

## Best Practices for Caring for Individuals with Dementia During Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

The Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) provides the following best practices for caring for individuals with dementia during COVID-19. CCLD outlines these practices in "P-E-R-S-O-N" below.

### **P** Person-Centered Care

Given that a care team may change frequently during a pandemic such as COVID-19, share information about individuals in care with all caregivers, including those who are temporary, from other departments, or from other care settings, at the start of each shift.

- Create an at-a-glance confidential personal information sheet that is easy to access, such as in a folder inside the door to an individual's room or apartment, that:
  - Describes typical sleeping, eating, drinking, and other behavior abilities and patterns, and normal daily structure and routines.
  - Points out what upsets them and what calms them down.
  - Outlines health conditions and medical needs and provides information about any advance directives.
- Ensure appropriate adaptive devices are available e.g. hearing aids/glasses.
- Prepare for ongoing medical needs, including doctor appointments. Contact health providers to ask about telehealth appointments available to those with Medicare due to COVID-19.

### **E** Ensure Communication with Residents

Individuals in care with dementia may differ in their awareness of information about and changes related to COVID-19 and may become anxious easily.

- Tell those who are aware of what is going on that COVID-19 is a virus to be especially careful of and explain in simple language they need to stay home in the facility and people who normally visit them need to stay home to keep the virus from spreading.
- Continue providing reminders about COVID-19 and the need to stay healthy and safe at the facility.
- Provide simple, truthful answers to concerns, explain that everybody is helping, and provide ongoing comfort and reassurance to those who may not be as cognitively aware of what is going on.

### **R** Routine

Individuals in care with dementia, who may experience memory loss and confusion, rely on comfort of consistency and reliable routine.

- Maintain consistent environment and routine, with minimum disruption.
- Ensure regular exercise and safe spaces to walk about, allow time outdoors in safe areas where possible and when weather permits, and provide visual reminders of safe places.
- Provide activities that can be done in rooms or apartments, such as:
  - eating a favorite food(s)

- looking at photographs of family and friends
- listening to audio books and familiar music from a playlist of favorites.
- interacting with activity applications (apps) on a mobile device, tablet, or laptop.
- putting together puzzles appropriate to abilities that support mental stimulation.

## **S** Support Connection with Family and Friends

*Individuals in care with dementia rely on regular connections with family and friends to keep them in memory.*

- *Schedule telephone or video calls through FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, or other programs and assist with accessing and operating a device as needed.*
- *Encourage family and friends to send notes and photos or visit at a window.*
- *Provide information about how families and friends can receive updates, talk with caregivers, and visit in special circumstances such as end-of-life.*

## **O** Observe

*Individuals in care with dementia may require more frequent observation.*

- *Watch more carefully and through more frequent room and apartment checks for sudden changes in ability to understand what is going on around them.*
- *Understand causes of dementia-related changes and behaviors that may increase during COVID-19, such as boredom, confusion about changes in routine, loneliness, and unfamiliarity with personal protective equipment (PPE) or clothing, such as gowns or masks.*
- *Respond to behaviors by distracting or redirecting to appropriate activities as needed, while practicing physical distancing if possible, or while wearing PPE.*

## **N** Note Behaviors That May Help Prevent Any Illnesses

*Individuals in care with dementia may have reduced ability to follow or remember directions and need frequent reminders.*

- *Place signs with pictures where they will be noticed, such as in bathrooms, with reminders to practice good hygiene and take additional steps as needed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides [sample signs and posters](#) that you can use.*
- *Demonstrate and supervise scheduled handwashing with soap for 20 seconds, with song or a timer to keep time, and hand moisturizing.*
- *Remind about covering nose and mouth during a sneeze or cough, not touching face, physical and social distancing, and not sharing items.*
- *Post reminders for caregivers about precautions and using PPE when assisting with medications, eating, drinking, hygiene, and other activities with close personal contact.*

**Please see next page for additional resources for information related to providing care during COVID-19.**

**Additional Resources for Information Related to Providing Care During COVID-19:**

- AARP
- Alzheimer's Association / Alzheimer's Society UK
- National Association for Regulatory Administration Coronavirus Information
- National Certification Council for Activity Professionals: COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)