

# A Consumer Guide to Best Practices in Dementia Care

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**Choosing a dementia care provider may seem to be a very difficult task but having the right information to guide you in your selection may make the process less challenging.**

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## Introduction

There are many variations in the type of providers, the types of services that are available and the specific needs of the individual living with dementia to consider. Specific types of providers will be described. Additionally, a guide is made available to assist in making a consumer decision that is based upon having knowledge of the offerings, services, and the requirements to achieve the highest quality of care.

The **Purple Flag for Dementia Care™** program is an affiliate of the Institute for Senior Living Education (ISLE) and was established with a focus to ensure that the person living with dementia could receive care that was based upon best practices in care. These best practices are identified from the 2018 Alzheimer's Association Dementia Care Practice Recommendations which outline 56 recommendations across 10 content areas. An additional four recommendations have been added by the **Purple Flag for Dementia Care™** program to total 60. The practice recommendations, which make up a quality framework and specific elements of care programs, are considered to be essential and valuable in making a difference in the care for a person living with dementia. One of the goals of the **Purple Flag for Dementia Care™** program is to educate the consumer and offer assistance by presenting a tool that identifies the current practices and a process of evaluating those practices. Asking the right questions at an interview of the provider, making a visit to the care provider, and observing specific areas of the care delivery program will provide insight and comfort in the selection process.



## Best Practices in the Provision of Person-Centered-Care Offerings Must Be Able to Demonstrate and Provide Evidence Of:

- Education about the meaning and practice of person-centered-care by all of the staff that interacts with persons living with dementia and family caregivers.
- A scheduled first assessment and ongoing assessment that captures all of the important elements to gain an understanding and knowledge of that person.
- An activity program that is able to incorporate individualized activities.
- A staffing plan that incorporates continuity of caregivers that includes RN's, LVN's, Nursing Care Aides, Recreational Therapists, Social Workers, and other ancillary team members.
- A plan that incorporates cultural, ethnic, religious, and holiday/special events for the purpose of expressing total engagement with the person living with dementia.
- A plan that allows for incorporation of routines, dietary preferences, socialization, activities of daily living such as mealtimes, bathing, bedtimes, and toileting scheduling.



## Best Practices in the Provision of an Extensive Staff Training Program About Brain Health that:

- The education program must encompass training in the aspects of cognitive changes, the stages of dementia, and normal aging that older adults and families experience.
- An education program that is instructive in the use of validated evaluation tools that address changes in cognitive capability.
- Printed resources that are made available to persons affected by a diagnosis of dementia.
- Evidence of family teaching when there is a diagnosis of dementia.



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### Best Practices that Include Physical and Psychosocial Evaluations at Admission and at Scheduled Intervals Thereafter for Follow Up and to Detect Changes in Condition, Accompanied By:

- Assessment tools are used to assess behaviors, cognitive function, physical status, and psychosocial status.
- The assessment process includes all of the care partners engaged in care in a multidisciplinary approach.
- A specific assignment of a care manager to collaborate, provide documentation of care, and communication to the care partner team and family care givers.
- Evidence of a program to support advance care planning, that include advance directives, palliative care, hospice and other care provisions identified by the person living with dementia and caregiver.



### Best Practices that Include a Comprehensive Medical Management Program Including:

- A presentation of a mission statement, practices, employee training that focuses on a holistic, person-centered care program embracing a positive approach.
- A demonstration of the role of the physician in education, collaboration, and direction in the medical care of the person living with dementia.
- Evidence of training in the normal aging process and the potential medical conditions that may occur in an aging adult.
- Description of non-pharmacological interventions used to support a person living with dementia.
- Description of pharmacological treatments and rationale for use.
- A description of the education for the staff focused on pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions.
- An education program that addresses potential conditions that affect safety, quality of life, and co-morbidities that may occur with a person living with dementia.
- Materials that support end-of-life care options, including palliative care and hospice.



## Best Practices that Include Information, Education, and Support for Individuals Living with Dementia

- Education programs that address early stage dementia and the progression of the disease with a care plan.
- Evidence of specific assessment tools for person-centered-care that address specific cultures, ethnic diversity, LGBT persons, other minorities, and socially disadvantaged.
- Availability of written educational materials that address the needs of the caregiver in times of transition.
- Use of technology systems to reach families that would benefit from education and support.



## Best Practices that Support Activities of Daily Living (ADL's)

- The process to assess the performance of daily living activities such as bathing, toileting, dressing, and eating.
- A description of the internal operations routines for providing the routines of the person living with dementia and the process for providing privacy and dignity.
- A description of the dining procedures and the ability to offer supportive care in eating.
- A description of the toileting practices that are provided.
- Mechanism for managing nutritional intake, weight loss and appetite loss.



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## Best Practices in Facility Staffing

- A description of the leadership and credentials of staff.
- Process that promotes dissemination of person-centered information to the care partners staff.
- Process for interdepartmental communication.
- Description of staff turnover rates and methods of assignment.
- Calendar of educational events for staff for one year with specific topics.
- Summary of quality development projects.



