



Dementia Friendly Businesses and Organizations: Information for Starting a Local Initiative

Over 70 percent of Dementia Friendly America communities provide outreach to the business sector. Based on lessons learned from DFA communities, this document summarizes strategies and criteria for conducting work in this sector.



What is a Dementia Friendly Business?

A dementia friendly business is one in which management and employees are able to recognize the signs of dementia in customers, communicate effectively with individuals with dementia, connect individuals to local resources and support caregiver employees. A dementia friendly business is a supportive, prepared and knowledgeable place for people with dementia and their care partners to visit or be employed.

What Are the Business Benefits?

- Recognition as a community partner and social leader
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Opportunities for publicity and marketing
- Increased employee satisfaction
- Providing better customer service for all customers

Dementia Friendly Business Criteria

Communities offering dementia friendly business designations have criteria to determine when a business has met dementia friendly requirements. Criteria should include:

- Minimum 50% or more of staff are trained with a goal of 100% of staff
- Management is trained (training the owner/ multiple managers supports sustainability)
- There is a commitment by the business to train new hires
- There is a commitment by the business to periodically refresh training for existing staff
- Business agrees to review information on environmental changes and consider improvements
- Establishes policies and practices to support employee caregivers

It is also important to consider how a business will *remain* dementia friendly. This is especially important if the business displays a dementia friendly decal or window cling. Particularly in industries with high staff turnover, training all staff at one point in time does not ensure ongoing awareness of dementia friendly practices. Strategies to address this include:

- Annual refresher training or lunch and learns either in-person or online. For example, [Bloomington, Indiana has a system to track online attendees](#) of training as does [Eau Claire County, Wisconsin](#)
- Annual “site visits” from the dementia friendly initiative to evaluate and address further training needs
- Embedding training as part of new employee orientation so all new employees receive the training. (Developing relationships to build management and HR buy-in supports this effort.)
- Having the business provide at least one point of contact to arrange refresher trainings or lunch and learns.

There are instances when establishing a 50% staff trained criteria has been a challenge. For example for a very large business or corporation, reaching that many individuals may exceed the capacity of the community initiative or hinder a business from signing-on for training. Denver, CO has worked to address this concern and large businesses have signed dementia friendly pledges/ commitment statements and commit to annual lunch and learns for staff. In Wyoming, departments within larger organizations receive a dementia friendly emblem when 50 percent of the department’s staff is trained, which has helped to stimulate friendly competition within businesses.

Dementia Friendly Training Content

A dementia friendly business training should include the following content areas:

- What dementia is and how to recognize signs
- Tips for communicating and interacting with a person who has dementia
- Local resources for supporting individuals
- Information on a physical environment that supports safety and ease of navigation
- Information on how to support caregiver employees or employees with early signs and symptoms

Some communities have developed standard training materials with information that applies to many settings but customize the materials by adding sector or industry specific information when needed.

Sector information can be found on the DFA website [Sector Guides](#) and [Resources](#) web pages.

In general, expect to work within the schedule of the business you are training. Depending on the business, they may need to receive the training early or late in the day. You may need to provide several trainings and possibly over different shifts. Keep your presentation focused on the essential elements that a business should be knowledgeable of. Expect to keep your presentation to an average of 60 minutes, although in some instances presentations may run longer or shorter.

Recognizing a Business as Dementia Friendly

- Many communities provide decals or window clings to a business that has received dementia friendly training and met the necessary criteria. Most commonly the decal/window cling has the local dementia friendly logo and/or reads “Dementia Friendly Business.” Others have used “proud to be dementia friendly” or “becoming dementia friendly.”
- It is important to have a plan to determine how dementia friendly criteria *continue* to be met. This is especially important if a business displays a dementia friendly decal. Some communities have placed expiration dates on their decals. Others have chosen to not provide decals if there is not a sustainability plan. In Orange County, North Carolina, they print dementia friendly emblems that say “valid through _____” and then add the two-year end date based on when the business was trained.
- If your community is offering Dementia Friends USA session (a sub-licensed outreach initiative administered by DFA), you can use the Dementia Friends branding.
- Recognize the business for their leadership as much as possible. Highlight them on your website and elsewhere. For example, in Walker, MN each time a business has completed dementia friendly business education they take a picture which is placed with comment in the local newspaper and on the Chamber of Commerce website. Businesses are encouraged to post the photos on their Facebook page or website.
- Consider providing packets as takeaways. This could include local resources and key messages from the training. Keeping it to the essentials helps manage printing or copying costs. If your initiative promotes the use of “Please Be Patient” business cards, consider providing a sample to the business so they know what to look for or include a screenshot in your presentation.

Measuring Progress

- Be sure to establish a tracking system to monitor key information such as: date of training, number of people trained, date of re-training, staff liaison, etc.
- Tracking change as a result of trainings is always important for assessing impact and areas to improve. Consider administering a post-training survey or using a validated tool such as the [Dementia Attitudes Scale](#). Share your successes!

Resources

- [Dementia Friendly Business Guide](#)
- [DFA Sector Guide](#)
- [DFA Business Resource Compilation](#)
- [DFA Customer Service Resource Compilation](#)
- [Dementia Friendly @ Work Training](#)
- [Home Instead Help for Families](#)
- [How to help people with dementia A guide for customer-facing staff](#)
- [ACT on Alzheimer's Dementia Friendly Business Resources](#)
- [Dementia Friendly Work Places](#)

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