a guide for all initiatives.

Evaluation Framework: Create a framework to assess the initiative's progress and impact, with key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics. This plan should be developed alongside the action plan.

Feedback Mechanisms: Set up ways to gather ongoing feedback from stakeholders and adjust the initiative based on changing needs.

Reporting and Accountability: Ensure regular reporting and accountability processes to maintain transparency and stakeholder engagement.

Planning Template: Use planning templates to organize tasks, timelines, and responsibilities, streamlining processes for consistent implementation.

Readiness Assessment

Community Readiness: Assess the community's current level of readiness to become dementia friendly. This involves evaluating existing resources, infrastructure, awareness levels, and potential challenges.

Strengths and Weaknesses: Identify the community's strengths and weaknesses in supporting individuals with dementia. Understanding these factors will help tailor strategies to leverage strengths and address weaknesses.

Resource Inventory: Conduct an inventory of existing resources, such as dementia support groups, healthcare services, and educational programs, to identify gaps and opportunities for enhancement.

Don't reinvent
the wheel!


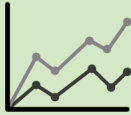





Check out The Community Toolbox to learn about effective tools to assist in program planning, implementation, management, evaluation, and reporting.

Logic Model & Theory of Change
Needs Assessment



Determining Goals and Setting Objectives

S	M	A	R	T
Specific 	Measurable 	Achievable 	Relevant 	Time-Bound 
What will you accomplish? What actions will you take?	What data will measure the goal?	Is the goal doable? Do you have the skillset?	How does this goal align with broader objectives?	What is the time frame for accomplishing the goal?

Set **specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound** (SMART) goals that align with the community's vision and guiding principles. These goals will provide a clear direction for the initiative.

Establish **short-term objectives** that can be achieved quickly to build momentum, as well as **long-term objectives** that require sustained effort and collaboration.

Chapter 8 of The Community Toolbox provides detailed information on SMART goals and setting objectives.

Establishing an Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Framework: Develop an evaluation framework to assess the progress and impact of the dementia friendly initiative. Evaluation is not an after-the-fact activity. Your evaluation plan should be created alongside your action/implementation plan. This framework should include key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics for measuring success.

Feedback Mechanisms: Implement feedback mechanisms to continuously gather input from stakeholders and adapt the initiative based on evolving needs and challenges.

Reporting and Accountability: Establish processes for regular reporting and accountability to ensure transparency and maintain stakeholder engagement.

Template for Planning: Utilize templates for planning and organizing tasks, timelines, and responsibilities. These templates can help streamline processes and ensure consistency in implementation.



Section 3, Phase 2:

Building Awareness and Education



Training and Education

Training equips staff and communities with the skills to interact compassionately and effectively with PLWD, improving quality of care, reducing misunderstandings, and creating a more supportive environment for PLWD and their caregivers.

Partner with Experts

Collaborate with top dementia care organizations to bring specialized training to your staff and community.



Flexible Learning Options

Offer both online and in-person sessions, giving everyone the flexibility to learn in a way that suits their schedule and style.

Tailored Training

Customize the training to fit the unique needs of various sectors—whether it's healthcare, retail, or public services—to ensure it's relevant and impactful.

Understanding Dementia's Impact

Whether you work in healthcare or are starting a dementia-friendly initiative, understanding dementia's impact on individuals and caregivers is key. This awareness helps us provide compassionate care, improve communication, and foster a supportive, inclusive environment. So, how can your organization or community do this?

Educational Workshops

Organize workshops and seminars to educate community members about the impact of dementia on individuals, families, and society.



Lived Experience

Share personal stories and experiences of PLWD and their care partners to foster empathy and a deeper understanding.

Awareness Campaigns

Launch awareness campaigns to dispel myths and misconceptions about dementia and promote understanding and acceptance.

Communication Techniques

Effective communication with PLWD and their caregivers reduces confusion and fosters trust.

