



ActiveAgers Toolkit

Activating ActiveAgers in the Bay State



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Welcome to MCOA's ActiveAgers



MCOA's ActiveAgers (ActiveAgers) is an exciting new initiative, highlighting physical activity programs at Massachusetts municipal councils on aging (COAs), centers for active living and senior centers. **ActiveAgers is a collective of local COA physical activity programs.**

Since a variety of approaches reduce disease and improve quality of life, we want to chronicle the entire range of COA fitness programs across Massachusetts.

ActiveAgers recognizes participation, is open to all abilities, and rewards councils on aging and individuals.

This toolkit:

- outlines how the program works
- provides messaging samples and ideas for COAs, and
- contains resources for participants.



HOW IT WORKS

The ActiveAgers program is built on work COAs are already doing. To participate, COAs:

1. Run physical activity programs
2. Submit participation data
3. Get ready to win
4. Celebrate

1. Run physical activity programs

ActiveAgers is the next step beyond MCOA's walking programs. Walking and all your other fitness programs count under ActiveAgers. **Schedule them as usual and track participation using your center's software.**

As resources permit, offer new activities. Explore community resources, poll participants or peers, and consult the ideas in this toolkit.



2. Submit participation data

Submitting data provides a picture of what's happening statewide, and makes your center and participants eligible for raffle prizes.

Participation data must be submitted by September and January. See the deadlines below and how to submit it.

1. Export fitness program participation data from your center's software system.

- a. Use your default report ([see an example with default settings](#))
- b. Or use [this template](#) displaying the minimum information needed for submission (participation numbers

2. Submissions must be in Excel

3. Email data to tara@mcoaonline.org

4. Participation deadlines are:

- a. September 15, 2024 - for programs run January 1 - August 30
- b. January 10, 2025 - for programs run September 1 - December 31



3. Get ready to win

Councils on aging who submit fitness program data are eligible to win a \$250 grant. COA participants can win \$25 Visa gift cards.

Selection of winners - COAs

- Ten (10) councils on aging will win \$250 grants to use toward fitness programming.
- There are two drawing periods (two chances to win). They occur in September and January.
- Each COA submitting participation data during a drawing period, receives one raffle entry.
- MCOA will randomly choose winners and mail checks to COAs

Selection of winners - PARTICIPANTS

- At least 125 participants will win \$25 Visa gift cards.
 - MCOA will randomly choose from all the programs submitted then notify the COA of the winning program. (*Hampden - Functional Fitness, Rehoboth - Drums Alive, etc.*)
 - The COA will randomly choose a winner from the identified program. COAs could use a [random number generator](#).
 - Gift cards will be mailed to COAs to give to the winners.

Note: These are separate prize pools. Individual winners *could* come from a COA that did not win a \$250 prize.

See next page for deadlines.



3. Get ready to win (cont.)

FIRST DRAWING

Covers January - August programs

Deadline to submit program data: September 15

Drawing held: September 25 (ActiveAger day)

SECOND DRAWING

Covers September - December programs

Deadline to submit program data: January 10, 2025

Drawing held: January 15, 2025

Winners

- Ten (10) councils on aging will win \$250 grants to use toward fitness programming. MCOA will keep a list of winning COAs.
- At least 125 participants will win \$25 Visa gift cards. MCOA will not keep a list of winning participants.



4. Celebrate

MCOA wants to celebrate with you!

- By December 31, MCOA will visit at least twelve COAs throughout the state for a kick off, wrap up or celebration event. Provided is a healthy aging presentation or pep-talk, and \$100 for food, decorations, etc. These occasions can coincide with a currently scheduled event. If you are interested in one of these events, email tara@mcoaonline.com. Generally, requests will be fulfilled based on availability and on a first-come, first-served basis.
- **ActiveAgers Day**, September 25 is our statewide day of celebration! Join us in honoring your efforts, programs and participants. Host a party, have sports banquet, or highlight your program on social media. Highlight ActiveAgers as activators spreading the word it's never too late to be active.
- **Feel free to use the [ActiveAgers logo](#)** and any of the messaging in this toolkit
- When promoting on social media, please include hashtags [#activeagers](#) [#mcoaactiveagers](#)

For scheduling and questions, contact tara@mcoaonline.org.



Messaging for COAs

Use these tips to encourage participation:

- Everyone who participates in [insert your program name] is eligible to win a prize.
- Regular exercise can reduce the risk of developing dementia
- Start comfortably and slowly as you increase physical activity.
- Caring for one's physical health is vital for healthy aging.
- Start comfortably and slowly as you become more active
- Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity weekly. (Get your heart beating faster and your breathing harder.)
- Every week, do at least two days of muscle-strengthening activity. (Make your muscles work harder than usual.)
- Choose a mix of activities that improve aerobic capacity and muscle strength.
- Be active at a combination of intensities.
- Maintaining endurance, strength and balance supports one's independence.
- Being consistently active provides mental health and social benefits.
- Be active consistently, even for only a few minutes a day.
- Flexible, inclusive, varied physical activity is part of every wellness wheel model out there. While walking is the easiest form for most, ActiveAgers includes all activities offered by COAs and in their communities.



Ideas for COAs

Build out your fitness programming by listing ideas, tools and barriers. Identify your current programs and map out additional possibilities.

A simple internet search generates many options. Here are **three free** programs to get you started.

1. [Move Your Way for Older Adults, MYW activity planner](#)
2. [National Councils on Aging - exercise programs](#)
3. [Massachusetts state parks and Universal Access Program](#)

Need a springboard for ideas and themes?

