

Elements of an Effective Council on Aging Board



A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR COUNCIL ON AGING BOARD MEMBERS



Serving on your Council on Aging Board
is not just a commitment;

it's a promise to support older adults, caregivers and the community.

*“Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world.
For indeed, that’s all who ever have.” – Margaret Mead*



Massachusetts Councils On Aging

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Welcome and congratulations on your new role as a Council on Aging (COA) board member.

The new “Elements of an Effective Council on Aging Board” resource guide was created through a collaboration of COA directors, COA board members, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) and Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA). Their individual experiences, coupled with a unique “on the job” perspective integrates local differences to develop the best processes and recommend proper solutions. This guide’s pages contain the most updated information and methods proven to aid COA board members in making the most effective decisions concerning their COA.

You have an important role to play on behalf of older adults in your city or town. The guide is designed to provide an overview of your role and responsibilities as a COA board member. We are confident that this guide will be a valuable resource to you as a COA board member. Please keep in mind that none of the 350 COAs in the Commonwealth are exactly alike. Nevertheless, the basic roles and responsibilities of COA board members are very much the same.

This resource guide includes information on the roles and responsibilities of COA board members, the COA’s governing documents, the latest laws and regulations affecting COAs, and resources and support that can help you be a more effective board member. The digital edition of this resource guide features clickable links for convenient navigation.

We hope that this guide enhances this important volunteer experience for you. Thank you for dedicating your time and expertise to the COA, and for your service to older adults in Massachusetts.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth H. Connel".

DEDICATIONS



Emmett Schmarsow

Prior to his retirement, Emmett Schmarsow served as the Council on Aging Program Manager at the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs from January 1977 through November 2020. Emmett had realized for many years that volunteer Board members were as integral a part of the elder services world as were COA professional staff. In addition to his other duties, he traversed the commonwealth numerous times over the years, offering workshops and seminars to Council on Aging board members about “what to do” and “how to do it.” Each session covered a wide variety of topics from board development, best practices and working relationships to the MA aging network, programs, communications, and related issues. With his leaving, and realizing this educational opportunity was no longer being offered, MCOA took up the challenge of continuing Emmett’s work, not only gathering an extensive body of knowledge necessary for COA board members but expanding this information base and providing for its usefulness, distribution, and availability to members of all 350 Councils in Massachusetts. *“Ask. Smile. Keep your sense of humor. And tell their story.”* E. Schmarsow



David P. Stevens

David P. Stevens leaves behind a remarkable history of activism and advocacy for the health, social, and economic well-being of older adults who may have been marginalized. David's tireless work ethic influenced and marshalled decades of Massachusetts policy makers to support services for older adults and his influence is legendary. He received national recognition by the National Council on Aging for his work. MCOA continues to carry on David's philosophy as it continues to serve as a familiar guiding light for those in the aging network who worked with him. David firmly believed that investing in training and education of COA staff significantly benefited older adults and their families. He was deeply committed to providing COA staff with the professional development training and tools they needed to be successful in the areas of advocacy, community-based care, municipal laws and obligations, consumer education, and technical assistance.

David dedicated more than 40 years as an advocate serving older adults in Massachusetts. Throughout his career, he held leadership positions at various organizations, including serving as Executive Director at the Massachusetts Council on Aging (MCOA), Director of Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) at Springfield Elder Services, and Families USA Foundation. David passed away after a brief battle with cancer at the young age of 67.



INTRODUCTION

As your board member journey begins, we encourage you to use this guide as a resource throughout your term. We hope that it will help you to better understand the COA's mission and goals, board member roles and responsibilities, and legal obligations. We value your contributions and believe this will be a fulfilling experience for you, while making a positive impact on the lives of older adults in your community.

In summary, here are specific ways that you can use the guide:

- *To learn more about the roles and responsibilities of COA board members.*
- *To gain a better understanding of the COA's governing documents.*
- *To understand the Massachusetts aging network and the importance of building relationships.*
- *To stay up to date on the municipal laws and regulations affecting COA boards.*
- *To find resources and support that can help you to be a more effective board member.*

Please note that every municipality operates differently and despite the differences in COAs, there are also many commonalities that unite them.

Special considerations include the following:

- *Board members should be aware that individual communities have different ways of operating boards, and it is important to understand and defer to community practices.*
- *Consult with your COA director about the COA's governing by-laws, and any caveats pertaining to changes to them, as well as day-to-day responsibilities and management of the COA department.*
- *Keep in mind that the COA department in your community may have a different title, such as the Department of Senior Services, Community Center, or Elder Affairs.*

ABOUT MCOA

MCOA is a nonprofit membership association of the 350 municipal Councils on Aging and senior centers. COAs are the first stop on the continuum of care. We support the 1.7 million older adults, 60 and over in Massachusetts, in leading healthy, purposeful lives.

MCOA Mission Statement: Building strategic partnerships to educate, empower, and advocate for professionals who work with older adults.

