



SPONSORED CONTENT



A publication of

LifePath

options for independence

Editor, Janis Merrell
GoodLife@LifePathMA.org
(413) 773-5555 x2255

THE GOOD LIFE

Find past editions on www.LifePathMA.orgwww.facebook.com/LifePathMA

Introducing GUIDE: A New Way to Support Families Living with Dementia

By Diane Robie, Director of Client Services

Diane Robie

Across the world, June is recognized as Global Alzheimer's Awareness month. At a time when resources are diminishing and programs are closing, we are excited to announce the launch of the GUIDE (Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience) Program as people across the world are joining together to promote brain health and fight to end Alzheimer's disease.

The GUIDE Program is a comprehensive approach to dementia care that bridges the gap between providers, caregivers, and people living with dementia. Through a more coordinated approach to care as well as education, training, and time-off support for caregivers, this program addresses challenges faced by the growing number of people across the country impacted by dementia.

Over seven million Americans aged 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's Disease, which accounts for about three quarters of all dementia diagnoses. That number is expected to double by 2060. Dementia is now the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. And it doesn't only affect older adults. Approximately 200,000 Americans under age 65 are living with early-onset dementia. Dementia reshapes the life of the person living with dementia along with those who provide care, comfort, and companionship. Unpaid caregivers provide more than 19 billion hours of care valued at over \$446 billion, according to a 2026 report from the Alzheimer's Association.

GUIDE is a free Medicare program for people with dementia and their caregivers. Launched in July 2024 by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), this eight-year initiative connects families to comprehensive care, resources, and support, when needed most. The GUIDE Program is offered through a collaboration with AgeSpan, in partnership with CCS Health and Healthspan Partners. As a result of this collaboration, GUIDE services will be available across Massachusetts through the Aging Service Access Points (ASAPs) network.

Experienced, trained LifePath staff will provide GUIDE support services to residents of Berkshire and Franklin Counties as well as the North Quabbin region. Services include:

- **Care Navigation:** Care Navigators work with individuals and families to understand their needs, provide education and coaching, and connect them to medical and community-based services such as specialists, in-home services, and local support groups. They help to navigate the complex systems of care.
- **24/7 Access to Support:** Participants have access to round-the-clock support to help you problem-solve those sticky situations.
- **Respite Care:** GUIDE provides up to \$2,500 per year for respite services, including in-home care or adult day programs, giving caregivers a much-needed opportunity to rest and recharge.
- **Personalized Care Planning:** Each person enrolled in GUIDE receives an individualized care plan developed with an interdisciplinary team that includes the Care Navigator and a clinician with specialized dementia expertise.

GUIDE is available to people who have a dementia diagnosis and are enrolled in traditional Medicare (Parts A and B). Eligible individuals must be living at home or in a community setting such as Assisted Living. Individuals living in long-term nursing facilities or currently enrolled in Medicare Advantage, Senior Care Options (SCO),

hospice, or PACE services, are not eligible. If you or someone you know may be eligible, or if you want to learn more, please contact us at info@lifepathma.org or call 413-773-5555. Our team is here to walk the journey with you. No one should have to navigate dementia alone.

Tips for Caring for Someone with Dementia

Caring for someone with dementia is one of the most meaningful things a person can do. It is also one of the most demanding. Here are some practical tips from the Alzheimer's Association to help you along the way:

Daily Routines

- Try to keep a routine, such as bathing, dressing, and eating at the same time each day.
- Help the person write down to-do lists, appointments, and events in a notebook or calendar.
- Plan activities that the person enjoys and try to do them at the same time each day.
- Consider a system or reminders for helping those who must take medications regularly.

Communication and Behavior Changes

- Reassure the person. Speak calmly. Listen to his or her concerns and frustrations.
- Allow the person to keep as much control in his or her life as possible.
 - Build quiet times into the day, along with activities.
 - Keep well-loved objects and photographs around the house to help the person feel more secure.
 - If you are asked the same questions repeatedly, try distracting the person with an activity.

Maintaining a Healthy Lifestyle

- Consider different activities the person likes to do to stay active. Match the activity to what the person can do.
- Help get an activity started or join in to make the activity more fun. People with dementia may lack interest or initiative and can have trouble starting activities.
- Add music to exercises or activities if it helps motivate the person. Dance to the music if possible.
- Be realistic about how much activity can be done at one time. Several short "mini-workouts" may be best.

Safety Tips

- If you have stairs, make sure there is at least one handrail. Put carpet or safety grip strips on stairs or mark the edges of steps with brightly colored tape so they are more visible.
- Insert safety plugs into unused electrical outlets and consider safety latches on cabinet doors. Doorknob covers may be helpful.
- Clear away unused items and remove small rugs, electrical cords, and other items the person may trip over.
- Remove curtains and rugs with busy patterns that may confuse the person.
- Make a plan early about when to stop driving. Include your PCP.
- Lock up guns and other weapons.

Scam Protection

- Solidify good security practices. Leave notes not to give out social security or bank information.
- Apply blocking tools to phones and computers.
- Find someone to monitor financial activity.
- Establish stronger financial safeguards. Set up alerts with the bank or credit card company.

Taking Care of Yourself

- Ask for help when you need it. This could mean asking family members and friends to help or reaching out to LifePath for additional care needs.
- Eat nutritious foods and get exercise as often as you can.
- Join a caregiver support group. Meeting other caregivers will give you a chance to share stories and ideas and can help keep you from feeling isolated.
- Take breaks every day. Try making a cup of tea or calling a friend.
- Spend time with friends and keep up with hobbies.

GUIDE is a free Medicare program for people with dementia and their caregivers.