

FACTSHEET

JUNE 2019

alzimpact.org

Dementia Training for First Responders

Alzheimer's often causes individuals to exhibit disruptive behaviors.

- Six in 10 people with dementia will wander. A person with Alzheimer's may not remember his or her name or address—and can become disoriented, even in familiar places.
- When individuals with dementia are lost, they may show signs of anxiety, fear, or hostility—all of which can escalate to more aggressive behaviors.
- As the disease progresses and individuals with dementia forget family members and societal norms, there may be cases of false reports and victimization, indecent exposure, and shoplifting.

First responders and Adult Protective Services (APS) workers will often encounter individuals with dementia.

- First responders interact with people with Alzheimer's while searching for a lost individual, stopping drivers who exhibit unsafe driving, rescuing people with dementia from abuse, and intervening in crisis or disaster situations.
- Individuals with Alzheimer's and other dementias can also be the victims of elder abuse. But, they may be unaware they are victims and may not know how to—or be able to—report it.
- Despite the frequency of interactions, in 2015 only 10 states had laws requiring dementia training for first responders/law enforcement personnel, and only 6 states required training for APS workers.

What Can States Do?

- Require four hours of dementia training to be completed during police academy training for law enforcement officers and during the certification process for other first responders.
- Establish dementia training standards for Adult Protective Services (APS) workers.
- Ensure a minimum of two hours of continuing education on dementia for first responders.
- Develop a process for reporting to law enforcement cases of neglect, criminal abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and financial exploitation of individuals with dementia.

Dementia training for first responders and APS workers provides tangible benefits to both parties.

- People with Alzheimer's may present as uncooperative, disruptive, and combative when they have difficulty communicating and understanding what is happening.
- First responders may not know how to work with people in these situations—leading to more confusion.
- Education of the disease and training in de-escalation tactics can often effectively address the situation and ensure the safety of individuals with dementia.