MCOA Vision Statement: Statewide collaboration to advance the quality of life for older adults.

MCOA Positioning Statement: MCOA will be the principal statewide organization to support municipalities, membership, and other organizations that serve older adults through advocacy, networking, professional development, consumer education, and resource opportunities.

MCOA Value Words: Educate, Advocate, Collaborate.

COUNCILS ON AGING: FROM LEGISLATION TO MISSION AND ACTION

The Statute that Established Councils on Aging: A Council on Aging (COA) is a department of municipal government authorized under Chapter 40 Section 8B of Massachusetts General Laws. This “permissive legislation” allows a municipality to establish a Council on Aging for the purpose of coordinating and/or carrying out programs to address aging issues in coordination with the programs of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

There is pending legislation regarding the above MGL that establishes Councils on Aging. As of the release date of Elements of an Effective Council on Aging Board: A Resource Guide for Council on Aging Board Members, a legislative amendment is currently pending before the 193rd General Court of the Massachusetts Legislature that shall clarify the language in the existing law that reflects the current constructs of COA Board authority, as COA boards typically serve in an advisory (not supervisory) capacity.

Responsibility: As a COA Board member, you are responsible to the elected body of your town or city government and ultimately to the citizens of your community. The enabling language authorizing the COA may have broadly stated its mission. The COA may wish to further adopt its own goals, priorities, and outcomes toward that end. Understanding your charge is essential.

Municipal Department: A Council on Aging (COA) is a department of local municipal government that provides essential outreach, social and health services, advocacy, information, and referrals to help older adults, their families, and caregivers. COA staff are experts when it comes to helping residents navigate the complex network of services and resources. In Massachusetts, 350 communities have a COA, which acts as a focal point for resources and support for older adults within the community.

Here are some key things to know about COAs in Massachusetts:

Mission: To help older adults maintain their independence, health, and well-being while living in their communities for as long as possible. What makes the COA unique? You are, in fact, the only public social service department in most cities and towns in the commonwealth.

What defines aging? Most COAs begin “aging services” at age 60, although some may start at 50. (Aging is not defined in the enabling legislation.)

In effect:

- *COAs help seniors remain independent and in the community by providing information, choices, support, and opportunities by linking needs and resources.*
- *COAs identify unmet needs and develop and implement programs, services, and activities to meet such needs.*
- *Many COAs incorporate education and advocacy on behalf of older adults into their mission statement. Board members must be committed to the department’s mission and serve as the municipality’s ambassadors and champions of the COA.*

**“Ask. Smile.
Keep Your Sense
of Humor.
And tell their
story.”**

E. SCHMARSOW



Services: COAs offer a wide range of services, programs, outreach support, wellness, and recreational classes, typically delivered at senior centers or community centers. No two centers are alike, and the programs vary widely. For a more comprehensive list of activities offered at senior centers: **See Appendix A: MCOA’s Council on Aging Services: About COAs**

Here are a few services COAs provide:

- *Socialization activities and events: such as educational workshops, recreational and social programs, and virtual programming.*
- *Health and wellness programs: such as group fitness classes, health screenings, nutrition counseling, and chronic disease management programs.*
- *Transportation assistance: to help older adults get to appointments, shopping, and other essential activities.*
- *Meal programs: such as congregate meals at the senior center or home-delivered meals.*
- *Benefits counseling: to help older adults understand and access government benefits they may be eligible for.*
- *Outreach and Caregiver support: such as support groups, educational resources, and respite care.*
- *Information and referral: to connect older adults to other community resources and services.*

- *Funding: COAs are funded through a combination of municipal budgets, state, and federal grants, as well as private donations.*
- *Accessibility: COAs are open to all older adults in the community, regardless of their income or ability to pay.*

COA Directors as Municipal Employees: COA directors are hired by and ultimately responsible to the appointing authority—typically the chair of the select board or mayor, the town/city manager or administrator, human services department, or, very rarely, the COA itself. The appointing authority has the power to hire, evaluate and/or terminate the director. COA boards are primarily advisory and support the COA director. They provide policy input, help set goals and aims, advocate and further the COA’s mission. Know and observe your local policy or rules regarding this administrative practice.

BOARD ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

“

BEST PRACTICE

A successful relationship between COA boards and COA directors is built on communication, collaboration, and cooperation.

”

Policy and Management: COA board members typically serve in an advisory capacity. Board members help set/review the COA’s policies in conjunction with the director. The director manages daily operations. Involvement in day-to-day functions/operations is not a board member’s responsibility; the board **does not** direct the director.

A successful relationship between COA boards and COA directors is built on communication, collaboration, and cooperation.

