

# Alzheimer's Disease & Memory Loss

## First Responder Training Video Series—Information Sheet

Provided by the County  
of San Diego Office of  
Emergency Services

This document provides a brief summary of the information presented in the first responder training video relating to those members of our community who have Alzheimer's disease or memory loss.

### Understanding individuals with Alzheimer's disease and memory loss:

- Alzheimer's disease is a physical disease of the brain characterized by memory loss, personality changes, and behavioral changes.
- It is a progressive, degenerative, neurological disease.
- It is not a mental illness.
- It is not a disease that only affects the elderly.
- It is not a part of the normal aging process.

### Visual cues to look for:

- Individuals with Alzheimer's disease may have difficulty with balance and have difficulty understanding what's happening around them.
- Individuals with Alzheimer's disease may have a disheveled appearance or may not be dressed appropriately.
- They may fear your badge depending on experiences they have had in their life.
- They may have a messy home environment with an odor of old food, stacks of mail, and reminder notes placed around the home.
- Individuals with Alzheimer's disease may mistake you for a family member, child, or someone they know.
- They may have a "self-return" bracelet indicating they are memory impaired – the bracelet will often have a phone number to call.
- Individuals with Alzheimer's disease may not understand there is an emergency.

### How to approach and care for individuals with Alzheimer's disease or memory loss:

- Approach individuals with Alzheimer's disease or memory loss from the front and maintain eye contact.
- Speak clearly and calmly.
- When you repeat a question, use the exact same words to repeat the phrase.
- Understand that breaking them from their routine can disorient them.
- You may need to join their reality—indulge in what they are saying in order to keep them calm.

### Special thanks to the following organizations for participating in this video:

Alzheimer's Association San Diego  
San Diego Police Department

