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 Tactcs
- Take it slow.
- Ask simple questions.
- Limit reality checks.
- Keep 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.
- 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/firstreresponders.

Around-the-clock support for you and your community members:
- 24/7 Helpline: 800.272.3900
- Website: alz.org
- Safety Resources: alz.org/safety

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