DementiAbility Guidelines for:

Name Badges in Aged Care

Guidelines Written by:
Gail Elliot, BASc, MA, Gerontologist & Dementia Specialist
DementiAbility Enterprises Inc. (2015)

DementiAbility Methods focus on enhancing lives by supporting memory loss and adding meaning, purpose, human connection and joy to each day.

Our Name Badge Goal:
To create a name badge culture in aged care that supports memory loss while also creating a standard of practice that focuses on addressing social needs by connecting people who provide and receive care.

There is nothing more personal than a person’s name! Use the person’s name – and let them see (and read) yours.

There is nothing more personal to us than the use of our name. Our name connects us to others and is the starting point for meeting new people, greeting friends and family and initiating all forms of health and business interactions.

The following guidelines have been created with the objective of supporting memory loss, connecting people and initiating conversations, all of which are important elements in relationship and person-centred care. While these guidelines were specifically developed for older adults with dementia, and other forms of memory loss, they are also recommended for anyone who wears a name badge.
First Steps for those in Long-Term Care (LTC)

Education:
Education is the first step in the process of developing policies around the use of name badges in LTC. Staff, volunteers and families need to understand that name badges support memory loss and also help to connect people, as they personalize interactions and help to initiate conversation and human connection.

Consent:
For residents that are not capable of making their own decisions, families will need to be asked to provide consent for their loved one to wear a name badge, as per existing policies associated with confidentiality and privacy. Create a consent form that is part of the admission process, explaining the importance of using name badges, and ask residents and families to sign it. (Note: The form could also seek permission to use the person’s name for other purposes, such as on the person’s door and on the table where the person sits for meals.) The same form should be used for those already living in the home.

Who should wear a name badge?

- **People living at home:** Those at home who no longer remember or recognize family, and friends, benefit when loved ones wear name badges with their name, their name and photo or name with a photo of the person in the past and the present (as they may recognize the younger photo but not the recent one).

- **Everyone who is in a long-term care home (living, working and visiting) should wear a name badge.**

- **Ask a resident to be a Name Badge Officer:** This person is asked to make sure all staff, residents and visitors are wearing a name badge.
Encourage Visitors to Wear a Name Badge: Place a table at the entrance of the home and/or of the unit with a sign that says, “Please make and wear a name badge” and place a sample that shows how the name should be written (illustrating the size and clarity). Be sure to include a black marker and sticky labels. If you have families who visit often, you might consider having one made for them and asking them to leave it on a name badge board when they leave.

What name should you put on the name badge?

For Residents/Program Participants: Ask each resident/program participant what he/she would like on his/her name badge. Some prefer to use first name, while others want a proper name, including titles (such as Dr. or Reverend).

Families: Loved ones might benefit if they have a photo of themselves at an earlier age along with a recent photo. This supports memory loss. An example is presented on the left.

For Staff: Staff should also be asked how they want to be addressed, and that is the name that should be put on the name badge. Minimize the information provided on the name badge.

How much information do you need?

The name of the staff member should be in large font and his/her job title/position should be in smaller font. When identifying their role consider what words make sense to those with dementia. Words such as “Personal Support Worker” may be meaningless to a person who has dementia. Some homes have used words such as “Nurse Helper”. The terminology is affected by the regulations of professional practice (e.g. – a Personal Care Worker cannot be called a “Nurse Assistant” because that might imply they are a Registered Nursing Assistant). Details about the organization, and other details that are policy driven, should be placed on the back of the name badge or on a separate badge.

Note that some people will read the job title and even think this is the person’s name. Those who have experienced this say that it opens up the lines of communication.
Before: You can’t see the name. 
   Too many details – badge cluttered. 
   Photo, name & name & logo of home included.

After: Name dominates the badge. 
   Her position is in smaller print.

• **Type of Font:** Use fonts that are easy to see, with no curls, such as Arial or Avenir. Bold text may be preferable if space permits.

• **Colour:** The font should be black and the background should contrast with the black font. Ask your residents what they can see best. Many select yellow background with black font as their preference, but white can also be clearly seen by most. Which one do you see best?

• **Size of Font:** Use a large font, within the limits of space, based on the name of the individual. (Long names may limit what you can do.)

**This is 48 bold.**

- Size 48 (as a minimum size) is recommended. Test to determine the best size for the residents who will be using the name badges. (Note: remember that some people are illiterate and others cannot see or read name badges.) If the residents can’t see the name badge, they can’t read it!
• **What type of name badge should you use?** There are a number of options. You can use a:
  - plastic case that has a clip on it (computer generated and cut to size, thus providing lots of flexibility around the colour of the paper),
  - plastic name badge (professionally produced by a name badge business) or
  - magnetic name badge (not recommended for those with a pace maker).

  The decision should be based on cost, visibility (no glare, and can be clearly seen), safety and how easy it is to wear (e.g. – putting it on and taking it off and keeping it in the line of sight). Lanyards are not recommended as they hang too low and constantly move, making them difficult to see.

• **Where should they be worn?** Name badges should be worn in the same place on all people. Wear them on the right side of the body in the upper chamber of the chest (as it is the area that connects to an extension of a handshake). Caution against placing them too low (e.g. – low on the breast of a woman or in the belly button area, as with a lanyard that hangs too low). Make sure one’s hair does not cover the name badge.

• **Who ensures that residents wear name badges?** Organizations need to establish policies that require staff and residents to wear name badges and to use names during every interaction. Routines need to be established to ensure that name badges are on residents in the morning and taken off clothing at the end of the day. Residents should be encouraged to assume this responsibility, if they are able. It would make sense for the personal care worker on each morning and evening shift to assume the “name tag” responsibility, thus providing assistance to those who need their help. As Granger (2013) states, “It costs so little, and means so much.”

• **Explanations about why you are using name badges:** Since many people with dementia do not believe they need memory supports, it is important to create explanations other than ones that focus on their memory loss. A couple of ideas/suggestions are provided below.
  - **Suggestion for the Residents/Program Participants:** Tell the residents that your home/organization wants to help new residents to feel welcome, and a name badge will achieve that goal. Also, a name badge will help them to make new connections.
  - **Suggestion for staff, families and volunteers in organizations:** Some homes argue that people with dementia wouldn’t wear a
name badge at home, so why would residents wear them in the nursing home? The answer is simple. Tell people that when professional health workers come into a person’s private home, they would naturally wear a name badge to identify them by name and position. Also, we recommend that people supporting individuals with memory loss who are living at home wear name badges.

**End Goal:** When persons with dementia are addressed by name, healthcare providers are more connected to those in their care. Ultimately, this simple shift in culture creates an environment where one feels safe, supported and connected to those around them. It is our recommendation that all persons (patients, care providers and visitors) wear name badges as we embark to shift culture and treat all persons in mind, body and spirit. Moreover, it is recommended that family understand the importance of wearing name badges, whether their loved ones are in home, hospital or long-term care. The goal is to add quality of life in all aspects of support and care.

Note: A note of thanks is extended to Anne Kelly, RN, Montessori Ageing Support Services, Australia, Michelle S. Bourgeois, Ph.D., CCC/SLP, University of South Florida AND Jennifer Brush, CCC/SLP, Brush Development, Ohio, for their contribution to these guidelines.

For more information about name badges see the Canadian Nursing Home Journal (in press).