Role Clarification: Role clarification provides detailed information about the expectations and limitations of a COA board member. When members of the board have clarity, greater cohesiveness and focus, productivity increases. Role clarity can be achieved by:

- *Understanding that your duty is to understand, support and carry out the COA’s mission on behalf of older residents in your community.*
- *Honest communication among the COA’s board, chair, and the director.*
- *The COA as a municipal department embodies the dedicated staff and older adult participants, but also the diverse voices and goals of the broader community it serves.*
- *A COA director seeks board members who enjoy collaboration, advocacy, civic engagement, and reflect the diversity of the community.*

This guide focuses on the crucial relationship between the COA board and the director of the COA. If a new board member has served on another board previously, this does not suggest that they are familiar with the legal obligations of serving on a Council on Aging board.

It is the responsibility of the COA board chair of a municipal department and the COA director to provide information to all board members concerning the:

- Expectations of the position.
- Transparency in local government.
- Legal obligations.
- Roles and responsibilities, and the limitations that are set by the municipality and the COA.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Your COA is a governmental body and functions within your municipality's legal framework. As a COA board member, you need to understand state laws that affect your counterparts across the state. Because you have a public responsibility, you share many of the legal and ethical obligations of elected officials (and town/city employees).

The following laws apply to every COA and to you as a board member:

- *Open Meeting Law*
- *Public Records Law*
- *Conflict of Interest*
- *Ethics/Code of Conduct (fundraising is not permitted by municipal departments)*
- *Solicitations of Political Contributions by Employees*
- *Fair Information Act Practices ACT (FIPA)*
- *Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) - Department of Criminal Justice Information Services*

Descriptions of each legal obligation are in **Appendix B: Massachusetts Laws and Your Municipality**

COA Director’s Relationship with the COA Board: A COA director’s relationship with the board is rooted in collaboration and trust. The board members should support the COA director and understand the role of the COA director. This is done by following all policies and best practices put forth by the commonwealth and the municipalities that govern COAs. When new board members are introduced, educating them to understand the COA's mission and roles of the director and staff enhances the onboarding experience.

More key elements include:

- *Support and advise on concerns affecting older adults in the community.*
- *Communicate and stay informed.*
- *Support the COA board and educate new members.*

*“COA directors answer to the appointing authority, as does the board, COA boards are typically advisory (not supervisory), the director and boards share complementary responsibilities: stay in touch!
Joint planning of meeting agendas (and time limits for each item) is advised.”*

E. SCHMARSOW



Characteristics of a Well-Rounded COA Board: Board members supporting the COA’s mission and goals for serving older adults in the community have these qualities:

- *Supports the COA director’s role and is committed to the COA’s mission and vision.*
- *When explicitly requested by the director, provides administrative support in an advisory capacity.*
- *Advocates for older adults in the community by:*
 - *Knowing the COA’s budget process and, when needed, supports asking for more resources.*
 - *Enjoys advocating for services for older adults in the community.*
- *Visionary Leaders: Passion for the community, have leadership qualities and actively votes on issues, and provides feedback to the COA director.*
- *Diverse Skills and Talents: A mix of backgrounds, skills, professions, communication styles, and motivations fosters innovation and change.*
- *Communication: Considers all opinions and works collaboratively with others to find common ground. Prepares for and takes part in board meetings.*
- *Respectful Collaboration: Respect for all voices, including the COA director, staff, and older adults, leads to a strong board.*
- *Represents the COA as an ambassador to promote and advocate for the services and resources provided by the municipal COA.*
- *Shows an interest in local, regional, and statewide aging services and resources.*

Partnership: Regardless of how your director is hired or evaluated, ongoing communication between the board (especially the board chair) and the director is vital. A COA board’s advocacy

complements the director’s role: the ideal team/partnership offers multiple perspectives, but ultimately relies on and benefits from a shared vision, voice, and goals. Effective teams function best through mutual commitment, focus, and understanding.

“

BEST PRACTICE

Effective teams function best through a shared vision, mutual commitment, focus, understanding, and goals.

”

Share Your Story: Volunteering to Serve Older Adults:

Everyone has a story that led them to apply for a volunteer position on the COA board. Why did you choose to become a COA board member? When you are introduced to the COA board, share your personal reasons for serving the older adults in your community.

Here is why sharing your story is a good idea:

- *It’s beneficial for board members to introduce themselves as it creates a sense of camaraderie and unites the members who gather to serve a common purpose.*
- *You are a life-long resident of the community, or the COA staff helped your loved one find the help they needed.*
- *You have a passion for working with older adults, or you are an older adult. You have a job in human services and working with older adults is a good match.*
- *You are looking for purposeful engagement as a recent retiree.*

Whatever the reason, explore the connections and common purpose, and how your diverse backgrounds can strengthen your COA board.

Board and Service Volunteers: Board members may also serve as volunteers in other roles at the COA/senior center. This is a dual role: You officially share in the leadership of the organization, but as a volunteer you work under the supervision of the COA director. The director has the responsibility for the hiring and supervision of paid employees and unpaid volunteers.

