

## Where Should I Start? How Elder Care Services Are Organized in Massachusetts

Over the past 50 years, the availability of elder care services has expanded greatly as a result of federal legislation. These increased services are highly beneficial, but there are so many names and acronyms for agencies and groups that sometimes it seems like alphabet soup!

In Massachusetts, eldercare and caregiver services are delivered primarily through a combination of private and not-for-profit organizations serving different geographic regions. The state contracts with these organizations to deliver services, using both federal and state funds. You can also purchase services from private agencies if you do not qualify for subsidized care.

The key purpose of this Handbook is to give current caregivers and future caregivers easy access to organizations that provide elder care services and information. The book does not have information on everything that is available, but it can connect you with the elder care organizations in your community that do have this information - in this way, the Handbook is designed as a "Gateway to Resources."

Here are the key gateway organizations that coordinate elder care in Massachusetts and provide access to a broad array of non-profit and for-profit agencies.

### 1. Executive Office of Elder Affairs (Elder Affairs)

The Massachusetts Office of Elder Affairs oversees the network of non-profit and municipally delivered resources and services for elders and caregivers. It runs a statewide information number that can be accessed by calling, **1-800-AGE-INFO**, or go to: [www.800AgeInfo.com](http://www.800AgeInfo.com). You can find information on resources within your particular geographic area by calling this number or going to the web site.

The Office of Elder Affairs and the network of non-profit senior care agencies in Massachusetts have created an elders website that you can find through the state's main web address: [www.Mass.Gov](http://www.Mass.Gov)

If you are a caregiver who is looking for caregiver support resources, here's what you do on the Internet:

1. Go to the home page for Massachusetts state government: [www.Mass.Gov](http://www.Mass.Gov) and click on "Residents."
2. This page lists 14 different topics starting with Labor and Employment; go to the second column and click on "Elders."
3. The "Elders" page lists twelve topics. Click on "Caregiver Support."

In this Handbook, these instructions will be shown as: [www.Mass.Gov](http://www.Mass.Gov) > Residents > Elders > Caregiver Support. Services listed on the state's website are provided by a combination of the state, private, non-profit and community organizations. You can also find information provided by state agencies and departments such as Housing, Health, Transportation, Secretary of State, and Attorney General at: [www.Mass.Gov](http://www.Mass.Gov).

## 2. Aging Service Access Points (ASAP)

There are 27 of these agencies serving regions throughout the Commonwealth and they are known in the network of elder care service providers as "A-saps." ASAPs are private, non-profit agencies with governing boards made up of at least 51% representation of people age 60 or older and appointed by the local Councils on Aging.

ASAPs are designated by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (Elder Affairs) to coordinate services on behalf of the elders and caregivers in three major areas:

**Information and referral (I&R):** ASAPs provide free information about a wide range of elder care services and resources through trained I&R specialists. They also have trained volunteer counselors to provide health information through the SHINE program, which helps with medical billing problems, reducing insurance costs, and completing public benefits applications.

**Services for the Elderly:** The ASAPs coordinate services for the *MA Home Care Program* for elders who want to remain in their own home, but need assistance with activities of daily living. Elder Affairs is the primary funding source for these programs. Co-payments for services are based on a sliding fee scale. Core services include:

- A comprehensive in-home assessment conducted by a case manager;
- Development of a care plan which is reassessed regularly;
- Home care services delivered through a network of subcontracted provider agencies.

**Support for Caregivers:** The ASAPs develop local programs for the *MA Family Caregiver Support Program*, including information and referral, counseling, training, support groups, and access to respite care. Caregivers are eligible for this program if they are caring for an individual 60 years or older.

Each ASAP serves a group of contiguous communities within a geographical area. See the [Directory in Section 8](#), for contact information on the ASAP serving your city or town.

## 3. Councils on Aging ("COAs")

There are 348 Councils on Aging in Massachusetts serving the state's 351 cities and towns. These municipally appointed agencies range from small volunteer run programs to large multi-site elder service providers with a wide range of programs and services available. They are the front line for many elder services in your community. COAs have no regular funding and must get funds from either their municipal government, or private grants or donations. Volunteers are critical to the operation of the COAs, regardless of their size or scope of services.

While each COA is unique to its community, most Councils offer information and referral, transportation, outreach, meals (congregate and home delivered), health screening, and fitness and recreation programs. Some COAs also provide health insurance benefits counseling (SHINE), food shopping assistance, telephone reassurance, friendly visiting and other in-home activities, peer support groups, supportive day care, pre-retirement programs, minor home repair, computer training, case management and intergenerational programs, among many other activities and services.

Excerpt of MIT Caregiver Handbook <http://web.mit.edu/workplacecenter/hndbk/sec1.html>

See the [Directory, Section 8](#) for contact information on the COA serving your city or town. For more information about the Councils on Aging, you can visit the state associations' website at [Mass Councils on Aging On Line](#), or call the Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging office at 413-527-6425. The address is 116 Pleasant Street, Room 3109, Easthampton MA 01027-2740. E-mail: [info@mcoaonline.com](mailto:info@mcoaonline.com).

#### 4. Area Agencies on Aging ("AAAs")

There are 23 of these agencies in Massachusetts, set up by the federal government to provide funding for many of the eldercare services provided in your community by the ASAPs (Aging Service Access Points) described above.

Most "Triple A's" - as they are called - are also **ASAPs**, but there are three AAA's that are not: Boston Commission on the Elderly, Central Mass Elder Services, and the Old Colony Planning Council.

See the [Directory, Section 8](#) for contact information on the AAA serving your city or town.

#### Other Kinds of Organizations Providing Elder Care Services

It is important to understand that these four gateway organizations are just a part of a complex elder care service delivery system in Massachusetts. These groups each have their own programs and services, but they are just some of the providers statewide.

The overall delivery system is a complex mix of non-profit and for-profit agencies and organizations. Some of the other kinds of groups include:

- Hospitals with their own geriatric medicine departments and geriatric community service programs;
- Rehabilitation facilities with their own inpatient services and community-based follow-up programs;
- Out-patient centers linked to HMOs and community health clinics;
- Industry trade associations and professional associations — representing hospitals, extended care facilities, home care agencies, geriatric care managers and others — that support their members and offer information and educational programs to the public;
- Community agencies that serve a particular ethnic group or faith tradition, but are usually open to others outside that group or religion, and provide a range of services such as transportation assistance, home care, transportation and meals;
- Housing Authorities, continuing care retirement communities, assisted living residences and nursing homes in Massachusetts.

If you wish to contact one of these types of health care providers or groups, contacting your local ASAP/AAA or COA is a good place to start and contact information, arranged by city or town, is available in [Section 8, Directory of MA Gateway Organizations](#).