Effective Communication

Train community members and service providers in effective communication techniques. This includes using simple language, active listening, and non-verbal cues.



Building Rapport

Emphasize the importance of building rapport and trust to enhance communication and support.

Adapting Communication

Teach strategies for adapting communication approaches based on the individual's cognitive abilities and preferences.

De-escalation Strategies

PLWD may experience mood changes or confusion, leading to tense situations. De-escalation strategies can help reduce frustration for everyone. Here are a few key tips.

Recognize Triggers

Train staff and community members to recognize triggers that may lead to distress or agitation in individuals with dementia.

Shift the Focus

Use calming techniques such as soothing tones, offering reassurance, and providing distractions.

Crisis Intervention

Develop protocols for crisis intervention and ensure that staff are trained to respond effectively and compassionately to challenging situations.








Section 3, Phase 3:

Implementation and Action



How to Create a Dementia Friendly Environment

Creating a dementia-friendly environment helps improve the quality of life and care for PLWD and their care partners. Here are five ways to achieve this in a hospital or community:

-  **Staff Training:** Provide dementia awareness and specialized communication training for all staff, regardless of discipline.
-  **Clear Signage:** Use simple, consistent signs with contrasting colors and familiar symbols.
-  **Calming Spaces:** Design patient rooms and public areas with calming colors, familiar objects, and minimal clutter.
-  **Engaging Activities:** Offer sensory activities like busy bags or fidget items to engage and comfort individuals with dementia.
-  **Inclusive Design:** Ensure accessible layouts with clear pathways, seating, and wayfinding aids to support navigation.



Creating a Dementia Friendly Hospital Environment

Signage and Wayfinding

Design signage and wayfinding systems in hospitals that are easy to understand and navigate for individuals with dementia. Use symbols and colors that are recognizable and consistent.

Patient Rooms

Create dementia friendly patient rooms with familiar objects, personalized decorations, and calming colors to reduce anxiety and confusion.

Busy Bags and Activities

Provide busy bags filled with activities and sensory items that can engage and comfort patients with dementia during their hospital stay.

Fidget Sleeves

Utilize fidget sleeves as a distraction for patients living with dementia, helping to prevent them from accidentally dislodging IVs or tubes.

Staff Training

All hospital staff should receive dementia training during onboarding, with additional specialized training for direct care providers. This training should cover dementia awareness and communication techniques to enhance patient care.

Creating a Dementia Friendly Community Environment

Public Spaces

Design parks, libraries, and PLWD, using clear pathways, ample seating, wayfinding aids like landmarks and maps, and hosting inclusive event.

Transportation

Collaborate with transportation providers to train staff in dementia-friendly practices, implement safety measures like clear signage and audio announcements, and offer companion services for those needing assistance.

Signage

Use clear, consistent signs with recognizable symbols, contrasting colors, and personalized cues to aid navigation. For example, in the Outer Banks they use a purple seahorse for spaces that are dementia-friendly.

Training

Train staff in dementia awareness, empathy, communication, and conflict deescalation across sectors.

Inclusive Activities

Organize dementia-friendly events and intergenerational programs, promoting social engagement and a sense of belonging.

Developing Dementia Friendly Programs and Services

Support Groups

Establish in person or virtual support groups for PLWD and their care partners, offering both in-person and virtual sessions led by trained professionals to share experiences, resources, and coping strategies.

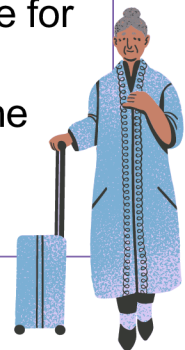
Social Activities

Plan inclusive events like music therapy and art classes, foster intergenerational programs for meaningful interaction, and engage PLWD in community activities to promote purpose and belonging.

Respite Care

Provide flexible respite care options, including in-home support and day programs with engaging activities, to give care partners relief while ensuring PLWD have a safe, supportive environment.

