

Dementia Friendly Communities:

Frequently Asked Questions

Is Dementia Friendly Communities a new initiative?

The official launch of the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan's Dementia Friendly Communities initiative took place in January 2017. This Dementia Friendly Communities initiative is part of a federally funded collective impact approach to reduce social isolation of seniors in south and central Saskatchewan. It is the first of its kind in the province. Globally, the dementia friendly concept is already several years old, with initiatives across the United Kingdom, Europe, United States, Japan, Australia and more. In Canada, some provincial Alzheimer Society federated partners have also been making strides to promote dementia friendly initiatives.

How can my community start to become friendlier for people with dementia?

At the municipal level, the *Dementia Friendly Communities Municipal Toolkit* offers information, examples, and case studies to assist communities to create their Dementia Friendly Action Plan. The process of becoming more dementia friendly may look different depending on the size, capacity, and intrinsic nature of each community. Contact the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan to learn more by contacting friends@alzheimer.sk.ca

What about my social group or club, can we become a Dementia Friendly Community?

Absolutely! For social groups, an excellent first step is to consider becoming Dementia Friends. Dementia Friends learn more about dementia and practical information they can incorporate in their everyday interactions to be more supportive of people affected by it. This reduces stigma and helps to build Dementia Friendly Communities, one Friend at a time.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan knows that it is important for groups of all sizes to become dementia friendly. This is reflected in a broad definition of "community" which encompasses not only small social groups like local book clubs, but also businesses and municipalities of all sizes.

What is the difference between Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly?

Though differences occur between the initiatives, several core characteristics overlap. Both Age Friendly Community (AFC) and Dementia Friendly Community (DFC) initiatives focus on strengthening communities by improving locally based supports, removing barriers to participation, and creating social and physical constructs that are welcoming. Not only do they aim to support people to live comfortably in their own communities for as long as possible, they both share similar goals of maximizing quality of life and ensuring safe environments.

When it comes to challenging attitudes, age friendly communities primarily address ageism, while dementia friendly communities also address the stigma that is often associated with dementia and the common misconception that it is only an “older persons” condition. Many dementia friendly considerations also provide benefit to the aged, but not all age friendly adjustments meet the needs of people affected by dementia because of the unique challenges faced by people affected by dementia and their care partners. Therefore, while the age friendly movement is an important step forward, additional dementia friendly considerations are also important to ensure that communities can adequately meet the needs of all their members.

My community is already Age Friendly, can we become Dementia Friendly too?

For communities that are new to both the Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly initiatives, it may be possible to work towards becoming more inclusive and supportive for all members by committing to strategies that address aspects from both. For communities that have already started the journey to become Age Friendly, incorporating dementia friendly considerations may complement and extend the age friendly milestones they have already achieved.