

U-First! is a training program that helps frontline staff to develop a common knowledge base, language, values and approach to caring for people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias by:

- Understanding the person living with dementia and associated behaviour changes
- Working as a team to develop individualized support strategies

If you are caring for someone with dementia, the U-First! Program will help you:

- **U**nderstand that there can be many reasons why you might see behaviour changes when a person is living with dementia
- **F**lag the possible changes that you may see when you are supporting a person living with dementia
- **I**nteract in a new way with both skill and a common understanding of dementia
- **R**eflect and report on not only new behaviours you may see in the person you are supporting, but also share your strategies and your tips on working with a person who is living with dementia
- **S**upport the person with dementia, their family and friends in everyday activities
- **T**o know that you are part of an important Team caring for the person with dementia

Understanding Dementia:

Many of the clients or residents you work with will have been diagnosed with some form of dementia.

Dementia is a term used to describe a variety of brain disorders that include symptoms such as loss of memory, confusion and problems with speech and understanding, and changes in mood and behaviour.

One of the causes of dementia is Alzheimer's disease, which is a progressive, degenerative disease of the brain, which causes thinking and memory to become seriously impaired.

You may see changes in the person's ability to interact with the people around them and perform activities of daily living.

When we ask people who work with people who have dementia about the number one difficulty they face as a care provider, the answer is always a challenging behaviour, such as aggression, wandering, physical resistance or agitation.

We call this behaviour "responsive," because it is not unpredictable, meaningless aggression or agitation.

We understand that:

- The person is responding to something negative, frustrating, or confusing in his or her environment
- The reasons or triggers for challenging behaviours may be external rather than within the individual
- Problems in the social or physical environment can be addressed and changed

U-First! Training will help you to work more effectively with people living with dementia, creating a healthy workplace for you.

U-First! provides a practical method for shared problem-solving and care planning, it also assists with the implementation of P.I.E.C.E.S. concepts.

Unique to U-First! is the innovative yet practical "job aide" (the U-First! wheel) which serves as a tool to promote on-the-job dialogue and communication between partners in care.

Note: U-First! is not P.I.E.C.E.S. training. However, participants learn basic P.I.E.C.E.S. concepts and how to apply these to observing changes and participating in care planning.

How do care providers benefit from U-First! Training?

- Increased awareness of the causes of behaviour in people with dementia
- Improved ability to handle situations that arise
- Increased teamwork with other staff
- Increased professionalism
- Increased ability to prevent aggression
- Reduced stress

**Source: Third Party Survey Data Evaluation December 2007 (Alzheimer Society of Ontario)*

Delivery of U-First*:

In Person:

U-First! Training is delivered by a U-First! trainer as a one-day (6-hour) format. Class size is minimum 12 participants, maximum 24 participants. Cost \$75. Currently piloting in Regina area.

Online:

U-First! Online is offered over a 3-week period, in a blended learning format. Participants are responsible for completing specific activities each week and should be willing to commit approximately 3-5 hours per week for the course. \$75

*For a participant to be considered U-First! trained and receive a certificate of completion, they must be registered at the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan

Visit www.u-first.ca for more information and to register for a session.

Contact Joanne Michael, Director of Programs and Operations - jmichael@alzheimer.sk.ca
306-949-4141