

# Community-based Innovations in Dementia Care (CIDC) – Providing support during COVID-19



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This report has been prepared by the AHS Seniors Health SCN.

## Contact

For more information, please contact:

Helen Lightfoot  
Provincial Practice Lead  
Seniors Health SCN  
Helen.lightfoot@ahs.ca

Abram Gutsher  
Manager  
Seniors Health SCN  
Abram.gutscher@ahs.ca

Karen Branicki  
Project Manager  
Clinical Project Support Services  
Karen.branicki@ahs.ca

# Introduction

In 2016, Alberta Health (AH) developed its 2016-2019 Business Plan to ensure Albertans receive the right healthcare services at the right time, in the right place. Outcomes and strategies were identified and in 2016, AH gave a grant to Alberta Health Services' (AHS) Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network™ (SH SCN) to support community innovations in dementia care.

The Community Innovation Grant initiative, led by SH SCN demonstrates that communities are able to improve quality of care and health outcomes for Albertans living with dementia. Funding from AH gave the SH SCN an opportunity to support community programs to successfully implement unique projects that would enhance the lives of people living with dementia and their caregivers, living in community settings.

The 2019 Community-based Innovations in Dementia Care (CIDC) grant provides further opportunities to increase capacity within 14 organizations to develop innovative approaches to person-centred services for Albertans impacted by dementia.

The CIDC project team was asked by Alberta Health to collect accounts of the organizations innovating and going further to support their communities during COVID-19. The CIDC project team met with each of the project leads to hear what their organizations are doing to support their communities in response to COVID-19 and the increased social isolation.

Organizations have initiated new activities and services to address needs that have arisen due to increased social isolation.

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to highlight the inspiring stories of how the CIDC projects have overcome obstacles to support their communities during COVID-19.

## Addressing the Impact of Social Isolation during COVID-19

It was inspiring to learn about the efforts of the CIDC projects in responding to increased social isolation of those impacted by dementia during the pandemic. The CIDC projects' ability to respond quickly through innovative approaches described below has meant that needs related to social isolation, food security, loneliness, grief,

transportation and information-sharing were addressed. We hope this overview is able to raise the profile of these ‘behind the scenes’ supports and the important role of community-level organizations during times of crisis.

### One Year Projects

#### ***Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories***

The Young Onset Dementia project supports those affected by young onset dementia.

- ASANT café weekly presentations have seen an increase in audience; there are now 500 people joining virtually.
- Developed online presentations and virtual support groups for health care workers and referring organizations.
- The First Link Connection program has been made virtual.

#### ***Camrose Public Library - Camrose Public Library Community Connections***

The Camrose Public Library (CPL) Dementia Project seeks to increase engagement, decrease isolation, and provide affordable resources for people living with dementia along with caregivers and families.

- Partnering with Service Options for Seniors to deliver library books and offer curbside pickup.
- Virtual options for most programs now in development, such as a Ukulele group that meets via Zoom. This group has contributed greatly to building connections.

#### ***Inside Out Theatre - Village Improv for Alzheimer's (VIA)***

The Village Improv for Alzheimer’s program (VIA) engages people living with dementia in the joy of self-expression and performing.

- Working with the Alzheimer Society of Calgary Club 36 to deliver their program virtually.
- Updates underway to their manual to include AHS public health guidelines and pandemic measures.

#### ***Rimbey Community Home Health Services - Opening Minds through Art (RC-OMA)***

Opening Minds through Art (OMA) is an evidence-based art therapy program for people living with dementia.

- Instituted telephone check-ins with isolated and vulnerable people.
- Wellness gift bags have also been delivered with information, links, resources, games, crafts and goodies.
- Links have been made to PCN phone-in session that features stories and music
- ‘Fill the Fridge’ coupon and gas coupon programs initiated to cover costs of fresh food, cleaning supplies, personal products, and transportation.

- Adult Day Support Program participants receive phone calls two times per week.
- Seniors Week activities will include delivering cards and pictures from local children and a small gift for caregivers.
- 146 deliveries were done by volunteers using the Rimbey Rimshaw, an electric 3-wheeled bike. A board member is building a Plexiglas custom barrier for the bike.



“We could not enter our Manor but went up to the windows at dinner time and they waved and blew kisses back, it was so nice to see all their faces after so long. We went to our three facilities and drove around town waving, wishing everyone we saw a Happy Seniors Week.”

- Jamie Coston, Volunteer Programs Coordinator, Rimbey Community Home Health Services.