Building an Active and Engaged COA Board: An engaged and supportive board is instrumental toward achieving the COA board mission. The following suggestions may be helpful to COA directors and board chairs looking to identify and recommend the best board members. Also, it is helpful for board members to understand that skills and experience developed through professional application as well as through personal interests, hobbies, and passions can be beneficial to the COA.

- *Members should ideally reflect the diversity of the community and have the knowledge and perspective needed to respond to change.*
- *Regular board and officer rotation can help ensure a balanced perspective, strengths, and interests, to sustain and grow programs and services.*
- *Consider asking prospective members to attend at least one board meeting prior to nomination. Consider designating honorary non-voting “associate members.”*
- *Assessment of board needs: Helpful assessment points for evaluating potential board members.*
- *Interests and expertise: Ask specific questions tailored to your organization's mission and needs; evaluate diverse perspectives to aid well-rounded decision making.*
- *List of skills based on community needs: Analyze strengths and weaknesses; where do you need added support?*
- *Suggest or request a bio: Look for evidence of involvement in similar organizations or volunteer work, or potential conflicts of interest.*
- *Long range organizational plans: Share your strategic vision priorities: Ensure potential board members understand and support your long-term goals.*
- *Connect career and interests: Show how their involvement can make a tangible difference on the COA board.*
- *Have a meeting to discuss the skills and ideas of prospective board members.*
- *Workshop on by-laws: Educate on municipal governance. Explain roles, expectations, and accountability measures. Promote compliance and ethical conduct.*
- *Educate on governance: Organize a workshop or provide resources to familiarize potential Board members with your governing document and their responsibilities.*

BOARD MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

Respect the Chain of Command:

To have an effective board, there must be open and honest communication between the COA board and the COA director. The director reports to the governing body of the city or town. The responsibility of the board is to work in partnership with the director. The board of directors should complement the role of the COA director and provide support for a mutual mission and goals.

BEST PRACTICE

The board does not direct the COA director in the management of the daily operations of the senior center.

The board **does not** direct the COA director in the management of the daily operations of the senior center. The COA director and staff manage daily operations, but a diverse board can make

things even better. By sharing their skills and connections, board members can support the director, advocate for the COA, and provide resources for older adults. They act as ambassadors and champion the work of the COA and serve the community. A COA board works collegially with the COA director to guide the organization and stay in tune with what older adults need.

- **The COA Board should see that each new member:**
 - *Receives orientation to the COA board.*
 - *Has committee job description(s). **See Appendix C: Board Member Job Descriptions Examples.***
 - *Obtains the by-laws under which the COA board operates.*
 - *Understands the roles of the COA director and staff.*
 - *Respects complementary professional and political roles.*
 - *Clear understanding of the COA board's role and responsibilities.*

- **The COA board follows its mission statement, written policies, and procedures to ensure:**
 - *Program goals and objectives are set.*
 - *Services are described.*
 - *Programs fulfill the mission.*
 - *Resources are used properly.*
 - *Feedback is obtained and periodically evaluated.*
 - *The COA board chair helps increase the effectiveness of board meetings by planning the agenda with the COA director: **See Appendix D: Emmett's Matrix, Aging Network, Quotes.***
 - *Distributing the agenda, committee reports, and motions in advance.*
 - *Starting and ending board meetings on time and adhering to the time frame (agreed in advance - with COA director as applicable for each agenda item.)*
 - *Encouraging active participation and adequate discussion.*
 - *Determining/confirming what action(s) should be taken.*
 - *Using a committee structure to help to provide in-depth information and guidance, as needed.*

COUNCIL ON AGING BY-LAWS

COA By-Laws: By-laws are legally binding; check with your COA director or city or town clerk for a copy. By-laws should follow your municipality's by-laws or ordinances. By-laws form the board's operating procedures, how the board is structured, and how it conducts business. COA by-laws are important because they help to ensure that COA departments operate in a fair, consistent, and transparent manner. They also help to protect the interests of COA members and staff. By-laws are rules that outline the structure and the guidance of how the board operates. By-laws are unique to each organization, should be reviewed every few years, and amended accordingly to ensure their continued relevance.

COA by-laws typically cover a variety of topics, including:

- *The board's operating procedures*
- *How the board is structured and conducts business*
- *Qualifications of members, duties*
- *The nominating procedure, termination, powers*
- *Responsibilities of officers, quorums, standing committees, conflict of interest policy, frequency of meetings, and procedures for amendment*
- *Authority of appointment*
- *Vacancies*
- *Officer list (responsibilities)*
- *Reports*
- *Removal of a member*

COAs should ensure that their by-laws set term/office limits. This approach eases transitions and predicts changes that may occur for health, caregiving, or other reasons. By-laws should provide details of the nominating process, backgrounds and experience, and committee duties, terms, and expectations. **See Appendix E: COA By-Law Examples.**

BEST PRACTICE

A COA director's input and recommendation ensures those with the best skills and experience augments the board and supports the COA and staff.

