

Dementia and Emergency Response: Engaging with a Person Living with Dementia Tip Sheet

Roles of a First Responder

- Attempt to identify what is causing the responsive behaviour
- Ensure the safety and security of the person living with dementia
- Suggest community resources

When engaging with a person (suspected to be) living with dementia

- Approach from the front
- Make eye contact
- Slow, clear, calm speech
- Use easy-to-understand, straightforward language
- Keep sentences short
- Ask direct, close-ended questions
- Allow extra response time
- Look for non-verbal cues
- Be patient
- Move to a distraction-free environment

Responsive behaviours may include

- Pacing
- Striking out
- Agitation
- Getting lost or losing one's way
- Restlessness
- Hallucinations
- Paranoia
- Making unexpected noises
- Becoming more withdrawn

Other considerations

- First Responders should note drastic changes in mood or behaviour, including responsive behaviours triggered by internal (e.g., pain) and/or external stimuli (e.g., barking dog), or both