

Dementia Live: A training program to increase quality of life and services for people living with dementia and their care partners

AGE-u-cate™ Training Institute
Texas

Caregiver support & resources
Community health workers
Community programming

Purpose: Dementia Live® serves a pivotal role in tackling the challenges encountered by individuals living with dementia and their care partners. With a dedicated emphasis on fostering education and awareness, particularly within rural communities in North Central Texas, this initiative strives to bridge knowledge gaps and enhance understanding. Through integration of the Dementia Live program in harmony with the Texas state plan for Alzheimer's Disease, our goal is to systematically cultivate a nurturing and informed atmosphere in rural areas. This program seeks to propel a collective effort toward a more compassionate and skilled community aligning with the state of Texas plan.

Summary: The Dementia Live program stands as an immersive educational initiative meticulously crafted to deepen participants' insight into the daily realities of living with dementia. Employing simulation and sensory experiences, the program skillfully transports participants into the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals with Alzheimer's disease and various forms of dementia. Its core objectives include fostering empathy, raising awareness, and instilling a commitment to person-centered care, extending its impact to caregivers, health care professionals, and the broader community.

Under the guidance of Director of Aging Doni Green, the North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging has championed the implementation of Dementia Live throughout a 28-county area. This visionary program has been strategically introduced to benefit a spectrum of entities, including area agencies on aging, aging and disability resource centers, home-delivered meal providers, local authorities, and diverse

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community partners. Through a robust collaboration with the Dementia Friendly North Central and East Texas Initiative, Dementia Live has transcended traditional boundaries. It now encompasses partner trainings for police officers, first responders, and health care professionals, amplifying its reach and impact.

A pivotal aspect of Dementia Live's success lies in its commitment to sustainability. The program extends its influence by conducting train-the-trainer sessions, empowering leaders in rural areas to perpetuate dementia training within their local communities. This approach ensures an enduring framework for providing support and care to individuals living with dementia and their care partners.



Despite the challenge of in-person engagement limitations, the Dementia Live program has demonstrated adaptability. Recognizing obstacles such as scheduling conflicts, transportation limitations, and individual preferences for social connections, the program pivoted to include virtual platforms in addition to in-person sessions. This solution has enabled participants to seamlessly join sessions from remote locations or the comfort of their homes, ensuring accessibility without compromising the program's impact.

Here are refined examples of program implementation:

1. Home-delivered meal staff and volunteers

- Conducted both live and virtual Dementia Live training.
- Adapted the program to incorporate warning signs that staff and volunteers may observe, such as uneaten meals and stacks of unpaid bills.
- Enhanced the training with local resource information for better support.

2. Local intellectual and disability authority staff

- Successfully executed virtual training sessions.
- Tailored the training to address the unique ways dementia may manifest among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Provided additional resource information to enhance staff capabilities.

3. Area agencies on aging (AAAs)

- Delivered comprehensive training to our staff.
- Conducted webinars for other AAAs, aligning with their requirement for dementia training using evidence-based or evidence-informed programs.

4. Family caregivers

- Offered specialized training for Spanish-speaking individuals.
- Adapted the training to include valuable resource information for family caregivers supporting individuals with dementia.

5. General outreach

- Conducted training sessions for churches, fostering awareness and understanding.
- In the process of preparing training for retirement communities to meet the specific needs of their residents.

These examples showcase the diverse and targeted approach taken in our program, ensuring that different groups receive customized training with relevant resources.

Impact and efficacy: During the contract term, NCTCOG has conducted training for 93 home-delivered meal staff members and volunteers relative to its output goal of 100 participants. The purpose of the training is to increase participants' understanding of dementia and awareness of community resources.



Preliminary outcome data indicate that the one-hour training program resulted in positive change relative to the following evaluation criteria:

1. Knowledge

- A comparison of all participants' pre- to post-test scores shows a 22.8 percent increase in knowledge that dementia is not a part of normal aging.

2. Attitudes

- A comparison of pre-test to post-test scores shows a 30.7 percent increase in confidence interacting with a person with dementia (PwD).
- Participants' self-reported confidence to respond to PwD with understanding increased by 16.4 percent.
- Participants' awareness of community resources for PwD increased by 51.8 percent.

Evaluation data were not uniformly positive. There was a minor decline in knowledge that “PwD may express themselves or communicate through actions instead of words,” with a change of -3 percent (from pre-test 95.7 percent to post-test 92.7 percent). There was also a decline in understanding that “PwD need to be respected just like anyone else,” with a change of -1.9 percent in positive attitudes (from pre-test 94.6 percent to post-test 92.7 percent). Evaluators noted that the curriculum did not emphasize attitudinal changes, and NCTCOG will amend and strengthen the curriculum accordingly. In addition, negative changes may reflect participants’ beliefs that they need to treat PwD with special attention as opposed to “like anyone else,” and/or participants may have had negative experiences interacting with PwD. Evaluators suggested changing the statement to “I know how to make people with dementia feel respected” or “I can respond to PWD with respect” for future program evaluations.

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