

# CONSUMER GUIDANCE

California Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Advisory Committee

## *Has your loved one with dementia experienced behavioral changes?*

Memory loss is often what people think of first when they hear the words “Alzheimer’s disease.” However, Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia can change more than memory. In fact, over 97% of people living with a dementia will also have changes in behavior.

In addition to memory problems, the person with dementia and their family members may experience:

- **Depression** – withdrawn, sad, feeling hopeless, lacking energy
- **Anxiety** – always worried, scared, afraid
- **Agitation** – resisting help, pacing, wanting to leave
- **Suspicion** – believing someone is stealing from them, blaming others
- **Verbal or Physical Aggression**- yelling, pushing, hitting, throwing



It is important to know that **both the person with dementia and their family members have the right to be evaluated for mental health services.** This right exists even if someone has a dementia.

Services such as counseling, case management and, where needed, medication, can help address these issues and lead to a higher quality of life for the individual with dementia and their family members. Unfortunately, at the time of diagnosis, many health care professionals do not talk with families about the behavioral issues that may develop, leaving families unprepared to recognize and address the kinds of symptoms listed above.

## *Getting Help*

If you are having problems caused by these behavior changes, call your doctor for help. They can refer you to a professional who can help you decide if you or your loved one could be helped by counseling, medication or case management.

If you or your loved one are experiencing more severe levels of distress and are on Medi-Cal, call your County Department of Mental Health. A list of all County Mental Health emergency numbers, can be found at ([www.dhcs.ca.gov/individuals/Pages/MHPContactList.aspx](http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/individuals/Pages/MHPContactList.aspx)).

If you are in immediate crisis, you have the right to request assistance from the County Mental Health Department’s Psychiatric Mobile Response Team (PMRT). In addition, the County can provide you with access to a variety of ongoing services/supports.

If the situation is life threatening, call 911. You can also ask the emergency responders to contact the PMRT to assist.

<sup>1</sup> Steinberg, M., Shao, H., Zandi, P., Lyketsos, C.G., Welsh-Bohmer, K.A., Norton, M. C., ... Cache County Investigators (2008). Point and 5-year period prevalence of neuropsychiatric symptoms in dementia: The Cache County study. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*. 23, 170-7.

***For additional help accessing services,  
call the following Helplines:***

Alzheimer's Association

800.272.3900

Alzheimer's Los Angeles/Orange County/San Diego

844.435.7259

If you are in a Medi-Cal managed care health plan and have questions about these services, call the member services number on the back of your health plan card for assistance. Online member handbooks and provider directories for the health plans by county can be found at [www.healthcareoptions.dhcs.ca.gov/learn/health-plan-materials](http://www.healthcareoptions.dhcs.ca.gov/learn/health-plan-materials).

For help understanding the services available through your insurance coverage, you may contact the California Department of Managed Health Care's Help Center toll-free, at 888.466.2219 or visit [HealthHelp.ca.gov](http://HealthHelp.ca.gov).

Additional assistance is provided by the Managed Care Ombudsman who can be reached by calling 888.452.8609 or by visiting: [www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/MMCDOfficeoftheOmbudsman.aspx](http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/MMCDOfficeoftheOmbudsman.aspx).

