TOOLKIT FOR CLIENTS WITH DEMENTIA

PROTECTING WEALTH FOR AN AGING AMERICA

Developed in collaboration with MIT AGELAB

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STARTING THE CONVERSATION WITH YOUR CLIENTS

When you think of a first responder, you likely envision a firefighter, police officer, or paramedic.

But as a financial professional, you might be among the first to recognize a problem when it comes to Alzheimer’s disease or dementia, especially in clients you’ve worked with for years. One of your challenges is how to start the potentially difficult discussion. Transamerica and researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) AgeLab have collaborated to develop suggestions for initiating positive, constructive conversations about dementia and the need to develop a financial strategy for this risk. Recommendations are provided for broaching the subject with two types of clients: those who appear healthy, and those you suspect are showing symptoms of dementia.

FOR CLIENTS WHO APPEAR HEALTHY

1. Explain why you’d like to talk about this subject. Feel free to “blame” Transamerica or the MIT AgeLab for bringing this to your attention.

“I recently attended a presentation about ...” or “I recently read an article about ...”

Why? Because this helps put people at ease. They might be thinking, “Why is he or she saying this to me?” or “Why is this coming up now (and not earlier)?”

2. Ask for permission to have the conversation. Reveal sincerity of intent.

“Can we discuss for a moment more ways we can help protect you and your family as you age?”

Why? When your clients give you permission to discuss this topic, they are more likely to be engaged and receptive to the discussion.

3. Be direct. If you believe this conversation is worthwhile, speak with authority and conviction, just as you would with any other important aspect of your client relationships.

“Dementia and Alzheimer’s disease are not a comfortable subject, and many financial professionals avoid it as a result. But it makes no sense for us to strategize for your future and not discuss something that would dramatically affect your financial strategy and the lives of your family ...”

Why? It’s not an easy conversation, but you’re likely to put your client more at ease if you discuss it directly and candidly, without being vague or dancing around the issue.
4. Make it a two-way street by discussing expectations. Position the issue in the broader context of risk prevention.

“We create strategies for all kinds of scenarios; this is one of the issues we try to prepare for. We can help you and your family prepare and feel confident should difficult times arise.”

Why? By inviting dialogue, you’ll likely enhance clients’ trust in you, helping to make them feel more confident about the strategy you have planned together.

5. Engage in the “what if?” discussion — not to scare, but to open dialogue for potential strategies.

“Have you thought about who would make financial decisions on your behalf if you were not able to do so, for whatever reason?”

Why? This will help you and your clients identify potential gaps in their care needs and determine who they wish to serve in various roles if need be.

6. Recruit family members to be on your client’s team — all those who are aware of your strategy to guard against potential abuse, fraud, or mistakes as a result of cognitive decline.

“We want to help you fulfill your wishes if a caregiving situation arises. We don’t want to wait until there’s a crisis that forces potentially distraught family members to make decisions on your behalf.”

Why? If your client does develop Alzheimer’s or another form of dementia, you and other family members will be working closely together. Having a good relationship with this trusted group will grow increasingly important as the disease progresses.

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FOR CLIENTS YOU SUSPECT ARE EXPERIENCING SYMPTOMS

1. Recognize the client may know something is wrong.

The person may feel insecure, unsure, and potentially embarrassed because he or she is having trouble remembering things.

Why? It’s important to people living with dementia to maintain their dignity and have a say in decisions that affect their lives. Insecurity can occur when a client is worried about being told what to do or being manipulated.

2. The best approach to dealing with insecurity is empathy. Reassure the client about your role.

“I’m here to help. What would you like me to do? I want to understand your wishes and will do everything I can to ensure you have a say in decisions that affect your life. I’m not here to tell you what to do.”

Why? This is an opportunity to let your client know you care and that you’re paying attention.

3. Suggest your client see his or her doctor.

You’re not a medical professional. If something is wrong, it’s important for you and your client to understand what you’re dealing with — and the outcome may not always be bad.

Why? If a doctor can determine that something other than dementia is the cause of the client’s symptoms and the issue can be corrected, think of how valuable that would be to your client and that person’s family.
The following five steps will help guide you when creating a strategy for clients and families dealing with dementia.

1. **UPDATE THE ESTATE PLAN**
   Ensure you have a complete view of your client’s assets, how they are managed, and their estimated value.

   **THIS INCLUDES:**
   - Real estate
   - Investments and brokerage accounts
   - Retirement plans
   - Household items

   **YOU MAY ALSO WANT TO:**
   - Review how property is titled (with an attorney) and ask whether wills, trust, and beneficiary designations should be updated

2. **IDENTIFY ALL INCOME SOURCES**
   Review your client’s income status, insurance policies, and bank accounts. It is critical for your client’s agent, or durable power of attorney, to know all account logins and passwords and the location of each important document.

