

## **Finding Your Way - supporting people living with dementia in our community**

The Finding Your Way Program is a crucial initiative aimed at supporting individuals living with dementia and their families. It provides resources and strategies to help ensure the safety of those at risk of going missing due to dementia-related wandering. This program educates the public, care partners, and communities on the risks associated with wandering and how they can contribute to keeping vulnerable individuals safe.

Wandering is a common behaviour among people with dementia, often resulting from disorientation, confusion, or agitation. Individuals may leave their homes or familiar environments without the ability to return, which can be life-threatening, especially in harsh weather or unfamiliar areas. Triggers for wandering can include memory loss, stress, or the urge to fulfill a perceived need. The program focuses on preventing wandering and ensuring a swift response if someone does go missing, highlighting the need for preparation, education, and community involvement.

The Finding Your Way Program offers several key resources:

- **Educational Resources:** These comprehensive guides and materials explain the risks of wandering, how to minimize them, and the steps to take if a person goes missing. Available online, these resources are accessible to anyone interested in learning more.
- **Safety Kits:** People living with dementia and their family members are encouraged to complete FYW ID kits, containing vital information like recent photographs, medical details, and a list of potential destinations. These kits are invaluable for first responders and volunteers during a search.
- **Community Training:** The program provides training sessions for community members, first responders, and businesses to raise awareness about dementia-related wandering and how to assist someone who may be lost. This training helps build a supportive community network, making it more likely that vulnerable individuals will be recognized and aided quickly.
- **Online Tools:** The Finding Your Way website offers interactive tools and resources to help families develop a plan tailored to the person they are supporting with dementia. The site also provides tips on making homes safer and approaching conversations about wandering with someone living with dementia.

### **The Importance of Community Awareness**

Community awareness is vital in preventing and responding to dementia-related wandering. Educating community members about the signs of dementia and how to assist someone who may be lost is crucial in ensuring the safety of those living with dementia. The program stresses that wandering is not just a family issue but a community concern. The more people are informed about recognizing and responding to wandering behaviours, the better equipped we are to protect our neighbours, friends, and family members.

In conclusion, the Finding Your Way Program is a comprehensive initiative that empowers individuals, families, and communities to work together in safeguarding those living with dementia. Through awareness, practical tools, and training, the program ensures that vulnerable individuals are kept safe and supported, even if they find themselves lost. Community involvement is key, and by being informed and prepared, everyone can contribute to making communities safer.

*Note: In person-centered language, terms like "wandering" or "wanderer" are replaced with phrases that focus on the individual's experience and needs, such as "walking with purpose" or "exploring."*