



Champlain  
Dementia Network

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# Intergenerational Dementia Companion

# PROGRAM MANUAL



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## ABOUT THIS MANUAL

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This program manual was developed from the learnings of the Champlain Dementia Network's Intergenerational Dementia Companions Program (IDCP). This program manual is intended as a resource tool for others who are interested in establishing and running a similar program in their community, school, or organization. This manual will guide you through the steps to develop your own scalable program from forming a program team to sustaining and spreading the program across your region.

In 2021 the Champlain Dementia Network (CDN) (<https://champlainedementianetwork.ca/>) developed an 8hr training & certification for high school student to increase understanding and empathy for older adults living with dementia. Upon completion of the CDN's IDCP Certification, students had the opportunity to be matched as Dementia Companions to engage in meaningful social interactions with people living with dementia in a variety of settings.

While the piolet project was initially created to engage high school students, it can be easily adapted to be appropriate for any volunteer or staff who interacts with older adults (including those living with dementia), their families and care-partners and can be utilized across multiple settings (i.e. communities, private homes, retirement homes or in long-term care homes).

The project was reviewed and validated by partners, across the continuum of care, who participate in the CDN Education & Training Collaborative.

The following supporting documents from the CDN's IDC Program have been provided in the IDC Program Toolkit:

- Program Logic Model
- Project Workplan Template
- Training Curriculum
- Program Overview with Roles and Responsibilities
- Volunteer Coaching Facilitator Guide
- Matching Process Map
- Student Evaluation

*Throughout this manual, lessons learned from the CDN pilot project will be highlighted by this symbol*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The CDN's IDCP Advisory Team would like to extend its deepest appreciation to the companions who participated in this pilot project including students who volunteered and person's living with dementia and their family members.

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## WHY WE NEED COMPANIONS

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The prevalence of dementia is growing at an exponential rate. A diagnosis of dementia still carries tremendous stigma, an extension of the ageism that older adults can experience. It is anticipated that the number of people living with dementia will grow more over the next four years than it has in the last eight years. This is also happening at a time when it has become more and more difficult to attract and people to work in geriatric care. In Parallel, social isolation among older adults living with dementia also grows. Isolation can have negative health outcomes, including depression, dementia, increased mortality. Those living with dementia, and their care-partners, often refer to the “social death” that can precede actual death.

Care-partners are essential and contribute a tremendous amount of unpaid work to support persons living with dementia. They also struggle to ask for help, and when not supported are more likely to become sick themselves. With care partner stress at an all-time high, as per the most recent Spotlight on Care-partners (OCO 2020), it is crucially important to enhance understanding that one of the greatest predictors of hospital admissions and premature move to long-term care, is care-partner burden and distress.

Connecting with people living with dementia and decreasing ageism needs to be a community effort. Youth have often been overlooked as a critical population to help reduce this stigma and create meaningful social relationships to support enhanced well-being. The Champlain Dementia Network feels there is no better way to influence youth/young adults at this key juncture in their lives than by spending time with people living with dementia to infuse a sense of understanding, compassion and empathy that can be carried along with them. Simultaneously this will benefit our health/social services by infusing them with this complementary dementia companion role.



## THE PILOT PROJECT

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The Champlain Dementia Network's Intergenerational Dementia Program (IDCP) was developed to offer an evidence-informed Dementia Companion Training Certification for high school students. This program addresses ageism and misconceptions related to older adults living with dementia by empowering young people with the knowledge and supports to engage in meaningful companion relationships with older adults. It also addresses social isolation frequently experienced by older adults living with dementia and their care-partners by training youth/young adults to see the person rather than the illness. The CDN training modules has been revised so it can be easily adapted and used across settings for anyone (volunteers, staff, etc.) whose role could benefit from this skill-building in therapeutic communications and understanding dementia.

In addition to training and certification, the CDN's IDCP model matches students with people living with dementia in a variety of settings and provides ongoing support to these matches. This initiative was evaluated and documented with the broader goal of spreading this certification and matching approach across the province. The program was structured to enable different levels of engagement: high school students could choose to complete the certification only, participate as volunteers, or participate as a full co-op student.

