



# DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES: Municipal Toolkit Summary

**Alzheimer Society**

SASKATCHEWAN

**Learn More** **Live Well**

## Executive Summary

This Toolkit aims to support municipalities and local governments in Saskatchewan in their efforts to make their communities more supportive of people with dementia. The concept of dementia friendliness has roots in Japan and the United Kingdom, and in recent years has spread across the globe. Saskatchewan is not the first province in Canada to adopt dementia-friendly initiatives, but January 2017 marked the launch of the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan's Dementia Friendly Communities initiative in the province.

While international initiatives and approaches may differ, all Dementia Friendly Communities possess power to combat stigma, to increase inclusion and accessibility, and to support people with dementia to be engaged in their own communities in meaningful ways.

People with dementia and their care partners have told the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan (ASOS) that stigma, lack of awareness or understanding, as well as both social and physical barriers, make it more difficult to get around and to feel supported in their communities. They are also at risk of becoming socially isolated, which has a profoundly negative impact on overall health.

In a dementia friendly community, there is an awareness and understanding of dementia, and people with dementia and their care partners are supported and able to participate fully in community life.

After consultation with leading experts, the ASOS has adapted this *Municipal Toolkit* so that villages, towns, districts and cities may be officially recognized as working to become more dementia-friendly. Becoming a dementia friendly community is a journey rather than a destination.

The steps listed here ensure that communities are able to work towards a common vision based on what is important and meaningful to people affected by dementia. Becoming more dementia-friendly includes the following key steps:

1. **Partner in providing dementia education in your community,**
2. **Create a Dementia Friendly Working Group,**
3. **Develop a Dementia Friendly Action Plan,**
4. **Implement your Dementia Friendly Action Plan,**
5. **Stay accountable by maintaining communication with the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan.**

### What are municipalities?

Saskatchewan legislation recognizes municipalities as a level of government with considerable autonomy to govern local matters. Saskatchewan's population is largely rural and widely dispersed, accentuating the need for strategies that recognize both the strengths and unique challenges posed by various types of municipalities.

In Saskatchewan, there are currently 459 urban municipalities (including villages, towns, cities, and resort villages) and 296 rural municipalities. In Northern Saskatchewan, there are also 24 incorporated municipalities and 11 unincorporated settlements.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan knows that Dementia Friendly Communities are important to both rural and urban municipalities. In this document the term "local government" will be used to describe municipalities of all types and sizes.



## How will this toolkit help municipalities and local government?

This toolkit is intended to introduce the concept of “dementia friendliness” and provide a tangible resource for communities working to become more dementia-friendly. Included in the *Toolkit* is information about dementia, the importance of dementia-friendly considerations, and practical information about the key steps to implementing dementia-friendly initiatives in your own community.

Initial efforts to become more dementia-friendly do not require large commitments of resources. Even small changes can make a significant difference for those living with dementia and their care partners, and support people with dementia to remain in their own communities for longer. Building momentum and sustaining the intention to become more accessible, supportive, and inclusive, over time, can have a profound impact on a community.

The final sections of the *Toolkit* include examples of checklists, tips, and links to additional resources and materials. These can assist local working groups to understand the current level of dementia friendliness in their community, and to create and execute an action plan. The *Toolkit* provides information for communities of all sizes, not just large cities.

The practical suggestions in this document are compiled from evidence-based best practices and new approaches that show promise in communities around the world. Any information, examples or resources included in the *Municipal Toolkit* are intended to be adapted to local contexts. They should not be confused with provincial certification or monitoring standards.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan recognizes the contributions of the Alzheimer Society of British Columbia in supporting the launch of Dementia Friendly Communities in Saskatchewan. The *Municipal Toolkit* has been adapted from materials provided by the Alzheimer Society of British Columbia, and revised to fit the Saskatchewan context.

## Why are Dementia Friendly Communities important?

There are over 19,000 people with dementia living in Saskatchewan. While this number is projected to increase as the population ages, dementia does not just affect the aged.

Dementia affects families and friends as they take on care partner roles.

Dementia impacts workplaces as employers and colleagues seek to support co-workers with awareness and understanding.

It affects businesses as staff respond to the needs of clients and customers who may be experiencing changes in abilities, behaviour, and communication.

Dementia also affects both urban and rural communities as they strive to create safe environments for their citizens.