By implementing these strategies, communities can create environments that are welcoming, inclusive, and supportive for individuals with dementia and their families. Developing dementia friendly programs and services helps enhance the quality of life for those affected and fosters a more compassionate and understanding society.



Section 4:

Evaluation and Sustainability



Evaluating and Sustaining the Initiative

Evaluating the work of building a dementia-friendly culture allows you to tell the story of what you did and the impact it has had on your community. It can also help you set goals for what to do next.

You can then share this story with people with dementia, care partners, community members, and other stakeholders. With evidence of successes and challenges, stakeholders can become energized or re-energized to invest their time and resources in supporting the work.

Evaluation helps communities recognize their own abilities to bring about change. And it provides feedback that tells you when and what to celebrate, and when and what to change along the way.

Ultimately, evaluating your work will help you measure your progress and maintain the momentum of your dementia friendly work.



Evaluation



There are two parts to Evaluation.

The first type of evaluation is about the impact your efforts are having on individuals or communities. It often focuses on how people are better off because of your project.

The second type of evaluation is about how you are doing the work. It focuses on process and progress, providing feedback that you can use to improve how you are doing things.

Both types of evaluation help maintain the momentum of your work. It is important to formulate your evaluation plan alongside of your work creating goals and an action/implementation plan.

Dementia Friendly America offers a useful Evaluation Guide with descriptions of key goals, and examples of activities, outcomes, and measurement methods.

[Dementia Friendly America Evaluation Guide](#)

Also, consider the following evaluation strategies:

Surveys and Feedback Mechanisms



Regular surveys of staff and community members, PLWD, and their caregivers provide insights into the effectiveness of dementia-friendly initiatives.



Organizing focus groups with PLWD and their caregivers provides in-depth feedback and insights not always captured in surveys.



Accessible feedback forms in public spaces, healthcare facilities, and online encourage community input, helping organizations adapt to changing needs and priorities.



Hosting public forums or town hall meetings provides opportunities for open dialogue between community leaders, service providers, and residents. These forums can help address concerns, celebrate successes, and plan future initiatives collaboratively.

Engage and Sustain Your Initiative

To effectively evaluate and enhance programs, it is essential to use various tracking and feedback methods. Tracking participation through attendance records, registration systems, digital analytics, and follow-up surveys provides valuable insights to guide program development. Attendance records help monitor trends over time, while registration systems ensure efficient participant tracking and tailored offerings. Digital analytics offer data on user engagement for online resources, and follow-up surveys assess program impact and highlight areas for improvement. Together, these tools help refine and expand programs to better meet community needs.

In order to support dementia-friendly initiatives, it's crucial to provide ongoing education and collaboration. Regular training sessions for community members, service providers, and businesses ensure up-to-date knowledge about dementia, covering communication techniques, recognizing signs, and offering appropriate support. Hosting workshops and seminars with dementia care experts enhances understanding of best practices and emerging research, while also fostering networking opportunities. Online learning resources, such as courses and webinars, allow for flexible, convenient access to information. Collaboration between organizations and sectors further promotes shared knowledge and a unified approach to dementia-friendly initiatives.



Celebrate Achievements



Organizing events to recognize and celebrate the achievements of individuals, organizations, and the community reinforces the value of dementia friendly efforts and motivates continued engagement.



Establishing awards or acknowledgment programs for individuals and groups who have made significant contributions to dementia friendly initiatives helps highlight positive impact and inspire others.







Sharing success stories through local media, newsletters, and social media platforms raises awareness and highlights the benefits of dementia friendly communities.



Hosting community celebrations that highlight progress and milestones fosters a sense of pride and belonging among residents, reinforcing their commitment to the initiative.