- connect to health observances and celebrations
- try multicultural activities like Zumba, salsa dancing, Irish step dancing
- go retro with a weekly disco, Jane Fonda's videos, hula-hoops, limbo stick, and field trips to the local rollerink

Share your tools and ideas. Add them to the [MyMCOA ActiveAgers folder](#), start a discussion on MyMCOA or post on social media with #mcoaactiveagers or #activeagers.

GETTING & STAYING ACTIVE



The next few pages support participants. Share as is or modify as needed. Included is short list of resources and a simple walking journal.

Use the space below to list additional resources needed to keep older adults active in your community. See if you can answer the following questions.

- What are their requests?
- Is there a wish/to-do list supporting their continued activity?
- What tools can you provide in the short- or long-term?
- What can your partners provide?

TOOLS FOR PARTICIPANTS



Set a goal

Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

1. Decide your ultimate goal.
 - What is your long-term goal? What would you like to be able to do? When do you want to reach your goal?
2. Map out how to achieve your long-term goal.
 - What do you need to do first? What is the next step? What time, tools and supports do you need?
3. Set specific, small (short-term) goals.
 - Is this taking the first step? Is this 1/4 of the way to the ultimate goal? Is it another measurement?
4. Monitor your progress regularly
 - Keep a log of your actions even if you don't advance each time. Aim to do 1% better, whether that's doing more, going faster, improving your form, etc.
5. Adapt to changing circumstances.
 - Life gets in the way. Let it. Don't push through an injury or illness. Pick back up when you can.
6. Don't be too hard on yourself.
 - If you haven't been active for a while, acknowledge you're starting from a new place. Plan to progress at a different pace. It's never too late to start, even if it seems hard at first. Be proud of your effort and keep going. Even a few minutes a day has benefits.

TOOLS FOR PARTICIPANTS



Measure your progress

Progress is measured in many ways. Weight alone is not an indicator of health so skip the scale and try another method. Pick a method **before** you start. Note your improvement over time.

- Has your blood pressure or cholesterol improved?
- Do your clothes fit differently?
- How far can you walk?
- How often can you walk?
- Is it easier to carry items like groceries, books or tools?
- Can you climb stairs easier?
- How many flights of stairs can you climb?
- How many squats, push ups, jumping jacks can you do?
- How long you balance on one leg?
- Can you stretch further with a standing or seated forward fold?
- Can you sit comfortably in a deep squat?
- What new activities are you trying?
- Has your mood improved?
- Has your waist-to-hip ratio improved? (This calculation considers the amount of abdominal fat, a predictor for some diseases.)

TOOLS FOR PARTICIPANTS



Stay motivated

Keeping active improves quality of life. It's easier to stay motivated if you know why you lose motivation. Did you choose a goal that is too hard? Do you prefer to work out in a group but live alone? Are you afraid to get going after years of inactivity?

Why do you lose motivation and what can you do to prevent it?

- find an exercise or accountability buddy
- remove the pressure (you don't need to have the best workout every time)
- break it up (three 10-minute strolls v. a 30-minute walk)
- remember the hardest part can be getting going
- pair your activity with another habit (longer dog walks, bicep curls with the grocery bags, etc.)
- choose from a range of activities and try new things
- alternate individual and group activities
- revisit a favorite sport or skill from decades ago
- explore options in your community
- adjust or set a new goal if you need or want to
- find a training partner
- reward yourself with something small
- remind yourself why activity is good for you

TOOLS FOR PARTICIPANTS



Reminders

Regular physical activity has many benefits. Check all that are important to you then post the list where you'll see it every day.

Improves or increases

- immune function
- independence
- lean body mass (muscles + a few organs)
- physical performance
- self-esteem
- endorphins ('feel good' hormones)
- sleep
- strength
- coordination
- flexibility
- social engagement
- brain function

Decreases or diminishes

- chronic diseases (heart disease, diabetes)
- the need for some medications
- the risk of falls
- stress
- sleep disorders
- recovery time from injuries and illnesses
- social isolation
- depression
- anxiety
- dementia risk

What other physical activity benefits are important to you?

TOOLS FOR PARTICIPANTS



Walking Journal

Many people enjoy walking as well as participating in a center’s fitness program. For those looking to track their progress, MCOA shares a walking journal on the next page. You can track steps, miles, minutes or days active.

Sample entries



Walking Journal

○Days ○Miles ○Steps **✗**Minutes

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Week total
Week 1	11			14		20	37	82
Week 2		18	20		9		22	69
Week 3	45			20			20	85
...								



Walking Journal

○Days ○Miles ○Steps ○Minutes

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Week total
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Week 5								
Week 6								
Week 7								
Week 8								
Week 9								
Week 10								
Week 11								
Week 12								
Week 13								
Week 14								
Week 15								
Week 16								
Week 17								
Week 18								
Week 19								
Week 20								
Week 21								
Week 22								
Week 23								
Week 24								
Week 25								
Week 26								
Grand total								

FAQs



- Who can participate?
MCOA ActiveAgers is open to Massachusetts municipal councils on aging and residents aged 60+ participating in COA fitness programs.
- Do people have to register?
Participants must register with and participate in a council on aging's physical activity program.
- How many people will win a gift card?
At least 125 winners will receive a physical \$25 Visa gift card.
- When will people know if they won a gift card?
Winners will be notified by their local council on aging shortly after each prize drawing (September 25 and January 15).
- How many councils on aging will win?
Ten (10) councils on aging will win a \$250 cash prize.
- Can a participant win multiple prizes?
No, each participant can only win once.
- Can a council on aging win multiple prizes?
No, each council can only win once.
- Who do I contact with questions?
Email Tara Hammes tara@mcoaonline.org.

Privacy Policy

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