## Two Year Projects

### ***Edmonton West Family Physicians Group, Building Resilience in Caregivers (BRiC)***

Building Resilience in Caregivers (BRiC) is an 8-week program for people living with dementia and their caregivers to support the development of resilience through education and social connections.

- PCN Frail Elderly Outreach team is doing more phone and support calls. This has been well received by recipients.
- Actively promoting Edmonton Southside PCN’s program Senior Centre Without Walls.

### ***Drive Happiness Seniors Association - Dementia Friendly Transportation***

The Dementia Friendly Transportation project is a program for people living with dementia and their caregivers to access affordable, accessible, and safe transportation.

- Partnerships with outlying communities including included FCSS and Home Care have been strengthened during the pandemic.
- Promoting Senior Centre Without Walls to all FCSS offices which has helped this program become province-wide.
- Sanitizing kits provided to all volunteer drivers. Funding provided from the Edmonton Community Foundation (\$10,000).
- Instituted weekly calls and email newsletter to socially-isolated riders



- Food security activities include:
  - Delivery of food hampers for Leduc and Strathcona food banks;
  - Volunteer grocery shopping for home-bound individuals
- Transportation activities include:
  - Supporting FCSS, home care and hospital volunteer programs whose transportation services are closed by providing rides to medical appointments (i.e. dialysis, cancer treatment).
  - Transporting essential health care workers in areas that bus service is absent (i.e. Beaumont, after 7 pm).



by providing information to Dr. Lewanczuk and Provincial Seniors Housing on what was happening in the community.

### **Linkages Society of Alberta, Music2LINK**

An intergenerational program which pairs junior and senior high school students with senior care centre residents experiencing dementia to engage through music.



centres.

- In response to COVID-19, they have reached out to youth volunteers through email, phone calls and zoom meetings to talk about loss of care centre residents to COVID-19, grief, and how to cope. This has been very well received.
- Arranged zoom calls between students and residents. Have sent ideas for art and music activities to care centres.
- Small activity bags were prepared for care centres which included puzzles, topics for telephone conversations and art projects. Staff really appreciated these bags as they provide activity without adding to staff workload. 100 bags to 10 care centres.
- Supplying books for recording personal biographies at care

### **Stony Plain FCSS, Community Connectors**

Increases awareness, provides information, and develops strategies with the community to create and maintain inclusive and welcoming dementia-friendly environments.

- Launched 3 new virtual programs ahead of schedule to address social isolation
- Caring Hearts Connection program recruited 60 participants and 8 volunteers for friendly phone calls and check ins

- Seniors Connect provided training and orientation for volunteers through an online program
- Neighbors Connect promotes neighbors checking in with each other.

***CapitalCare Group Inc. (ICCER), Creating Conversations: A Dementia Activity Toolkit to Reduce Social Isolation***

- Redesigned ICCER Innovation Day to a series of webinars.
- Virtual education webinars were held from April to June 2020.
- Community of Practice session held in April on adapting to social isolation.

***Capital Care Foundation – Open Doors Outreach Program***

CapitalCare Foundation, CapitalCare and Alzheimer Society of Alberta will collaboratively provide fine arts programming for those living with dementia in both care settings and the community.

- Family visits have been held through:
  - Virtual meetings or phone calls
  - Outside in special event tents which allow for social distancing
  - Window visits to accommodate residents with advanced dementia who have difficulty understanding social distancing.
  - Doorway activities helped to maintain social connections through Pub night
  - Hallway bingo
  - Mother’s Day tea
- Email and phone updates & supportive counselling for families about residents.
- Town hall meetings with Calgary and Ontario facilities and a group in the U.S. to network and share ideas on how to adjust during the pandemic.

***St. Michael’s Long Term Care Centre, Advancing Person-Centred Social Engagement for People Living with Dementia***

Establishing a place where people living with dementia are part of an active, engaged, vibrant, and busy social environment.

- Launch of outdoor garden visits: 48 visits per day, 3 days/week. This includes screening of visitors and residents and additional portering.
- FaceTime calls for family and residents: over 1000 calls hosted.
- Day support program participants are receiving regular phone calls for support.
- Volunteers and families organized car parades for Good Friday and Mother’s Day, with over 40 cars participating.
- Organized an opportunity for families to give a chocolate present to residents. Staff fundraised among themselves to ensure all residents received chocolates.
- Supportive cards have been sent from the community.
- Window visits and entertainment have been initiated.