Building Partnerships Across Sectors

-  Building partnerships between public, private, and non-profit sectors, also referred to as cross sector collaboration, leverages diverse resources and expertise, enhancing the effectiveness and reach of dementia friendly initiatives.
-  Collaborating with healthcare providers ensures that PLWD receive comprehensive and coordinated care. Healthcare partnerships can also facilitate access to educational resources and support services.
-  Engaging local businesses in dementia-friendly efforts can enhance customer experiences and create more supportive environments. Businesses can benefit from training and resources to better serve PLWD.
-  Partnering with community organizations and advocacy groups helps amplify the voices of PLWD and their caregivers, ensuring that their needs and preferences are prioritized



Five Steps for Evaluating the Impact of Your Dementia Friendly Initiative

- 1 Form an evaluation team.
- 2 Identify activities to evaluate.
- 3 Identify an outcome measurement method and tool.
- 4 Create an evaluation plan.
- 5 Communicate your findings.



Form an Evaluation Team

The first step is to form an evaluation team and designate someone to oversee the entire evaluation process. This ensures accountability and keeps the effort organized and focused. It's important to engage a range of perspectives, especially those of PLWD and their care partners, as their insights are crucial for a well-rounded evaluation. Your team can be made up of community members, such as staff, volunteers, and local advocates, who bring hands-on experience and a personal connection to the initiative. You can also include a research group from a local college, university, or public health program to bring a more formal, data-driven approach to the evaluation. Combining both community members and research professionals ensures that the evaluation is both thorough and grounded in real-world experience, helping to assess the initiative's effectiveness from multiple angles.



Identify Activities to Evaluate

Start with the end in mind. What are the goals of your dementia-friendly initiative? These goals may be shaped by the strengths and gaps identified through a community needs assessment. Consider what activities will help you achieve these goals and who your target audience is. Your evaluation team should determine which activities to evaluate, ensuring they align with your goals and are relevant to your audience. Additionally, think about the specific outcomes you want to measure, as this will guide your evaluation process and help track progress effectively.



Identify an Outcome

Measurement Method and Tool

Next, select the most appropriate measurement tool or method to assess whether you have achieved your desired outcomes. The choice of method will depend on the specific outcomes you aim to measure. Some methods, such as using existing data, are resource-efficient, while others, like focus groups, may require more time and effort but can yield richer insights.

Data collection can be quantitative (numbers-based) or qualitative (narrative-based). The type of information you seek will determine which approach is most suitable.

Additionally, consider who your data sources will be (e.g., PLWD, caregivers, professionals, community members), how the data will be collected (e.g., electronic or paper surveys, telephone interviews, focus groups), who will be responsible for data collection, and who will analyze and interpret the results.



Create and Implement the Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan is a formal document that outlines key elements of your initiative in detail. It begins with the goal, specifying what the community aims to achieve. Next, it details the activities or initiatives that will be implemented to meet these objectives. The plan also identifies the target audience, specifying who will participate, such as persons living with dementia, care partners, or other community members.

Outputs are the measurable aspects, like the number of participants or events, while outcomes describe the expected changes resulting from the activities. The plan should also outline the tools and measurement methods, indicating what data will be collected, how, and by whom. Finally, the communication plan describes how the results will be shared and with whom.



Communicate Your Findings

Finally, determine how you will communicate your results and identify the key audiences you want to reach.

Sharing your findings is not just about reporting outcomes—it's an opportunity to build awareness, engage stakeholders, and foster continued support for your initiative. By effectively communicating the impact of your efforts, you can mobilize community members, attract new partners, and inspire ongoing involvement. Whether through reports, presentations, social media, or public forums, sharing results helps maintain momentum, highlights successes, and identifies areas for improvement, keeping your initiative dynamic and relevant.



Section 5:

Resources



Resource List

Below are the names and links to organizations and resources which you may find helpful as you embark on your own dementia-friendly initiative. If you are aware of additional resources that should be included, please contact **Heather.Carter@dhhs.nc.gov**.