**“Individuals with dementia deserve nothing less than a dementia-friendly Canada in which they are not only accepted but embraced.”**

Senate Report, 2017

**“Rural communities are disproportionately affected by dementia because they tend to have a larger share of older adults and fewer dementia-specific services.**

**Despite the challenges, rural communities are known for their problem-solving approach and they are often sites of innovation.**

**This Dementia Friendly Communities Municipal Toolkit will be a tremendous resource to rural communities in planning supports for people with dementia and their families.”**

**Dr. Debra Morgan**

Rural Dementia Action Research (RaDAR)



## The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan's Dementia Friendly Communities Initiative

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan's Dementia Friendly Communities initiative exists to reduce the social isolation of seniors with dementia by supporting municipalities, the professional sector, community groups and the general public to become dementia-friendly through tools, education and strategic partnerships.

As the population of our province ages, dementia-friendly considerations will support individuals to maintain a better quality of life in their own homes and communities.

The Dementia Friendly Communities initiative will seek to promote supports and address the social and physical barriers that can make inclusion challenging and lead to social isolation for those that are affected by dementia.

By improving the number of locally based supports and strengthening community relationships, dementia friendly communities will provide many benefits to their members including those living with dementia, and the families, friends and care partners who support them.

### Vision & Goals

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan's ultimate vision is to create communities throughout the province that are welcoming to people with dementia, support them to live well, and engage them meaningfully in everyday life.

Our vision is that these communities will possess a better understanding of dementia and will recognize that a person with dementia may experience the world differently.

These dementia friendly communities will be prepared to make a conscious effort to reduce stigma, prevent social isolation and ensure the social-citizenship and participation of people with dementia.

This initiative aims to:

1. Improve quality of life for people with dementia and their family and friends.

2. Reduce barriers that prevent people with dementia from engaging in community activities.
3. Reduce stigma associated with dementia.
4. Support people with dementia to live comfortably in their own communities for as long as possible.
5. Create safe public and private environments for people with dementia.
6. Build understanding in the professional sector, reducing stressful interactions as a result.

## The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan: Who We Are

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan (ASOS) is the province's leading dementia care and research charity.

**Every 24 hours 10 more people develop dementia.**

Since 1982, the ASOS has been dedicated to providing help for people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias and their caregivers. That help is delivered through support and information, education and awareness, advocacy and research.

The ASOS offers Help for Today through programs and services for people affected by dementia, and Hope for Tomorrow by funding research to find the cause and cure.

The Provincial Office and Regina Qu'Appelle Resource Centre are located in Regina, while additional Resource Centres are located in Saskatoon, Swift Current, North Battleford, Prince Albert, and Weyburn.

Learn more about the  
Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan  
at  
<http://alzheimer.ca/Saskatchewan/>

## What is dementia?

Dementia is a term that describes a group of symptoms including memory loss and difficulties with comprehension, problem-solving, judgement, or language. It can be described as an “umbrella term” because there are many different types of dementia. Some types of dementia are neurodegenerative conditions that progress over time. These include, but are not limited to, Alzheimer’s disease, Vascular dementia, Lewy Body dementia, Mixed dementia, and Frontotemporal dementia (including Pick’s disease).

There is currently no known cure for progressive, neurodegenerative conditions like Alzheimer’s disease. However, there are also some treatable conditions such as vitamin deficiencies, untreated infections, or medication interactions that can produce dementia symptoms.

## Warning Signs

There are ten evidence-based warning signs of dementia. These warning signs can be summarized as the “ABC’s of Dementia” based on changes in Abilities, Behaviour, and Communication. The warning signs a person may experience are dependent on the person’s unique characteristics, as well as the type of dementia they are experiencing, and the area of the brain affected. The ten evidence-based warning signs include:

- Memory loss affecting day-to-day function
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks
- Disorientation of time and place
- Decreased judgment
- Changes in mood and behavior
- Problems with language
- Loss of initiative
- Changes in personality
- Misplacing things
- Problems with abstract thinking

## Understanding & Awareness: the ABC’s of dementia.

Building awareness and understanding of dementia is a critical step to becoming dementia-friendly.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan strives to promote awareness of the warning signs associated with dementia. The ABC’s of Dementia refers to changes in Abilities, Behaviour, and Communication.

With some forms of dementia, changes in the brain affect personality or language before memory loss even occurs. This emphasizes the need to increase awareness, improving understanding dementia is about more than just memory.

Stigma is often a result of lack of knowledge or understanding of what a person with dementia may experience.

Awareness of the warning signs of dementia is an important part of the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative because of it contributes to increased recognition of warning signs beyond just memory loss, reduced stigma and myths, better understanding of the types of dementia, and emphasis on the importance of a timely diagnosis.

Visit [www.ABCDementia.ca](http://www.ABCDementia.ca) to learn more about the ten warning signs.



# Alzheimer *Society*

S A S K A T C H E W A N

**Learn More** **Live Well**

301 - 2550 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Regina, SK  
S4P 3X1

Phone: 306-949-4141 or Toll-Free: 1-800-263-3367

Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada

Canada 