COA BOARD MEMBER ONBOARDING:

COA Board Development: Developing COA board membership varies from community to community. Each has its own way of recruiting and selecting board members. However, many communities find it is helpful for COA directors to recruit and interview potential members before recommending them to their administration. A COA director's input and recommendation

ensures those with the best skills and experience augments the board and supports the COA and staff. Because communities have diverse ways of recruiting and appointing board members, it is important to understand and adhere to local procedures.

Recruiting and Advertising Board Prospects: There are general processes that can prove to be effective in attracting skilled board members. As previously noted, a COA director can recommend prospective candidates to the municipality's administration for consideration. In other communities, the administration makes the choice on behalf of the COA, and there are other approaches as well. Observe and learn your local policy or rules about this administrative

practice. Recruitment includes the use of word of mouth, the municipality's website, social media, newspapers, and the COA newsletter.

Selection Process: The selection process for prospective board members should be a collaborative process. The COA director, with the support of the municipality or governing body, should examine the following and make choices based on the current needs of the COA.

Some items to aid the selection process are:

- *A letter of interest (to town or board of selectmen)*
- *Letter of Support (from COA)*
- *Prioritizing desired skills*
- *Application*
- *COAs in some communities can request to review the letters and applications to match desired skill set*

- *COA director can interview prospective members and give their recommendation to the city or town administration.*

Interview: Prospective board members may go through an interview process to evaluate the skills they have and if they are beneficial to the COA. In this process, the COA director, municipal administration, and other board members can assess whether the prospective board member is a suitable fit in terms of time, commitment, and expertise. Also, the interview process informs the prospective board member of the expectations and the functionality of the board. A comprehensive interview can reduce confusion and surprises, and set realistic expectations, creating an open forum for questions on both sides. Be sure to inquire about local policy or practices in advance, as not all municipalities follow the process outlined here.

Appointment/Nomination: Municipalities are not all the same and may handle the appointment process differently, so it is recommended to consult in advance with the city or town administration about the process. When onboarding a new board member, you should provide them with an orientation packet with a welcome letter signed by the board chair and COA director. This literature should include the expectations of COA board members, the mission statement of the COA, CORI Form, Conflict of Interest Statement, and a COA newsletter.

Additional suggestions for the orientation packet include:

- *Board member agreement*
- *Copy of the most recent annual report*
- *Mission and history of the COA*
- *Contact information and bio of current board members*
- *Explanation of the by-laws*
- *Policies and procedures of the COA*
- *List of board responsibilities*
- *Minutes from previous board meetings*
- *Appendix D: Emmett Schmarsow’s Classic Matrix, Aging Network, Quotes*



Swearing In: The new board member will be asked to take an oath of office. The city or town clerk will administer the oath. The board member’s appointment should be announced publicly through the COA newsletter or social media. This creates transparency and visibility within the center and the community.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE COUNCIL ON AGING AND COMMUNITY INCLUDE:

A COA board member: A board member is collaborative, advocates for older adults, represents diverse opinions and effectively stands for and serves the community.

- **Attendance at board meetings:** Attendance guidelines are outlined in the by-laws. Regular attendance at monthly board meetings is important and a quorum of votes is needed to make policy changes. Frequent absenteeism holds up important policy decisions and may prevent the board from voting on key issues. A COA board requires regular attendance to function properly.
- **Communication in/out of COA:** When representing the COA as a board member, there will be many opportunities where communication is necessary. Professionalism is vital when representing the COA.
- **Active listening:** Fosters communication, builds trust, and fuels learning from experienced professionals. This prepares new members in this leadership role for any challenge.
- **Conduct:** It is important to be mindful of your role to uphold the COA's mission, act ethically, and avoid sharing confidential information. Be mindful of Open Meeting Laws, social media and personal biases and opinions that cast a shadow on board member duties. Serve the older adult community with integrity, objectivity, and act in the best interests of the COA and the municipality. A board member's beliefs and "feelings" should not interfere with a board member's responsibility to act in the best interests of the COA and the older adult community.
- **When pursuing a position on a COA Board, prospective Board members should consider the following:**
 - Know the COA's mission and familiarize yourself with the role of the COA director and key staff.
 - Understand your municipal legal obligations, role, responsibilities.
 - Advocate for issues and concerns for older adults and their caregivers.
 - Pay attention to the by-laws.
 - Use of sub-committees to review programs, new projects or evaluate procedures.
 - Serve as an ambassador for the Council on Aging and act as an advocate on behalf of older adults in your community, and elsewhere as requested by the COA director.
 - Collaborate with the COA director by remaining engaged, attentive, and willing to contribute and offer support, where needed.
 - Become acquainted with the aging network, locally and regionally.
- **Board responsibilities to the community include:**
 - Maintain a commitment to the COA's mission.
 - Attend all board and committee meetings as applicable.