<b>Desire Program Outcomes</b>	Decreased stigma / demystification of dementia for youth / young adults
	Increased quality of life for people living with dementia and their care-partners
	Increase social connection / decrease social isolation of people living with dementia
	Increased sense of empowerment
	Diminished burden / increased wellness for care-partners
	Improved youth / young adults' attitude towards older adults
	Increased partnerships between schools, community agencies and healthcare organizations
	Increased volunteerism and paid companion services provided by youth / young adults
	Increase interest among youth / young adults in geriatric services as a career



Champlain  
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**Dementia  
Society**  
Ottawa and Renfrew County

# 4 PHASES TO BUILD AND RUN A DEMENTIA COMPANION PROGRAM

## Phase 1: PREPARE

### 1.1. Assemble a Project Team

Forming a dynamic Project Team is a critical first step to successfully develop and run your Dementia Companions Program. We recommend that the lead on this initiative be from your local relevant community organization (i.e. the Alzheimer’s Society) with membership that includes individuals from the following areas:



Team members should take the lead on aspects of the development based on their unique experiences and expertise the different areas needed to plan, develop, and launch your IDC program. For example, the hospital and lead community organization should be responsible for the content development of training with the rest of the team providing feedback and insights. The IDC Program Toolkit includes a program workplan template with suggested tasks, leads and supports. Team members can help shape the program and outcomes in many ways such as:

- Participate in development (or adoption), verification & delivery of training
- Assist with sustainability through fundraising, grants, staff/volunteer, in-kind support, etc.
- Participate in recruitment and promotion of partner organizations through their networks
- Provide expert advice on understanding the needs of participants
- Assist with the development of relevant promotional material and companion recruitment
- Contribute to additional learning opportunities for volunteers
- Provide expertise on partner organization requirements and supports
- Participate as a partner organization (see [section 3.1](#) for more details and responsibilities)

*Having a lead organization with expertise in Dementia and older adults’ needs is of the utmost importance to running a dementia companions’ program. The CDN’s IDC Program could not have been run without the integral leadership and support of it’s lead organization, the Dementia Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County.*



## 1.2. Shape a Terms of Reference

The Project Team should develop their Terms of Reference (TOR) to outline the goals, membership, expectations and procedures of the group. Key items to incorporate in your TOR include:

- Project Team Purpose and vision
- Project Overview
- Project Team Activities
- Evaluation, Reporting & Accountability
- Membership
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Meeting Structure
- Duration
- Approval Date

## 1.3. Determine Program Costs

With implementing any new program there are costs associated with launching and maintaining it. While some costs can be avoided by utilizing available resources within the team, the successful running of an IDCP requires a Program Coordinator (see [section 1.4](#) for more details).

Human Resources (.5FTE)	Training Development / Delivery*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Recruiting partner organizations and volunteers</li><li>- Onboarding partner organizations and volunteers</li><li>- Building/maintaining registration &amp; data management systems</li><li>- Maintaining ongoing communication with all parties</li><li>- Coordinating volunteer support/coaching sessions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Training platform and / or physical space for live training sessions</li><li>- Program material development</li><li>- Speaker fees for initial training /coaching sessions</li></ul>

Other costs to consider can include printing of promotional and/or training materials, purchasing software or licenses for a registration / data management system.

Through the Project Team you may be able to offset some costs through grants, in-kind donations from partner organizations, or volunteer time.

\*The CDN-IDCP training curriculum / modules ([see 2.1](#)) are available fully online using Thinkific. These resources can be utilized for free by any Intergenerational Dementia Companion Program across Ontario to help standardize training and reduce program costs.

## 1.4. Onboard a Program Coordinator

The Program Coordinator role is instrumental to the organization and implementation requirements related to running the Intergenerational Dementia Companions Program. They will be the main point of contact and lead in ensuring a positive client and volunteer experience. While it is recommended that this position be hired it could also be an assigned staff from one of the Project Teams organizations with the capacity to take on the .5FTE duties. Suggested responsibilities and qualifications include:

### Responsibilities

- Support regular meetings of the Project Team membership
- Work closely with a local schools/boards to recruit students
- Provide presentations on the program to internal and external stakeholders
- Support development and implementation of training, including ongoing coaching/mentoring
- Coordinate volunteer/placement opportunities for across participating healthcare organization
- Support development of evaluations, including collection and reporting
- Provide program updates and reports

