

Screening Passengers with Dementia (Part 1)

In your role as security personnel you may encounter situations in which individuals living with dementia have difficulty following instructions relating to security procedures and navigating the security area. Individuals living with dementia may:

- Have difficulty waiting in line at security checkpoints.
- Have difficulty maintaining social distancing.
- Be unable to quickly respond to your questions.
- Have trouble showing you travel documents.
- Have problems with balance and agility.
- Have difficulty removing shoes, raising their hands, or managing their belongings.

The noise and activity around them can bring on increased anxiety and agitation. Other common issues such as incontinence, mobility problems, visual-spatial distortion and difficulty with hearing and speaking, can add to an already disruptive experience.

Do not separate individuals with dementia from their care partner / travel companion / someone with a gate pass during security checks. A traveler with dementia relies on their care partner/travel companion to communicate for them; to keep them calm and focused in the midst of chaos, and to manage their personal belongings and required documents. A traveler with dementia with impaired navigation and communication abilities can also easily get lost if separated from their care partner during security screening.

Have chairs available in the security area to offer to someone who is having to stand longer than expected or is having a difficult time.

Recognize that someone living with dementia may be physically unable to safely comply with your requests and unable to explain why they cannot do what is being asked of them. Difficulties with balance, motor control, vision, memory, thought processing, and communication may make it impossible for them to tell you. The presence of their care partner / travel companion can be critical in these situations.

Face the individual while giving instructions and speak clearly using simple words and a calm tone. Maintain eye contact and speak directly to the individual living with dementia if you are asking them to do something. Do not talk about them to their caregiver or companion as if they aren't there. Treat them with respect and dignity.

This briefing is provided by the Dementia-Friendly Airports Working Group (DFAWG) which promotes dementia-friendly airport protocols.