

TO: AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
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SUBJECT: DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY AMERICA DESIGNATION
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What Is Dementia Friendly America Designation?

A Dementia Friendly village, town, city or county ensures every part of the community plays a role in working together to ensure that people with dementia can live as independently as possible. Dementia Friendly communities increase capacity to support people with dementia along with their care partners.

Local governments determine many community features that influence the quality of life for people with dementia. At the local level, policymakers can act to:

- 1) Minimize adverse health outcomes and improve quality of life for people with dementia and reduce care partner stress.
- 2) Allow a person with dementia to remain at home longer, cutting costs tied to stays in health care facilities.
- 3) Create a community that is more livable for all residents, including older adults and people with disabilities.
- 4) Benefit local economies by fostering a more attractive, competitive, and sustainable community.

What Are The Goals of a Dementia-friendly Municipal Government?

Dementia Friendly America recommends that municipalities follow the following planning and implementation steps to become a dementia friendly municipality:

- **Community Planning**
 - *Help community stakeholders understand the impact of dementia and commit to dementia friendly principles* through meetings with public agencies, aging professionals, local commissions, care partners, and the public.
 - *Assess and respond to needs related to dementia and community characteristics* through assessments of housing, transportation, emergency response, open space, social services, and other municipal functions.
- **Home Life:** *Increase housing programs to allow those with dementia to age gracefully within their home or in a new unit.* This can include a diversity of affordable housing options near transportation and services, home modification and repair services that improve accessibility and meet changing needs of memory and sensory impairments.
- **Mobility:** *Improve planning and coordination of transportation and services.* This may include transportation policy that fosters complete streets, pedestrian safety and ease, and transit access. Infrastructure can also incorporate universal design features in signage, schedules, and trail and sidewalk design.
- **Community Life:** *Offer people with dementia opportunities to engage in community life.* This includes inclusive public participation, welcoming physical environments, including well-defined restrooms, shelter and seating, universally designed signage, and support services that allow people with dementia to stay independent.
- **Public Safety, Disaster Planning, and Emergency Response:** *Foster community planning and family preparation that considers safety, security, and needs of people with dementia in disaster planning and emergency response.*

How Do I Become Designated As A Dementia Friendly Community?

Dementia Friendly America recommends four steps:

1. **Convene;** determine community readiness, build an action team and engage the community more broadly.
2. **Engage;** the broader community in a dialogue to learn community strengths, gaps, and priorities for action which raises awareness of dementia
3. **Analyze;** review all the data available from interviews and assessments, determine community strengths and gaps/opportunities related to each of the key elements of a dementia friendly community, and identify priority goals.
4. **Act;** create a community action plan and a timeline that includes specific objectives, and activities to meet these objectives, along with designating a lead person/organization.

How Can My Municipality Apply?

- Memo summary of how your municipality meets the readiness and recognition criteria.
- Three or more letters of support representing different municipality sectors.
- One-page project description to be used for public dissemination.
- Communities within a DFA state lead must provide an additional letter of support.

What Is The Ongoing Process Within A Dementia Friendly Community?

- **Connecting Across Sectors.** Communities convene a cross-sector team of three or more community sectors to advance dementia friendliness. A cross-sector team includes at a minimum, government, clinical, community-based organizations and people living in community with dementia and their care partners
- **Inclusion and Leadership of People Living with Dementia.** People living with dementia and their caregivers are at the forefront of leading and shaping dementia friendly communities
- **Adoption and Communication of Dementia Friendly Practices and Change Goals.** DFA communities foster sector specific dementia practices across their communities.
- **Champion Organization and Coordination Capacity.** Communities have an organization that leads, coordinates, recruits, and if needed serves as a fiscal sponsor for the DFA pledge.
- **Progress Tracking and Sharing.** Communities will report progress by providing a current program description, and by completing periodic surveys.

What Are the Dementia-friendly Communities in Illinois?

The following municipalities in Illinois have achieved dementia-friendly status:

Evanston

Grayslake

Kankakee

North Chicago

River Forest

The Agency on Aging Northeastern Illinois is working with the following communities to achieve a Dementia Friendly status:

Elgin

Naperville

Fox Lake

Highland Park

Tri-cities (Batavia, Geneva, St. Charles)

Oswego

Resources

For more information, please visit the following websites:

<http://www.dfamerica.org>

<https://www.ageguide.org/advocacy/dementia-friendly-initiative/>