### Qualifications

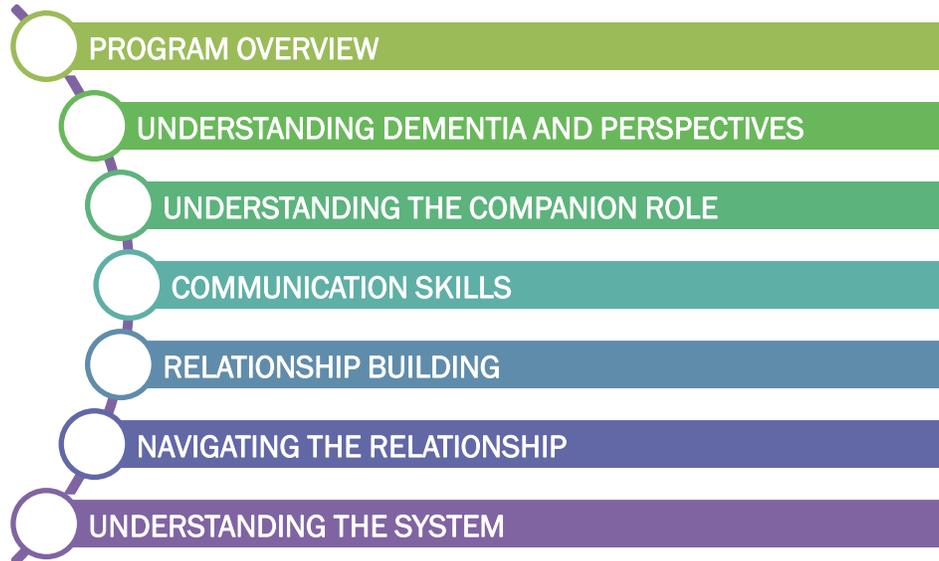
- Demonstrated experience and interest in working with people living with dementia and their care-partners
- Compassionate, enthusiastic, positive and energetic attitude
- Significant administrative and project coordination skills
- Understanding of program implementation and quality improvement processes
- Excellent organization and critical thinking skills
- Strong ability to communicate effectively
- Experience with technology such as: Microsoft Office suites, SharePoint, Google Docs, video platforms, social media platforms, survey platforms

## Phase 2: DEVELOP

### 2.1. Training Modules

Training is the cornerstone of the intergenerational companion program model; it ensures volunteers gain a comprehensive understanding of dementia including insights from people with lived experience and provides volunteers with the skills to build meaningful relationships with older adults. The CDN's IDCP Training Modules were developed and validated by the Project Team and Advisory Committee made up of 23 organizations (many of which represent a network of providers as well as care-partners and people living with dementia).

Key learning topics were identified and developed into an 8-hour Certificate Program (the full Curriculum Outline is provided in the IDC Program Toolkit. These eight 1-hr interactive, self-paced training modules have been made fully virtual using Thinkific due to the impacts of COVID-19, but the curriculum can be used as an in-person or hybrid training model as well. The CDN's IDCP identified key training module topics include:



The fundamental steps used to create the IDCP Training Curriculum Certification, and that should be used to create further Dementia Companion Training Modules, include:

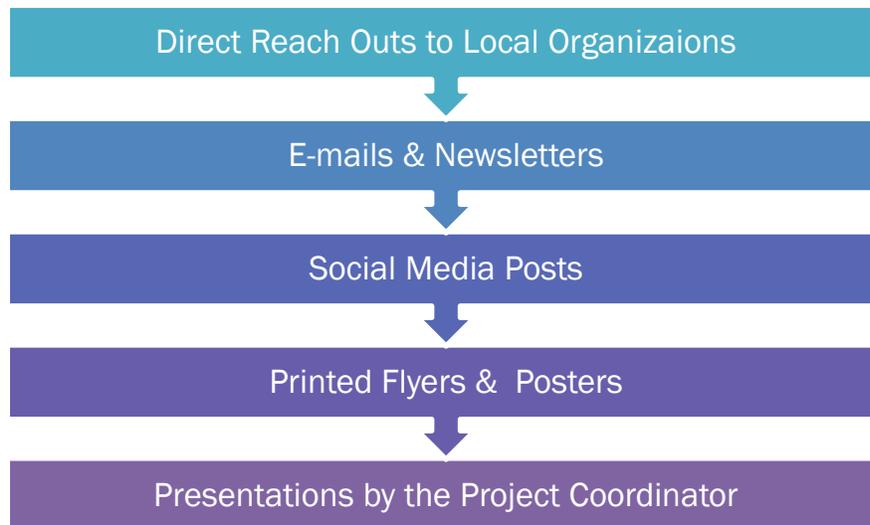


While this training was initially created for high school students it has been adapted to be appropriate for any volunteer/staff, across settings, whose role could benefit from this skill-building in relationships and understanding dementia.

