

Making Your Library Dementia Friendly

There are many ways in which you may become dementia friendly.

Here are a some suggestions:

Customer Service Considerations:

- Be aware of the 10 warning signs of dementia
- Provide dementia related materials for patrons with dementia and their family care partners
- Provide materials that will engage individuals of all abilities and interests:
Audio books, picture books, magazines (print and electronic), story books, history selections, Read aloud, short story, dvd films, music selections, etc
- Consider bringing programs or library materials to those who can't attend the library:
senior living residences, adult day health programs, homebound citizens
- Host an education program for those living with dementia or their family care partners
- Consider hosting a memory café, or offering space for a support group
- Display dementia related books and materials, particularly during Alzheimer's Brain Awareness Month (June)
- Create a resource kit or activity kit for those with memory impairment or for family care partners
- Provide individual time to assist patrons with their library needs
- Wear staff name tags

Environmental Suggestions:

Floors:

- Furnishings contrast with walls for easy visibility
- Open walking space clear of obstacles and clutter
- Floor plan with simple, clear walking routes

Avoid:

- Dark colored floor mats
- Carpets with bold patterns
- Highly reflective or slippery floor surface

Lighting:

- Indirect lighting for reduced glare
- Avoid areas of dark shadow or bright glare
- Reflections from windows and mirrors can cause confusion and disorientation
- When seating a client with dementia, position them facing away from reflective surfaces, glare, or visual stimulation

Signage:

- Be sure the circulation desk and other key areas are clearly marked, clutter free
- Simple signs with clear, essential information
- Use universal symbols when possible (ex: arrows)
- Signage should be displayed at eye level whenever possible
- Glass doors clearly marked
- Font on documents and signage is clear and large enough to read easily

Restrooms:

- Family room or unisex toilet to allow for someone to have assistance
- Doors clearly marked with simple signage / symbols

- Color contrast toilet seats, handrails installed in stalls

Acoustics:

- Minimize loud, noisy environments. Sound absorbing materials are helpful.
- Provide a quiet seating area away from noisy areas, lobbies, or street noise
- Alarms, chimes and bells can cause anxiety and confusion

Communication Techniques:

- Speak to the person with dementia, not the care partner, whenever possible
- Speak clearly and slowly
- Pay attention to your body language, tone, volume, pace of speech
- Use shorter sentences
- Avoid using jargon or slang phrases
- Use closed-ended questions / offer simple choices for answers
- Make eye contact
- Stay calm and listen carefully
- Be patient and flexible
- Avoid arguing or correcting

Employee Support Options:

- Promote awareness of the 10 Warning Signs
- Host a “Dementia & Your Community” customer service training program for staff
- Recognize and support employees and volunteers who are also family caregivers
- Provide Alzheimer’s Association 24/7 Helpline 800.272..3900 for dementia support, resources and education

Resources:

- Alzheimer’s Association MA / NH Chapter: 24/7 Helpline (800) 272-3900
- Dementia Friendly America www.dfamerica.org
- Boston Alzheimer’s Initiative (617) 635-3992
- Dementia Friendly MA www.dfmassachusetts.org
- Dementia Friends USA www.dementiafriendsusa.org



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