- Prepare for meetings by reviewing the agenda and reading distributed materials in advance.
- Vote and do not be reluctant to dissent if you are opposed.
- Serve on at least one subcommittee.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COA BOARD MEMBERS

The core members of a COA typically include a chair, vice-chair, secretary/clerk, and treasurer. However, this structure can vary depending on your municipality's specific COA by-laws. COAs may operate without a dedicated Treasurer, and the secretary/clerk duties might be handled by administrative staff. Therefore, it's crucial to consult your own municipality's by-laws to determine the exact composition and responsibilities of COA members.

COA Board Chair: The board has a leader called the chair who runs the meetings, sets the agenda with the COA director's input, and calls to order the meeting and opens the discussion of the agenda to be dealt with by the board. However, neither the chair nor any other member of the board has managing duties of the day-to-day operations concerning the COA director, staff, and volunteers.

In addition, the chair's role encompasses:

- *Oversees meetings and discussions, guides strategic direction, supports, and advises the COA director.*
- *Facilitates communication between the board and COA director.*
- *Mentors and develops members, establishes subcommittees, and assigns roles.*
- *Participates in advocacy efforts supporting services for older adults and their caregivers in the municipality. It's recommended to document and/or digitize any success stories related to securing funds or resources for new programs to help promote new services or resources.*

COA Vice-Chair: Steps in for the chair during his/her absence or inability to perform their duties and exercises all the functions of the chair. As a substitute, the vice-chair shall have all the powers and be subject to the limitations of the chair.

Secretary/Clerk: The COA's by-laws may call for the position of secretary/clerk to follow traditional note-taking methods at board meetings. Different notetaking procedures exist. Some COAs have dedicated, paid administrative staff or clerks to do the task. COAs with a paid position may use the COA's administrative staff to initially record meeting minutes. The minutes are reviewed by the board's secretary/clerk and passed on to the COA director and board. The traditional role of the secretary/clerk includes:

- **Meeting Minutes:**
 - Takes and archives minutes of meetings, including discussions, votes, and key points.
 - Ensures minutes follow by-laws and open meeting laws.
- **Communication:**
 - Records, stores, and shares board member contact information.
 - Works with the COA chair and COA director.

Treasurer: Not all COA boards have a treasurer. It's common practice for COAs with advisory boards to have the COA director and/or administrative staff handle the fiscal oversight duties. In the rare exceptions where there is a treasurer with fiduciary responsibilities on a supervisory COA board, it is essential to clarify who is responsible these following tasks:



- Supervise and manage COA funds.
- Oversee the fiscal processing of payables and receivables.
- Work with the city or town finance staff to ensure accurate financial reporting and compliance.
- Develop and monitor the budget.

SUBCOMMITTEES AND WORKGROUPS

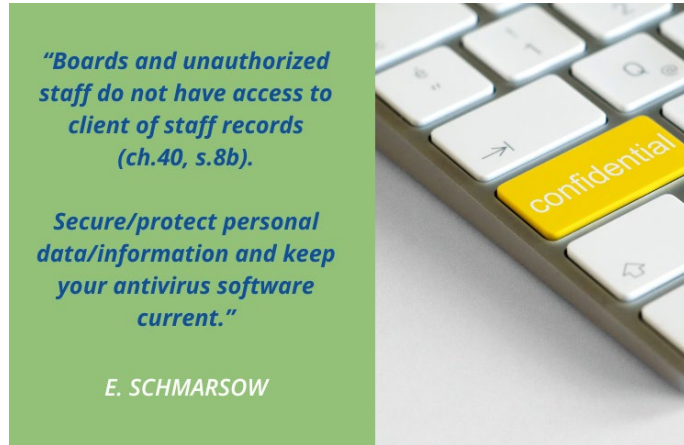
Standing Committees and Workgroups: The COA board may have several subcommittees and workgroups that may be noted in the COA's by-laws or be established on an ad hoc basis, as necessary. Board members are expected to serve on at least one standing committee that meets periodically.

These are examples of standing committees:

- *Long Range planning - Establishes the scope, character, and direction of the COA's services and activities.*
- *By-Laws - Reviews COA by-laws, elections, duties of board members, tenure.*
- *Transportation - Reviews available resources to meet the demand of service requests for older adults who require ride/mobility assistance.*
- *Advocacy - Attuned to current and pending legislation and acts on items that may affect the COA and/or older adults.*

- *Nominating - responsible for preparing a slate of candidates to fill COA board member and officer positions.*
- *Public Safety - Reviews training and education opportunities with the COA, Police, Fire, and Public Works.*

Resignation/Removal of a Board Member: Term limits for serving on the COA board are determined by the COA board’s by-laws. If a board member resigns from their position, the individual must do so by contacting the appointing body (mayor/town clerk/town administrator) through a formal letter. This letter should be copied and distributed to the board chair.



