

RESEARCH BRIEF:

Dementia Friends Program Evaluation in Washington State

BACKGROUND

One goal of the Washington State Dementia Action Collaborative is to raise awareness and challenge stigma about dementia. In 2019, we piloted and evaluated the Dementia Friends program to find out how well it works in our state, especially how it impacts attitudes toward people with dementia.

Dementia Friends is a global public awareness campaign that trains volunteers to give brief information sessions in their communities. Sessions cover five key messages about dementia, share ways to be supportive of people with dementia, and invite attendees to put this understanding into action.

Everyone who attends one of these sessions is called a Dementia Friend.



WHAT WE DID

We recruited and trained 15 Dementia Champions in **King, Yakima and Jefferson Counties** who gave Dementia Friends sessions in their communities. We used surveys to evaluate attitudes by asking about knowledge of dementia and comfort around people with dementia. Attendees filled out our surveys before and after the sessions, and one month later. We also interviewed Dementia Champions to learn about their experience with the program.

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“I didn’t know anything about dementia prior to this session, and really walked away with some good tidbits that I’ve shared with friends and family.”

– Dementia Friend

214 participants

22 Dementia Friends sessions

50% lived in a rural area

Participants ranged in age from **19 to 93**

WHAT WE LEARNED

After attending a Dementia Friends session, attendees:

- ↑ Had greater **comfort** around people with dementia and **knowledge** about dementia.
- ↑ Felt more **patience** toward people with dementia.
- ↑ Better understood how to **communicate** with people with dementia.

These findings suggest that the Dementia Friends program positively affects attitudes toward people with dementia and may be a promising way to challenge stigma and raise awareness.

“ More people should be aware of the many ways we can improve the lives of people living with dementia. There is so much fear and misunderstanding in the public when it comes to dementia. This program will help to shift the narrative within communities.
– Dementia Friend

WHERE WE'RE HEADED

The Dementia Action Collaborative aims to expand the Dementia Friends program in Washington State. We will work with partner organizations who can take the lead in their region. For more information on the evaluation and next steps, contact us at: dementiafriendswa@gmail.com.

Learn more about Dementia Friends at www.dementiafriendsusa.org.



Training Dementia Champions

DEMENTIA ACTION COLLABORATIVE

The Dementia Action Collaborative is a voluntary public-private partnership implementing the Washington State Plan to Address Alzheimer's and Other Dementias. Learn more at: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/dementia-action-collaborative>

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