

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY MASSACHUSETTS INITIATIVE

Statement of Values

PURPOSE

As more individuals and organizations recognize the need to make our communities work better for the growing number of people living with Alzheimer's or a related disorder, and their families and friends ("care partners"), it is helpful to define what it means to work toward becoming a "dementia-friendly" community.

HISTORY

On May 9, 2016, leaders from 84 organizations and companies, representing many professional sectors, cultural and geographic communities, met at Tufts Health Plan Foundation in Watertown to share ideas and learn from national leaders about pathways by which Massachusetts communities can become more "dementia friendly."

There is broad agreement that "one size does not fit all." Communities, organizations, and sectors need to find an approach that fits for their unique group or community. However, by sharing resources and information across the Commonwealth, we can leverage resources, ensure that everyone is included, and have a greater, more rapid impact.

The following statement of values is based upon the May 9th discussion, along with the work of national and international leaders listed as sources below.

A DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY INITIATIVE IS:

1. Open and flexible:

- **Many ways to help.** Dementia friendly initiatives can include programs (such as memory screenings, volunteer activities, and memory cafés), efforts to redesign physical and social environments to make them more accessible, professional training to equip service providers with needed information, community events and education to raise awareness and reduce stigma, and more.
- **Many starting points.** Dementia friendly initiatives can be led by many types of organizations, such as an individual faith congregation, a neighborhood group, a health care or community service organization, a school, a retail chain, a municipal organization or a statewide professional association.
- **Supportive of new collaborations.** To help our communities adapt, we need to get out of our "silos" and work together. Collaborations may include public safety staff,

neighborhood groups, businesses, town and state government, schools, faith communities, health and human service providers, library staff, and others.

- **Broad in vision.** In much the same way that curb cuts make our sidewalks accessible both for those using wheelchairs and those pushing baby strollers, dementia friendly initiatives will have a large spillover benefit. Dementia friendly initiatives fit within the broader “age-friendly” movement, which makes the point that all of us are aging and all can benefit by living in more neighborly, caring communities.

2. Built around the varied needs of those affected by dementia

- **“Nothing about us without us.”** Dementia friendly initiatives recognize the expertise of people living with dementia and their care partners. It is important that they help to design and advise dementia friendly efforts.
- **Centered around the whole person.** Dementia friendly initiatives take into account that the experience of dementia is different for each person. Some factors include the underlying medical condition causing the dementia, how much the condition has progressed, and the individual’s personality, culture, life experiences, goals, preferences, values and circumstances.
- **Inclusive of culture.** Dementia friendly initiatives recognize that people living with dementia remain unique individuals with their own culture, language, and developmental needs. In fact, these aspects of who they are as a person may become more important than ever. Effective initiatives value and respond to these differences.
- **Informed by family and friends.** Dementia friendly initiatives recognize that people living with dementia have important people in their lives – family, friends, coworkers and others – who are also affected and need support.

3. An ongoing process

- Dementia friendly initiatives help communities to evolve toward becoming more inclusive of individuals living with dementia and their care partners. There is no set endpoint or one-time stamp of approval; rather, this is an ongoing process.

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SOURCES

- Dementia Friendly America, www.dfamerica.org
- ACT on Alzheimer’s, www.actonalz.org
- Alzheimer’s Society, www.alzheimers.org.uk/dementiafriendlycommunities
- Dementia Action Alliance, www.daanow.org