The removal of a board member can be suggested if/when a board member is not performing their duties by not attending meetings, creating a hostile environment within the board and COA, and non-compliance with legal obligations. If there is a code of conduct in place and such

behavior occurs while representing the COA board, it may be a violation. To see a sample Code of Conduct for elected officials from Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) and MIIA (Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association): **See Appendix F: Code of Conduct.**

The board chair, with the support of the rest of the board, can contact the appointing body and request action towards the resignation of the member. However, in some cases this would be in conjunction with the town counsel/city solicitor along with input/communication from the appointing authority. The chair and the board alone may not have the authority to remove a board member. Municipalities are not all the same, and it is suggested that you consult with your community prior to starting a discussion to remove a board member.

BUDGET OVERVIEW & FUNDING SOURCES

Fiscal Controls and Accountability: The budget reflects the COA's program goals and priorities. It shows fiscal resources available to carry out the COA's services and activities. As the guardian of taxpayer dollars, COA directors and all municipal department heads must be diligent about how they spend taxpayer funds. The challenge in creating the annual budget is to carefully weigh what is needed to provide each service, considering how much municipal revenue can be expected, and how much can be spent on each service the town provides.

- A COA board has a responsibility to understand the budget, and how to support the COA director in the annual budget process.
- Know what is in (and not in) the COA budget. Are there unmet service needs identified by the COA director that call for new funding streams?
- Are revenues and resources adequate to support current and needed programs and services?
- How do COA services benefit from collaboration with other local municipal resources, (e.g., first responders, public health)?
- Note and recognize in-kind donations or contributions.



Appropriations/COA Budget Line Item: The COA’s budget will be separated into specific accounts called line items. Each category is a specific type of expense. Municipal departments will typically have line items for:

- *Personnel (Staff).*
- *Operating Expenses.*
- *Special accounts such as revolving accounts, gift accounts, grants, or funding through articles for special projects.*
- *Deposit accounts for program or service fees.*

COA Funding Sources: The COA’s primary funding comes from municipal budgets, grants from the commonwealth, and donations. Generally, municipal funding is the largest segment.

- **Municipal Gift Account:** Gift accounts can be established to accept monetary donations and gifts. Gifts typically must be used to pay for programs and services for the benefit of older residents in the community. These funds roll over from year to year and are not turned over to the Town’s general fund at the end of the fiscal year. Not every COA may have a gift account and it’s best to work with the COA director to research this option. Gifts may include donations made in memory of a loved one.
- **Revolving Account:** An account that allows a municipal department to raise revenues from a specific service and use those revenues without appropriation to support the service. For example, you may charge fees to pay for fitness classes. Those fees would be deposited into a revolving account and used later to pay instructors. You cannot

deficit spend, meaning you cannot spend more money than is available. COA directors manage this account.

- **Formula Grant Funding:** This funding is awarded according to the requirements of the Massachusetts General Appropriations Act, which is passed annually by the state legislature and approved by the Governor. Formula Grant funding is managed at the discretion of the Council on Aging to support the mission of the Grants to Councils on Aging in line-item 9110-9002. As of July 1, 2024, Formula Grant awards are issued to each COA at a rate of \$15.00 per person aged 60 or older in the community, based upon the numbers in the 2020 federal census, with a minimum award of \$7,000. Contracts are issued annually by EOE to the 350 Councils on Aging.
- **Service Incentive Grants (SIG):** This funding comes from a portion of a line item of state funds, #9110-9002, designated as Formula Grant – local aid for municipally based Councils on Aging. SIG was established to assist municipal COAs in developing services and programs, and to address and support the provision of regional services for smaller municipalities, as well as broad statewide initiatives, to address unmet needs and help fill important gaps in services and personnel not readily supported through typical state and local funding. The focus for FY 2025 SIG funds is on field demonstration projects that are innovative, and in designated project/program areas approved by EOE and managed by MCOA. SIG funds are distributed using a competitive bidding process. In FY 2025, SIG grant opportunities were named Field Demonstration Projects (FDP).
- **Capital Appropriation:** Allocation for capital improvements to a building like repairing a roof or remodeling a kitchen, or for the purchase of a vehicle. This is a separate part of the budget process. Check with your town administrator, mayor, or finance director for more information.
- **Friends of the Council on Aging Purpose and Responsibilities:** tax-exempt non-profit organization (501(c)(3) dedicated to providing financial support to the local Council on Aging (COA) through fundraising efforts. The key goal of the Friends is to collaborate with the Council on Aging director and COA board members. Effective Friends of the COA groups depend on seamless cooperation between the COA director, COA board members, and the Friends themselves. This collaboration enables them to secure funding for essential programs that empower older adults and enrich their lives, including hardship assistance, capital campaigns, volunteer recognition, social events, outreach, and much more. **See Appendix G: Friends of the Council on Aging.**
- **Title III Area Aging Agency (AAAs) Federal Grants:** AAAs can make available federal

funds to agencies and Councils on Aging to provide services to older adults. These grants have an application process and may vary based on the program funding provided by the AAA. Examples of Title III funds distributions include:

