

# First Responder Techniques: Critical Steps to Take for a Dementia-Friendly Encounter

## Tip Sheet

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### Possible signs of dementia

- Affected thermoregulation – not perceiving extreme hot or cold weather resulting in inappropriate attire
- Not responding as expected (e.g., continuing to walk instead of stopping to engage with First Responders)
- Inability to decide which way to go at decision points (e.g., intersections)
- Freezing in place
- Diminished communication skills
- Inability to provide name, place of residence, identification

### Steps for a First Responder to take

- Assess whether the person is in imminent danger
- If the person is not in imminent danger, follow the person until he/she stops of his/her own accord
- Approach the person from the front and introduce yourself
- Offer assistance and call the police to escalate the matter if further support needed
- Provide education to caregivers that missing incidents are likely to recur and share prevention strategies

### Other considerations

- It may be unclear whether you are interacting with an individual with mental illness or dementia. Dementia is more common among those aged 65+, but it also affects younger adults