

First Link® connects people with dementia and their families to support and education through the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia.

### **How First Link® Works**

A healthcare or community service provider refers individuals and families affected by dementia to the Alzheimer Society, using the First Link® referral form. The Society staff contacts the client/patient and with their permission, continues contact throughout their journey with dementia, providing information, support and referral to resources and services.

### **Benefits to Physicians and other Healthcare Providers**

- You can focus on the medical/clinical aspects of dementia care and our staff can provide ongoing support, education, care strategies, and help navigating the healthcare system.
- First Link® can help patients better understand dementia, identify their needs, and come to appointments better prepared.
- This support may result in fewer unplanned visits to emergency and other healthcare facilities.

### **Benefits to Patients/Clients**

- Persons with dementia and families receive early access to information, services and support.
- They receive ongoing support throughout the continuum of the disease.
- Family caregivers have enhanced coping skills, which can reduce the overall incidence and intensity of caregiving crisis situations.
- Family caregivers are more knowledgeable, and more confident in their caregiving role.
- With early intervention, people with dementia have a voice in planning for their own care while they are still able to do so.

### **Benefits to the Healthcare System**

- Patients are connected to services at a local level for a more community-based continuum of care.
- Families that benefit from early intervention through education, support and counselling can delay long term care placement, resulting in significant savings for the health care system.
- Visits to the emergency room and crisis related long term care placements are reduced when family caregivers are better prepared.