

Dementia Friendly Ohio

A dementia friendly community is a village, town, city or county that is informed, safe and respectful of individuals living with dementia, their families and caregivers, and provides supportive options that foster quality of life.

– Dementia Friendly America

Overview

Dementia friendly communities are started by residents, business owners, and service providers joining together with a shared mission to create a more dementia friendly culture in their local area. Creating a dementia friendly community involves raising awareness about dementia, transforming attitudes, and moving people to action. Dementia friendly communities come in all shapes and sizes, each with unique strengths, challenges, and resources—each one worth celebrating! These communities support family and friend care partners by offering accessible information, resources, and in-person support, while ensuring meaningful participation in community life for all.

Ohio Council for Cognitive Health (OCCFH) serves as the state lead for the Dementia Friendly Ohio initiative, offering support and guidance for communities who want to join the Dementia Friendly America (DFA) network and grow their initiatives.

DFA communities are influencers and catalysts for change that foster capability to support people with dementia and their care partners in local communities across the nation. The following factors indicate that your community is ready for and committed to this undertaking. Joining the DFA network means you are engaged in a process to become more dementia friendly. DFA does not certify communities as dementia friendly. Communities interested in being a member of the DFA network pledge that their efforts will include the following factors.

Benefits of Joining the DFA Network of Communities:

- Participation in a national movement
- Access to webinars for DFA communities
- Access to DFA communities
- Technical assistance with DFA staff team
- Access to DFA logo/branding
- Ability to connect with other DFA communities
- Opportunities to have your work highlighted



Steps to Join the DFA Network

Become a Dementia Friend and a Dementia Friends Champion

One great way to get started is to become a **Dementia Friend** or a **Dementia Friends Champion** by attending a free education session.

These free sessions help everyone in a community understand how dementia impacts individuals and families, and things we can each do to make a difference in the lives of those affected.

Dementia Friends is a global movement developed by the Alzheimer's Society in the United Kingdom and now underway in the United States. The goal is to help everyone in a community understand the basics of dementia including common types, signs and symptoms, communication tips and community resources. Participants attend a free, in-person or virtual, one-hour Dementia Friends Information Session to learn five key messages about dementia, how it affects people, and how we each can make a difference in the lives of people living with the disease.

Becoming a Dementia Friends Champion will allow you to deliver information sessions to community members who might join your efforts in working towards a dementia friendly community.

We offer two Dementia Friends sessions and Dementia Friends Champions Trainings each month. [Find an information session here](https://ocfch.org) or visit <https://ocfch.org> for more information.

Begin the Process

[Review the DFA Community Toolkit](#)

The **DFA Community Toolkit** is a research-informed resource that fosters adoption of dementia friendly practices. The toolkit supports communities in their Dementia Friendly efforts by providing straightforward, adaptable steps and standardized tools to help evaluate community efforts with trusted measures. The toolkit is organized into four phases to organize the effort. Within each phase, you will find detailed steps and accompanying resources for each step.

<https://dfamerica.org/community-toolkit/>



Steps to Join the DFA Network

Readiness & Recognition Criteria

Create an Action Team:

- Identify a leader or co-leaders
- As you form your team of allies, make sure to include people with dementia, care partners, or those with lived experiences on that team. Include populations such as individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and/or caregivers supporting individuals with IDD. **People living with dementia** and their caregivers are key to leading and shaping dementia friendly communities. It is imperative that people living with dementia shape a dementia friendly community effort.
- A good place to start is with a group of like-minded community members who share the mission to create a more dementia friendly culture in their local area.
- **Establish and maintain a cross-sector team that works collaboratively to create change.** A cross-sector team includes, at minimum, government, clinical providers, community-based organizations, and individuals living with dementia and their care partners. Ideally, it represents multiple community sectors as listed on the [DFA website](#), such as financial services, legal/advanced planning, healthcare, housing, public safety, libraries, faith communities, businesses, and residential or specialty care.

Consider Adoption and Communication of Dementia Friendly Practices

and Change Goals: DFA communities foster sector-specific dementia friendly practices across their communities. The DFA toolkit guides communities through a step-by-step process that fosters adoption of dementia friendly practices in all parts of community.

Identify a Champion Organization and Coordination Capacity: Many DFA communities benefit from having an organization that is willing to champion, coordinate and, if needed, serve as a fiscal sponsor. The champion organization may help recruit and partner with a senior leader of local government in the effort (e.g. mayor; city council; other elected officials).

Progress Tracking and Sharing: Communities will report progress by providing a current program description, upon request, and by completing periodic surveys.



Steps to Join the DFA Network

Join the Dementia Friendly America Network of Communities

Complete the DFA Community Application Form

- Access the online application here: <https://dfamerica.org/application-form>
- This includes a one-paragraph project description to be used for public dissemination (*see example below)
- You will need to provide **three or more letters of support** representing different community sectors
- **You must include an additional letter of support from the Ohio Council for Cognitive Health; state leads for Dementia Friendly Ohio.** Please contact Salli Bollin SBollin@alzcareservices.org for a letter of support.

Once DFA has reviewed a community's materials and communicated approval, a community may identify themselves with the Dementia Friendly America logo. **OCFCH will provide your community with its own unique logo and usage guidelines.**

Additional Tips and Resources

Tips for the Completing the DFA Application Process

- **Don't over think the process**
- Have sample **Letters of Support** to share
- **Check in with a mentor** from Dementia Friendly Ohio. They have gone through the process and can provide suggestions. Please reach out to Elizabeth Kinzig (ekinzig@ocfch.org) to get connected with a mentor. Additionally, use the following examples from our existing Ohio communities to help guide your work.

Sample Community Application: [Toledo DFA Application](#)

Sample Letters of Support: [Summit County Letters of Support](#)

Sample Community Action Plan: [Medina County Community Action Plan](#)

*Sample one-paragraph project description to be used for public dissemination: [DF Community Project Description](#)



Stay Connected

Dementia Friendly State Lead Meetings	<p>On the fourth Tuesday of every other month at 10:00 am, we hold a Zoom meeting for anyone working on Dementia Friendly efforts throughout Ohio. This meeting is an opportunity to share ideas and discuss challenges. <u>Anyone working on Dementia Friendly efforts in Ohio is welcome to attend, no need to register ahead of time.</u></p> <p>2026 Meeting Dates:</p> <p>January 27th March 24th May 26th July 28th September 22nd November 17th (Moved up 1 week d/t holidays)</p> <p>Link to join Dementia Friendly Community Leads Meetings or use Zoom Meeting ID: 851 7757 6039 and Passcode: 503940.</p>
Websites	<p>Dementia Friendly America Home Page - Dementia Friendly America</p> <p>Dementia Friendly America Toolkit DFA Community Toolkit - Dementia Friendly America</p> <p>Dementia Friendly America Sector Guides Sector Guides - Dementia Friendly America</p> <p>Ohio Council for Cognitive Health The Ohio Council for Cognitive Health</p>
Contact for Questions	<p>For questions about any of these processes, please contact: Elizabeth Kinzig, ekinzig@ocfch.org</p>