## Best Practices for Supportive and Therapeutic Environments

- Evidence of a sense of team and community with emphasis on caring, dignity, courtesy, and respect for each other and persons living with dementia.
- Evidence of choice, self-expression, safety, and meaningful engagement by the person living with dementia.
- Practice that demonstrates pain assessment and management of pain.



## Best Practices in Transitions of Care

- Availability of materials for support and education in transition of care events, other locations of care and expectations in each type of care.
- Assurance of timely communication to caregivers in times of condition change.
- Process of discharge to another care venue and re-admission after a return.



## Provider Considerations

There are several types of providers that may be under consideration as you make decisions. Depending on the care needs of the person living with dementia there may be residential care providers available that may offer the appropriate services and care. While, the best practice recommendations presented are more specific to long term care, assisted living facilities, home health care agencies and hospice services, they can be used to assist in screening other types of providers being considered. The following represents a summary of the types of providers:

### Retirement Housing

Senior housing with limited supervision which may provide opportunities for socialization, transportation, and other amenities. This type of facility is most appropriate for a person living with dementia in the early stage and are still independent in their own care.

### Assisted Living Communities

Adult living facilities that provide opportunities from independent care to full care services. The services may include housing, meals, recreational activities, social events, medication management, and care providers based upon level of need. There is medical supervision, although it may not be 24 hours per day. In most states, there is a licensing requirement and the requirements vary from state to state. Additionally, some communities offer memory care programs.

### Skilled Nursing Facilities, Long-term Care Facilities, and Nursing Homes

The long-term care facility offers 24-hour nursing care and supervision for complex medical conditions. There is a physician hired by the facility for oversight and direction of care and registered nurses as the supervision. Health care issues that may be managed include rehabilitative therapies, acute illnesses post hospitalization, and persons with dementia with complex care needs. There are federal and state license regulations.

### Continuing Care Retirement Communities/Life Plan Communities

This type of community provides an array of facilities and services allowing the person living with dementia to remain within the community and receive the most appropriate care.

### Group Homes

Provide people with dementia a comfortable domestic environment that does not provide the high level of nursing home care but gives seniors the option to live among peers.





## Choosing the Facility or Community

Visiting the facility is an important step in the selection process. Schedule an appointment for the first visit and plan to make additional visits unannounced to get a better sense of the culture and organizational style in the facility. Be prepared to use the best practice recommendations to gain insight into the care practices in the facility. Request copies of the most recent state licensure visit known as a survey report. If the facility is a long-term care facility, there is current information on the Medicare Nursing Home Compare website that compares facilities on a national average.

Other considerations include the types of programs and the environment that are specific to the person living with dementia. Areas to investigate include:

### The Environment

- Is the facility free from unpleasant odors?
- Does the facility have indoor and outdoor spaces to promote independence?
- Are there private spaces for family visiting?
- Are residents able to have their own furnishings and or familiar items?
- Are the resident rooms clean, uncluttered, and spacious?

### Individuals Residing in a Facility

- Is there regularly scheduled events on a posted calendar?
- Are activities planned for weekends?
- Are there religious services regularly scheduled?
- What holiday events are planned?
- How are unique interests and preference in hobbies and activities accommodated?
- What therapists are available?
- What is the frequency of physician visits made?

### Meals and Mealtimes

- Is the food appetizing?
- Is there flexibility in the meal times to accommodate personal routines?
- Is there monitoring of food intake?
- Is there a dietary plan for each resident?
- Is the dining room environment pleasant and conducive to comfortable meal time?

### Policies of the Facility

- Is there flexibility in the provision of activities of daily living, i.e. bathing, dressing, bedtime, and toileting?
- Do the individuals residing in the facility look well-groomed and dressed appropriately?
- What is the rate of falls?
- Do individuals residing in facility appear comfortable and engaged?

### Programs and Services

- Is there flexibility in the visiting hours for families and friends?
- Are there opportunities for additional care hours as the need arises?
- Is there an “aging in place” philosophy allowing the person living with dementia to remain in the facility through the course of the disease?
- Is there an ability to provide end-of-life care through the use of a hospice?

## Summary

The **Purple Flag for Dementia Care**<sup>™</sup> program team hopes that this information will assist you in the selection process of finding the service or provider that is of high quality. A number of providers of service and facilities have met all of the Best Practices in Dementia Care and have achieved a **Purple Flag for Dementia Care**<sup>™</sup> program status that is proudly displayed by flying the flag, displaying the symbol of the **Purple Flag for Dementia Care**<sup>™</sup> program on their literature, and displaying a certificate in the lobby of the facility.

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The **Purple Flag for Dementia Care™** program is a collaboration between the Institute for Senior Living Education (ISLE), the Connecticut Assisted Living Association (CALA) and with resources and information provided by the Alzheimer's Association Connecticut Chapter.



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