[North Carolina Registry for Brain Health](#)

[BOLD Toolkit](#)

[Dementia Capable North Carolina Educational Videos](#)

[Teepa Snow Positive Approaches to Care](#)

[North Carolina Assistive Technology Program](#)

[NC Area Agencies on Aging](#)

[Dementia Friends North Carolina Awareness Training](#)

[North Carolina Caregiver Portal](#)

[Project C.A.R.E.](#)

[Family Caregivers Support Program](#)

[Duke Endowment](#)

[Duke Dementia Family Support Program](#)

[Dementia Alliance of North Carolina](#)

[University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill School of Social Work](#)

[UNC Cares](#)

[UNC Center for Aging and Health at the School of Medicine](#)

[Dementia Friendly America](#)

[Southeast ADA Center](#)

[ACL's National Alzheimer and Dementia Resource Center](#)

[AARP](#)

[Alzheimer's Association](#)

[Dementia Friends](#)

Eight

Dementia Friendly Communication Strategies

for your business, workplace or community.

People living with dementia and their care partners may visit your shop, business, or workplace. Sometimes they may need extra support to access your services. Here are some simple tips you can use in your workplace.

2

Stick to the Basics



Use shorter simple sentences and ask one question at a time.

3



Active Listening

Speak clearly and calmly, be patient and actively listen.

4

Respect

Avoid arguing with or embarrassing the person.

7

Be Mindful



Seek to understand the person's reality or feelings

Apologize and redirect to another environment or subject as needed.



1

Speak clearly & listen carefully

Ask "yes" or "no" questions and allow the person time to respond. Find a quiet place to chat if possible.

5



Dignity

Treat the person living with dementia with dignity and respect.

6

Body Language



Be aware of your body language: smile and make eye contact at eye level.

Let's work together!

We can create inclusive programs and supportive services to keep people living with dementia engaged in our communities, alongside their care partners.

Dementia Friendly Busy Bags

Creating a "busy bag" for PLWD can be a thoughtful way to provide comfort, stimulation, and engagement. This checklist can be tailored to the specific interests and preferences of the PLWD, ensuring that the "busy bag" is both comforting and engaging. Below are some ideas of what could be included:

Sensory Items



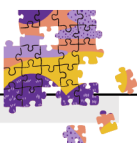
Offer calming items such as soft fidget toys, textured fabric swatches, aromatherapy with lavender or citrus scents, and a small, comforting blanket.

Reminiscence Aids



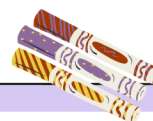
Small photo album with pictures of family and familiar places, vintage postcards or magazines to evoke memories, and memory cards with prompts or images.

Puzzles and Games



Provide engaging activities like large-piece jigsaw puzzles with familiar images, easy-to-read word search or crossword books, and simple tactile games.

Arts and Crafts



Provide adult coloring books with simple designs, washable colored pencils or markers, and easy-to-use craft kits for activities like bead stringing or knitting.

Comfort Items



Offer comforting items like soft stuffed animals or dolls, animatronic pets that can be taken home, a music player with familiar songs, and personalized items featuring their name, favorite sayings, or familiar scents.

Practical Tools



Provide activity books with simple prompts, a pen and notepad for doodling or writing, and a portable calendar with large dates to aid orientation.

Glossary

Here's a glossary of important terms for
Dementia Friendly Communities and Hospitals:

A

- **Alzheimer's Disease:** A progressive neurological disorder that is the most common cause of dementia. It leads to memory loss, cognitive decline, and behavioral changes.

B

- **Behavioral and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD):** A range of non-cognitive disturbances in dementia, including agitation, depression, anxiety, delusions, and hallucinations.

C

- **Cognitive Impairment:** A decline in cognitive functioning, including memory, language, thinking, and judgment. Can range from mild cognitive impairment (MCI) to severe dementia.
- **Caregiver or care partner:** A person who provides care for someone with dementia, often a family member or healthcare professional.
- **Care Plan:** A personalized approach to care that outlines the specific needs, preferences, and goals of a person with dementia.
- **Cognition:** Mental processes related to knowledge, including memory, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making.

