



Dementia  
Advocacy  
Canada

*Voices of Lived Experience*

# Dementia-Inclusive Meetings & Committees: Best Practices

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## **Introduction**

People living with dementia and their family/care partners are committed and need to be involved in meetings and committees that drive the development of policy, programs or services that will impact the quality of their lives.

Such inclusive participation will enhance the meeting's strategic deliverables while respecting the needs, interests and rights of those living with dementia and their family/care partners.

This document provides best practices for hosting meetings/events with participants that include Persons Living With Dementia, including:

- Timing
- Location
- Venue
- Seating
- Direct Support
- Name Tags/Cards
- Meeting Agendas & Documentation
- Presentations
- The Speaker
- Open and Inclusive Discussions
- Meetings Using Video/Teleconferencing



## **Timing of Meeting**

A mid-morning start and mid-afternoon finish is optimum.

- People Living with Dementia often need longer time to get themselves ready for a meeting. Rush, noise and crowds are more difficult to contend with. People Living With Dementia often experience a drop in energy later in the afternoon.
- Family/Care Partners will often have a number of responsibilities for their loved ones first thing in the morning thus a mid morning meeting would be more optimum. Family/Care Partners may also have additional time constraints in return to care for their loved ones thus a 1-1.5 hour time limit would be preferred.
- Whenever possible allow time to cancel or reschedule meetings with a 2-3 day notice period as the Person Living With Dementia and/or their Family/Care Partner may have arranged for alternate care support.

## **Location of Meeting**

Try to choose a venue that is easy to get to and is close to a major public transport route.

- People Living With Dementia prefer to travel to a familiar location
- Try to ensure the venue has parking facilities if no public transport to the venue is possible. Buses in unfamiliar areas can be difficult for People Living With Dementia.



## Venue of Meeting

Consider the following when selecting the venue:

- Ensure the main entrance of the building is obvious.
- Be fully accessible. (lifts *and* staircases with handrails)
- Offer a Loop hearing system.
- Offer spacious rooms; avoid cramped environments.
- Offer good lighting, this is particularly important for People Living With Dementia as it can help them make sense of their environment.
- Avoid swirly carpets or “busy” floors as this can induce nausea and dizziness as people can lose cues as to where one space stops and other starts.
- Avoid mirrored walls or reflective surfaces as this can cause confusion or visual challenges for People Living With Dementia.
- Avoid background or ambient noise from traffic, air conditioning etc. which can be problematic for both in-person participants and for those calling in.
- Offer clear signage and directions with WORDS and SYMBOLS, people with dementia need support to orientate themselves so signage to bathrooms, break out rooms, cloakrooms, tea and coffee is required. Signage should be well lit and at eye-level.
- Provide a quiet space from a busy and long meeting. The Person Living With Dementia may feel tired, overloaded with information or overwhelmed, so a quiet space will offer a break to rest.
- Ensure the bathrooms toilet flushes, locks and taps are obvious in the way they work without added signage.



## **Seating at Meeting**

Ensure the following:

- Make seating area spacious as a Person Living With Dementia may have some mobility issues. (ie. turning or stepping over objects such as electrical cords)
- Provide space near the front or close to the speaker as communication will be better being closer to the speaker and to AV screens.

## **Direct Support at Meeting**

Consider offering the following:

- If requested, ensure the Person Living With Dementia is able to have a support Person(s) to accompany them at the meeting. Such person will be able to help take notes and to provide other support including emotional support.

## **Name Tags and/or Name Cards**

Identification is helpful for all meeting participants:

- Ensure name tags and/or name cards/tents are used to clearly identify all participants.



## **Meeting Agendas & Documentation**

Ensure the following:

- Provide clear and timed agendas at least 2-3 days in advance of the meeting.
- Use a clear font style with no italics with minimum font size of 12, however 14 font size is preferable.
- Avoid changing the agenda suddenly, or adding new material spontaneously.
- Use a time keeper to manage the timelines of the agenda.
- Keep words to minimum and use short clear sentences.
- Use bullet points, bold text, headings to separate information as well as images, avoid using multiple columns.
- Break up text with white space, boxed information or simple graphics.
- Use numbered pages that are single sided– avoid the need to turn the page over.
- Don't use abbreviations or acronyms.
- Ensure the meeting organizer's contact details are included.
- Summarize the key points of the discussion and/or any To Do's at the end of each agenda item. This will help ensure each point is clear, accurate and is documented accordingly.
- Use Executive Summaries when lengthily and/or complex reports are being generated.



## **Presentations**

Consider the following:

- As much as possible, keep presentations to maximum of 10 minutes. If presentations are longer, it will be helpful if the speaker pauses and recaps before moving on.
- Avoid back to back presentations, break up the presentation with a discussion or schedule a short 5 minute break
- Ensure all presentations and/or documents shared for the in-person meeting are shared on any teleconferencing platforms to ensure quality and maximum participation.

## **The Speaker**

The Speaker(s) should consider the following:

- Use slow and clear delivery.
- Provide simple hand-outs with key discussion point/bullets available on them.
- Use visual aids such as PowerPoint slides help to add focus (e.g. an image that reflects the message or headings). Busy slides, or slides in small print, are not helpful.
- Use a microphone when in a large room, even for those who advise they can speak loudly. If a person is hard of hearing, near the back of a room, or have greater communication difficulties, a muffled voice is a barrier.



## **Open and Inclusive Discussions**

Consider the following key points:

- Avoid interrupting when a Person Living With Dementia is speaking.
- Allow only one person to speak at a time.
- Limit / avoid excessive bantering back and forth.
- Be patient and understanding when a Person Living With Dementia is speaking, as they may have difficulties in finding the right word(s) or use the wrong word.... or if a topic needs to be repeated multiple times. Listen respectfully and sincerely try to understand what is being expressed by the Person Living With Dementia. Ask questions to clarify if needed.

## **Meetings Using Video and Teleconferencing**

Consider the following key points:

- Use a platform that supports the setting that only shows the person speaking to be visible. Complex screens showing multiple people can be confusing and distracting.
- With consent, the best practice is to record meetings that use video or teleconferencing platforms. Such recording offers a means for all participants to review the recording and subject content again at a later time.
- Minute taking will be key to capture any key messaging.



## **Acknowledgments**

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This guideline will help ensure those of us Living With Dementia and our Family/Care Partners can participate in a sincere and meaningful manner in meetings and on Committees that will impact our quality of Life!

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