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ISP staff, offenders trained to care for those with dementia

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Dementia gets diagnosed every 68 seconds in America. An estimated 5.4 million* Americans have one of the seven forms of dementia. One in nine people over the age of 65 have dementia.*

Being an individual who is incarcerated does not preclude anyone from joining these statistics. At Iowa State Penitentiary, 25 percent of the population is 51 years or older, 11 percent is 65 years or older. "Dementia is a very real thing inside our secure perimeter" said Rebecca Bowker, Executive Officer "So when Rachel Benda, Director at the Kensington, contacted the prison about training on dementia, it just made sense"

The prison partnered with the staff at The Kensington, RN Mandi Garcia and Certified Dementia Practitioner Cindy Greer, who were excited to work with the staff and offenders at ISP. "We love what we do! The Kensington has the most educated and caring staff around. We've been specializing in Dementia care since 2004," says Rachel Benda, Kensington Director. "We put a lot of time and energy into training our staff and equipping them with the tools they need to be able to give the best care for those with dementia We believe we should share that with others."

Garcia and Greer agreed to do multiple sessions to accommodate staffing schedules. The first day was primarily classroom discussion surrounding symptoms of the disease, reactions and the various types of dementia. The important lesson being driven home, was people with dementia do not process sensory information in the same capacity as other people do.

The second day the Kensington staff brought items that would allow both staff and offenders to get a small taste of what a person who has dementia feels like. Gloves reduce sensation in one's hands, shoe inserts make it uncomfortable to walk, glasses reduce one's ability to see and headphones that simulates audio that is over stimulation.

The trainees were then given tasks to try to complete while wearing the gear. None were able to complete the tasks successfully. "I think the exercise was very beneficial" said Bowker "It provided the care givers a very different perspective on those they care for."