***Host organizations will require additional site-specific training and orientation, during onboarding the site lead and Program Coordinator should work together to determine and coordinate these additional requirements.***

## 2.2 Promotion

Developing and sharing targeted promotional materials will help facilitate connections required to launch your program. The Project Coordinator, along with the Project Team, should reach out to their networks and identified contacts to begin onboarding partner organizations. Program recruitment methods can include:



A Program Overview is included in the IDC Program Toolkit that can be used to help shape targeted outreach utilizing tools such as [Canva](#). Below are links to templates of the promotional material used by the Champlain Dementia Networks IDC Program that you are welcome to use:

- ❖ [IDCP Information Brochure for families living with dementia Template](#)
- ❖ [IDCP Poster for families of those living with dementia Template](#)
- ❖ [IDCP Poster for Students Template](#)
- ❖ [IDCP Poster Family & Students Template](#)
- ❖ [IDCP Information Brochure for Students Template](#)
- ❖ [IDCP Instagram Post Template](#)
- ❖ [IDCP Twitter Post Template](#)

*The CDN's IDCP pilot reviewed social media based on target audiences i.e. TikTok, Instagram and Twitter for high school students, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter for healthcare organizations. A skilled Project Coordinator will utilize the most appropriate options for your team.*



## Phase 3: LAUNCH

### 3.1 Partner Organizations

The IDCP model involves a partnership between school boards/schools and a variety of local organizations such as retirement homes, long-term care, and community service settings such as Adult Day Programs. Each partner site requires a primary contact lead to facilitate the process with the Program Coordinator. To participate in the program as a Host organization, they must provide students with access to on-site staff and ideally will enable various levels of engagement with volunteer and co-op opportunities.

#### ROLE OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

- Promote program with individual schools and identify lead contact (i.e. Co-op teacher) to assist in promoting / recruiting students
- Provide guidance and feedback to Project Coordinator on required liability, consents, agreements etc. for students to participate
- Ensure relevant policies & procedures (consent, liability, etc) are implemented
- Participate in evaluations to share input, suggestions, and outcomes

#### ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

- Participate in promoting / recruiting students
- Ensure students adhere to all relevant policies & procedures (consent, liability, etc)
- Provide supervision and support to students throughout the program
- Partner with Project Coordinator and hosting host organizations in the companion matching process
- Participate in evaluations to share input, suggestions, and outcomes

#### ROLE OF HOST ORGANIZATIONS

- Identify lead contact to work with Project Coordinator
- Support lead contact in promoting/recruiting older adults and their care partners
- Confirm number of co-op placements available
- Provide organization specific requirements / training for volunteers
- Ideally enable various levels of engagement opportunities
- Provide students with access to on-site staff/Speak at coaching/mentorship sessions to share professional insights
- Partner with Project Coordinator / school lead in the companion matching process
- Provide regular opportunities for volunteers to visit their companion
- Share any issues with the Project Coordinator and/or co-op teacher as appropriate.

## 3.2. Volunteers

The Program Coordinator in partnership with the school/board lead will work to ensure the recruitment of passionate, responsible, and flexible volunteers using various recruitment methods such as those discussed in [section 2.2](#).

### VOLUNTEERS WILL BE:

Trained to understand dementia, focus on commonalities and having an enjoyable time together as well as how to manage possible challenging situations.

Matched with a person living with dementia and families who seek social engagement opportunities.

Introduced to a variety of career opportunities, by exploring the rewards of working with older adults by host organizations (i.e., marketing and social media, event planning, job shadowing, and evaluation / quality improvement).

Provided ongoing regular coaching/mentorship opportunities with local partners (health agencies, schools and the school board) in order to support them in their companion role.

**COVID 19 Considerations:** All participating students must be fully vaccinated and meet all health and safety requirements of organizations who are hosting them – this will include completing basic Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) training. The CDN’s IDCP has been structured to be flexible and responsive to changing conditions – for example, training was structured so that it can be provided online or in-person. Matching opportunities were similarly flexible. While the ideal is that companion time be spent primarily in-person, virtual opportunities are important to adapt to the infection prevention and control measures at that time.

### *Training*

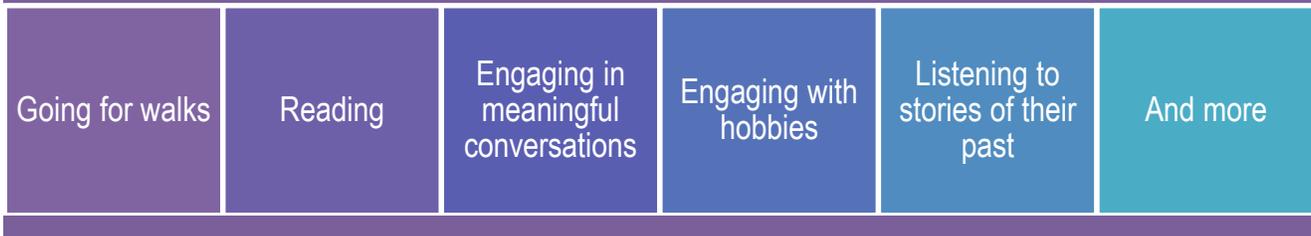
The primary goal of the training should be to help students focus on the person, rather than the dementia, and how they build relationships and make connections that are meaningful to both the student and person living with dementia. Volunteer training curriculum should enhance students’ understanding of dementia, the role of the companion, and the structure of the healthcare system/different settings.

