

Quick Tips for First Responders



Be ready with the right response in situations involving a person living with dementia.

FOR ALL CASES

Use the TALK Tactics

- T**ake it slow.
- A**sk simple questions.
- L**imit reality checks.
- K**eep eye contact.

A person living with dementia may be easily agitated or afraid. Tell him or her you are there to help.

Address Firearm Safety

When speaking with a caregiver, ask if there are weapons in the home where a person with dementia lives. If so, recommend that any firearms be removed. If that is not possible:

- » Store the weapon in a gun safe or locked container.
- » Store the key in a safe location.
- » Store the gun unloaded, with a safety lock.

WANDERING CALLS

Recognize Wandering

Look for these clues a person may need help:

- » Blank or confused facial expression.
- » Inappropriate attire.
- » Unbalanced or shuffling gait.
- » Lack of awareness of unsafe actions or situations.
- » Age (Dementia is more likely with advanced age, but can also affect those under age 65).

Search & Rescue

If a person living with dementia goes missing:

- » Begin the search immediately. If not found within 24 hours, up to 50% of individuals who wander may suffer serious injury or death.
- » Look for identification such as a medical ID bracelet.

DRIVING CALLS

- » Help ensure a positive resolution to a driving incident.
- » Issue a citation to create a paper trail.
- » Do not let the person drive home.
- » Follow local agency protocols for reporting the incident to the DMV.

ABUSE & NEGLECT CALLS

- » Situations of abuse and neglect can be complicated and require careful response.
- » If the person is injured, transport to a hospital immediately.
- » If the person is not injured but in immediate danger, move him or her to a safe location (preferably a hospital if in compliance with agency policy).
- » If the person is not in immediate danger, offer referral to available resources.
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Always involve Adult Protective Services.

SHOPLIFTING CALLS

If a person living with dementia unknowingly walks out of a store without paying:

- » Attempt to resolve the issue with the store manager instead of arresting the person and filing criminal charges.
- » Inform the person's caregiver about the incident and recommend the person be accompanied on future shopping trips.

DISASTER RESPONSE

To move a person from danger and help keep him or her calm in evacuation situations:

- » Avoid physical force or restraint.
- » Be creative rather than relying on reality.
- » Provide one-on-one instruction.
- » Provide step-by-step instructions using simple language.
- » Try to relocate the person to a quiet place.
- » Use distraction by giving the person a simple task.
- » Ensure the person is supervised at all times to prevent wandering.

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION RESOURCES

These tips come from the free online education program, "Approaching Alzheimer's: First Responder Training." Learn more at alz.org/firstresponders.

Around-the-clock support for you and your community members:

- » 24/7 Helpline: **800.272.3900**
- » Website: **alz.org**
- » Safety Resources: **alz.org/safety**