   **INCOME:**
   - Employment income
   - Pensions
   - Veterans benefits
   - Annuities
   - Social Security
   - Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)
   - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
   - Retirement accounts (IRA, 401(k))
   - Reverse mortgage
   - Other income (e.g., rental property)

   **INSURANCE:**
   - Health insurance (does it cover dementia care?)
   - Life insurance
   - Long-term care insurance
   - Medicare
   - Medigap

   **IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS:**
   - Titles and deeds
   - Beneficiary designations
   - Trust documents
   - Power of attorney (finances)
   - Power of attorney (health care)
   - Standard will
   - Living will/medical directives
   - Birth certificate
   - Passport
   - State ID/driver’s license
   - Social Security card
   - Marriage license
   - Vehicle registration

   **BANK ACCOUNTS:**
   - Checking
   - Savings
   - Certificates of deposit
3. LEARN YOUR CLIENT’S FUTURE INTENTIONS

It is imperative to understand your client’s wishes and how to ensure they are fulfilled.

CONSIDER ASKING:

☐ Who your client wants as an agent to make decisions if he or she is no longer able to
☐ Where your client wants to live as the disease progresses (assisted living, nursing home, etc.)

CONSIDER WORKING WITH AN ELDER LAW ATTORNEY TO:

☐ Create a power of attorney for finances
☐ Create a power of attorney for health care
☐ Create an advance directive regarding health care and end-of-life decisions

4. ENSURE FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS ARE BEING MET

Work with your client to ensure finances are properly managed and all bills are being paid on time.

☐ Have your client authorize you to speak with a friend, family member, or power of attorney
☐ Encourage your client to select a trusted person who understands what it means to be a fiduciary as his or her durable power of attorney for finances
☐ Discuss whether your client wishes to work with a daily money management service
☐ Talk about Social Security’s Representative Payment Program

5. DISCUSS CARE MANAGEMENT

Talk with your client about how to finance his or her care. This should include conversations about:

☐ Whether home modifications are necessary if your client is determined to stay in his or her residence as long as possible
☐ Working with a geriatric care manager
☐ Meals on Wheels and other community services

TIPS FOR FINANCIAL PROFESSIONALS

When helping families dealing with dementia, it’s important to understand the legal and ethical considerations involved. Here are actions you can take to help protect your practice:

1. Train your staff to recognize the signs of dementia and how to communicate effectively with afflicted clients.

2. Add a provision to your firm’s privacy policy reserving your right to contact an advocate if a client starts showing signs of dementia.

3. Create procedures for working with clients with dementia; for example, provide clients with a written summary after each meeting that includes the names of all attendees.

4. Educate clients about how to avoid fraud or elder abuse.
These links connect to online resources suggested in the “Five Areas of Focus” section in A Financial Professional’s Field Guide to Financial Strategies for Those Living With Dementia.

1. ASSETS

Medicaid.gov
medicaid.gov

Housing for Senior Citizens
usa.gov/housing-help-audiences

Administration for Community Living
aoa.acl.gov
2. INCOME AND INSURANCE

Social Security Administration
ssa.gov

Social Security Disability Insurance
ssa.gov/disabilityssi

Supplemental Security Income
ssa.gov/disabilityssi/ssi.html

“What’s Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap)?”
medicare.gov/supplement-other-insurance/medigap/whats-medigap.html

3. INTENTIONS

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
naela.org

American Bar Association
americanbar.org/aging

American Association of Trust, Estate and Elder Law
aateela.org

The National Aging in Place Council
ageinplace.org

A Place for Mom®
aplaceformom.com

SeniorAdvisor.com®
senioradvisor.com

Caregiverlist®
caregiverlist.com

Eldercare Locator
eldercare.acl.gov

Alzheimer’s Association® Community Resource
alz.org/crf

4. BANKING ADMINISTRATION

American Association of Daily Money Managers
aadmm.com

Social Security Representative Payment Program
ssa.gov/payee/index.htm

5. CARE MANAGEMENT

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS)
LongTermCare.gov
longtermcare.acl.gov

HHS Finding Local Services
longtermcare.acl.gov/the-basics/finding-local-services.html

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ Dementia Care
va.gov/geriatrics/Alzheimers_and_Dementia_Care.asp

The Aging Life Care™ Association
aginglifecare.org

Meals on Wheels America
mealsonwheelsamerica.org

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Make every day count.

To learn more about Transamerica’s Field Guide to Financial Strategies for Those Living With Dementia series and to get support materials:

Visit: transamerica.com

Contact: Your Transamerica wholesaler

MIT AgeLab

Transamerica is proud to collaborate with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s innovative AgeLab to educate and encourage financial professionals as they help those living with dementia and their caregivers make financial decisions about their future.

Transamerica is a proud sponsor of MIT AgeLab.

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