As reviewed in [section 2.1](#) the key training topics identified to create the CDN-IDCP training curriculum meets these goals as well as provides volunteers with a certificate of completion and can be fully utilized by other programs across Ontario at no cost.

## Matching

Upon completion of training and acceptance into the program, the program coordinator will work with host organizations, the student and co-op teacher to find the most appropriate match. Host organizations can include long term care homes, retirement homes, and community service settings such as Adult Day Programs and groups taking place in outdoor public spaces. The match will be based on the needs and interests of the person living with dementia and the student's availability, interests, and knowledge. More details on the Matching along with a process Map can be found in IDC Program Toolkit.

The focus of the companion relationship should be on social connectedness rather than care and stimulate older adults with dementia in activities of mutual interest, which can include:



Students may be regular volunteers or do a co-op placement as a companion in healthcare organizations where students will have access to staff on-site.

## Co-op Placement Interview

Interviews should be scheduled for based on the student's availability and include placement questions, time for student questions, expectations / next steps and review of required documents, Police Records Check, Proof of Immunization, 2-Step TB Test, etc.).

## Coaching & Support

The Program Coordinator should hold bi-weekly check-in sessions with student to provide support with problem solving, debriefing experiences, identifying needs / training gaps, impact of role and self-care strategies, and celebrate successes. From these sessions the program coordinator will identify mentors/guest speakers to speak at next sessions with experience in the field. Refer to the IDC Program Toolkit for an example agenda & facilitator guide.

*From the CDN's IDCP experience volunteer coaching support starting at onboarding and continuing throughout the program will provide your companions with increased confidence and satisfaction. Suggestions to improve volunteers experience include:*

- Increase check-ins at the start of program*
- Encourage organizations to provide new volunteers with a 1-day mentoring opportunity by partnering them with an experienced volunteer*



## Phase 4: EVALUATE

Program evaluation is an important element to any program to ensure the desired outcomes are being met as well as identify areas for improvement. Evaluation should be included in orientation sessions, mid-point and end-point evaluation and input sessions, should be provided to co-op students, co-op teachers, healthcare organizations and other school board staff as appropriate. A sample student evaluation template has been provided in the IDC Program Toolkit. Below are some questions to consider to when building your programs evaluations:

### Students / Schools:

- Did the program impact the students' attitudes and beliefs about people living with dementia?
- Did students benefit from the companionship? If so, what how? If not, why?
- Did the program impact the career paths of students? If so, what how? If not, why?
- What impact did the program have on teachers/staff/school?
- What, if any, were the challenges / barriers experienced?

### Host Organizations:

- Was there an impact on the older adult's food in-take, sleep, mood, etc.?
- Did the staff benefit from the program?
- Where there any other measurable changes / benefits during the program?
- What, if any, were the challenges / barriers experienced?

### Older Adults and their Care Partners:

- Did the older adult / care partner see positive changes in quality of life (mood, sleep, etc.)?
- Did the care partner benefit from the companionship relationship?
- Did the older adult / care partner experience a decrease in social isolation / increase in social connection?
- Did the program impact the level of stress / wellness in the older adult and care partner?
- What, if any, were the challenges / barriers experienced?

## NEXT STEPS FOR THE CHAMPLAIN DEMENTIA NETWORK IDC PROGRAM

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The Champlain Dementia Network is committed to continuing to support the Intergenerational Dementia Companion Program, the next steps include:

- Providing continued access to CDN's IDCP online training certificate platform
- Data collection to ensure continued program improvement
- Development of additional leveled training certifications
- Accessible and online program materials
- French translation of all program materials
- Exploration of program-to-program support and regional/provincial evaluation

For any questions on this manual, use of the CDN training certification, or planned next steps, please reach out to the Champlain Dementia Network.

[www.champlainedmentianetwork.ca/contact-us](http://www.champlainedmentianetwork.ca/contact-us)