D

- **Dementia:** A general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause.

- **Dementia Friendly:** An approach or environment that is understanding, supportive, and inclusive of people living with dementia.
- **Delirium:** A sudden, severe confusion and rapid changes in brain function, often reversible and triggered by acute illness or medication.

E

- **Early-Onset Dementia:** Dementia that occurs before the age of 65. Also known as young-onset dementia.
- **Environmental Design:** The creation of physical spaces that are supportive and safe for people with dementia, minimizing confusion and promoting independence.
- **Elder Law:** Legal practice focused on issues affecting older adults, including those with dementia, such as guardianship, estate planning, and long-term care.

F

- **Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD):** A group of disorders caused by progressive cell degeneration in the brain's frontal or temporal lobes, affecting personality, behavior, and language.

G

- **Geriatrician:** A doctor who specializes in the care of older adults, often including those with dementia.
- **Guardianship:** A legal process in which a person is appointed to make decisions for someone who is unable to do so due to dementia or other incapacities.

H

- Home Care: Supportive care provided at home for someone with dementia, including assistance with daily activities and medical care.
- Hospice Care: Care designed to provide comfort and support to individuals in the final phase of a terminal illness, including those with advanced dementia.
- Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP): A program aimed at preventing delirium in hospitalized older adults through structured care.

I

- Informed Consent: The process of ensuring that a person with dementia understands and agrees to treatment or care decisions.
- Inclusive Design: Creating environments, products, and services that are accessible to all people, including those with dementia.

L

- Lewy Body Dementia (LBD): A type of progressive dementia characterized by abnormal protein deposits in the brain called Lewy bodies, leading to cognitive decline, hallucinations, and movement disorders.
- Long-Term Care: Ongoing care for individuals with chronic illnesses or disabilities, including dementia, often provided in a residential facility.

M

- Memory Care Unit: A specialized facility or area within a residential care setting designed specifically to meet the needs of individuals with dementia.

- Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI): A condition involving problems with memory or other cognitive functions that are greater than expected with normal aging but not severe enough to be classified as dementia.

P

- Person-Centered Care: A care approach that respects and values the individuality of the person with dementia, focusing on their preferences, needs, and values.
- Palliative Care: Specialized medical care focused on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of a serious illness, including dementia.
- Power of Attorney (POA): A legal document that allows someone to make decisions on behalf of a person with dementia, especially when they are no longer able to do so.
- PLWD: Person living with dementia

R

- Respite Care: Temporary care provided to a person with dementia to give their primary care partner a break.
- Reminiscence Therapy: A therapeutic approach that encourages people with dementia to share memories from their past, helping to improve mood and cognitive function.

S

- Sundowning: A phenomenon in which individuals with dementia experience increased confusion, agitation, and restlessness in the late afternoon and evening.
- Support Group: A group meeting where care partners and people with dementia can share experiences and offer mutual support.

T

- **Transition Care:** Care designed to support the transition from one care setting to another, such as from hospital to home, for individuals with dementia.
- **Telemedicine:** The use of technology to provide healthcare services remotely, which can be particularly useful for individuals with dementia and their care partners.

V

- **Vascular Dementia:** A type of dementia caused by reduced blood flow to the brain, often following a stroke or a series of mini-strokes.

W

- **Wandering:** A common behavior in dementia where individuals may move about aimlessly, often due to confusion, anxiety, or a desire to fulfill a need.
- **Wayfinding:** The process of navigating and orienting oneself in an environment, which can be challenging for individuals with dementia. Design strategies can help support wayfinding.

This glossary provides a foundational understanding of key terms related to dementia care and the creation of dementia-friendly environments in communities and hospitals.

Thank You

Thank you for your dedication to making North Carolina a dementia friendly state and engaging with the toolkit. By adopting dementia friendly practices, you're helping to create hospitals and communities where people living with dementia and their care partners feel respected, supported, and included. Together, we can build a more dementia capable North Carolina.



NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Aging