

Alzheimer's Disease & Memory Loss

First Responder Training Video Series—Information Sheet

Provided by the County
of San Diego Office of
Emergency Services

This document provides a brief summary of the information presented in the first responder training video relating to those members of our community who have Alzheimer's disease or memory loss.

Understanding individuals with Alzheimer's disease and memory loss:

- Alzheimer's disease is a physical disease of the brain characterized by memory loss, personality changes, and behavioral changes.
- It is a progressive, degenerative, neurological disease.
- It is not a mental illness.
- It is not a disease that only affects the elderly.
- It is not a part of the normal aging process.

Visual cues to look for:

- Individuals with Alzheimer's disease may have difficulty with balance and have difficulty understanding what's happening around them.
- Individuals with Alzheimer's disease may have a disheveled appearance or may not be dressed appropriately.
- They may fear your badge depending on experiences they have had in their life.
- They may have a messy home environment with an odor of old food, stacks of mail, and reminder notes placed around the home.
- Individuals with Alzheimer's disease may mistake you for a family member, child, or someone they know.
- They may have a "self-return" bracelet indicating they are memory impaired – the bracelet will often have a phone number to call.
- Individuals with Alzheimer's disease may not understand there is an emergency.

How to approach and care for individuals with Alzheimer's disease or memory loss:

- Approach individuals with Alzheimer's disease or memory loss from the front and maintain eye contact.
- Speak clearly and calmly.
- When you repeat a question, use the exact same words to repeat the phrase.
- Understand that breaking them from their routine can disorient them.
- You may need to join their reality—indulge in what they are saying in order to keep them calm.

Special thanks to the following organizations for participating in this video:

Alzheimer's Association San Diego
San Diego Police Department

