

DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES LOCAL GOVERNMENT TOOLKIT



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The *Dementia-Friendly Communities Local Government Toolkit* aims to support local governments in British Columbia in their efforts to make their communities more supportive of people with dementia. Dementia is an overall term for a set of symptoms that are caused by disorders affecting the brain. Dementia is not a specific disease. Many diseases can cause dementia, the most common being Alzheimer's disease and Vascular dementia (due to strokes). Symptoms may include memory loss, and difficulties with thinking and problem-solving. Dementia is not a normal part of aging and is progressive, which means the symptoms will gradually get worse.

Many people with dementia live well in the community for quite a long time. However, dementia may make participating in activities and staying involved more difficult. People with dementia and caregivers tell the Society that stigma, as well as social and physical barriers, can make it more difficult to get around and to feel supported in their communities. However, with a little bit of information, a lot of compassion and your help, there is an opportunity to create positive change.

Becoming a dementia-friendly community is a journey opposed to a destination. The Alzheimer Society of B.C. has established a process so that villages, towns, districts and cities can be officially recognized as working towards becoming dementia friendly over a number of years. The criteria below ensures that communities are able to work towards a common vision based on what is important and meaningful to people affected by dementia. Here are the steps to becoming dementia friendly:

- 1. Partner in providing dementia-friendly education**
- 2. Create dementia-friendly working group (DF working group)**
- 3. Develop a Dementia-Friendly Action Plan**
- 4. Implement your Dementia-Friendly Action Plan**
- 5. Stay accountable and connected with the Alzheimer Society of B.C.**

The Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative assists communities in developing tailored approaches to supporting people living with dementia in their community. The initiative supports local governments through:

1. **Resources:** Education sessions, information on dementia and communicating appropriately, as well as consulting on the local Dementia-Friendly Action Plan.
2. **Networks:** Support to identify key stakeholders in the community and ideas for collaborating with them to best provide support and resources for community members living with dementia. For example, all Health Authorities in B.C. have at least one built environment specialist. They may be able to support this work, through providing health evidence and engaging with the community, other Health Authority departments and participating in the DF working group.
3. **Program integration:** Integration with an age-friendly grant or project. The Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative adds nuance and emphasizes the needs of people with dementia; it can also be integrated with a local government's Healthy Community partnership with a Health Authority. A Dementia-Friendly Action Plan could be part of a healthy community strategy and included in existing work.

The Toolkit includes background information on dementia and dementia-friendly communities, steps and practical tools to begin a Dementia-Friendly Action Plan and a dementia-friendly working group, as well as examples of how local governments can create communities that are inclusive, supportive and accessible for people with dementia.

The Toolkit discusses the considerations that should be made in both the social and built environments, in the areas of people, policy and practice. The practical suggestions and checklists in the resource are compiled from evidence-based best practices and new approaches that show promise in communities around the world. It also includes examples from local contexts and responds to frequently-asked questions to inform dementia-friendly work in a way that acknowledges and builds upon the unique characteristics of various communities.

If you are interested in learning more about the Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative, and receiving the Dementia-Friendly Communities Local Government Toolkit, please contact dementiafriendlybc@alzheimerbc.org.