- *Title III-B grants support various services. Homemaking, shopping, chores, and home repair Type services as well as outreach. The funding cycle runs during the federal fiscal year, October 1 to September 30. The basis of these grants is to provide services to keep older adults in their homes for as long as it is safe to do so.*
- *Title III-C grants are for nutrition programs. Some senior centers have nutrition sites funded by this grant. The COA contracts with the AAA to provide meals and staff.*
- *Title III-D grants fund health promotion and disease prevention.*
- *Title III-E grants fund caregiver support services.*

OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDS

- **Civic Organizations:** These grants vary in amount but can offer needed support for programming. Some of the civic organizations that offer these community grants include: Chamber of Commerce, Women’s Club, Men’s Club, Rotary, Elks, bank foundations, etc.
- **Massachusetts Cultural Council:** These are competitive grants available for funding art, music, literature/writing, speakers, dance programs and other types of cultural programming. The deadline for applying is typically October 15 and awards are available to use during the calendar year beginning in January. Contact your local arts council for criteria and dates or visit the MA website: www.massculturalcouncil.org.
- **Community Development Block Grant:** Massachusetts CDBG grants can fund any project that is eligible under federal statute in Title I of the 1974 Housing and Community Development Act, as amended. Traditionally, communities use Massachusetts CDBG resources to carry out the following types of programs or projects through these programs. This is only a partial list: housing assistance, housing development: Economic development/commercial rehabilitation, Infrastructure, Public Facilities, Public Support Services, and planning projects. Check with your community’s chief executive to find out more about whether your community is eligible to apply. Link to: [Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\)](#).
- **Massachusetts Community Compact Best Practices Funding:** In a Community Compact, a community will agree to implement at least one best practice areas that reflects a unique need in the community. Best practices areas include Age and Dementia Friendly,

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Education, Energy and Environment, Financial Management, Housing and Economic Development, Human Resources, Information Technology, Public Accessibility, Public Health, Public Safety, Regionalization/Shared Services and Transportation / Public Works. The program opens typically on August 15 and funds until funds are exhausted. Talk to your community's chief executive for more information about this funding.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION:

Together We Thrive - Advocating for Essential Services for Older Adults: An essential advocacy role for COA board members involves supporting the COA director when requesting funds for the COA's budget. The COA director has a wide-ranging role in securing funding for services for older adults. Their involvement spans the municipal, state, and, at times, national level.

The COA director takes the lead advocating for funding to support the COA's operation and services and documents the unmet needs to be addressed.

Be accountable to the community by:

- *Demonstrating how the COA's funds are used properly and share stories about how older adults have gotten help from a range of services.*
- *As a COA ambassador, communicate with older adults and the broader community about the value provided by the COA's programs and services and the finances it takes to operate an essential service dedicated to older adults.*

Local Advocacy - Partnering for a Vibrant and Thriving COA: Prior to the COA director's budget meeting with the municipal administration and/or the finance committee, the COA director may prepare:

- *Service data, charts, and graphs to illustrate service impacts and any unmet needs not addressed due to insufficient funding.*

"Seeing your name in print, improves your eyesight."

E. SCHMARSOW



- *Shares compelling case studies of lives affected by COA services.*
- *Specify how services help older adults (e.g., rides, meals, fuel assistance, SHINE, housing), how many were served, and those that were not served due to budget constraints.*
- *Identifies increased costs related to facility operations.*

HOW COAs BENEFIT FROM MUNICIPAL CENSUS DATA:

Making Sense of the Census:

Why is the Census Important: Massachusetts General Law, (M.G.L. ch. 51§ 4), mandates an annual street listing of residents as of January 1st each year mandates that all municipalities conduct an annual census of their residents as of January 1st each year. Many COAs have added questions specific to older adults and their needs. Questions added to the census may include transportation services, or if they would need help evacuating their home if a disaster or weather emergency occurs. The local census serves several crucial purposes:

Older Adult Services: Helps identify the number and location of older adults for planning and allocating resources.

- **Planning and Resource Allocation:** Provides insights into the demographics.
- **Maintaining Accurate Voter Lists:** Keeps the voter lists current.
- **School enrollment projections:** Plans future school needs and resource allocation based on expected student population changes.
- **Public safety planning:** Tracking the population helps authorities allocate resources for public safety.

The City or Town Clerk department is the chief administrative clerical officer that maintains the official records of the community- election results, census, permits and more. **See Appendix H: Link to the Massachusetts Town Clerks Association (MTCA):**

National Advocacy - National Council on Aging: National Council on Aging (NCOA) is a non-profit organization. It works to improve the lives of older adults in the United States. NCOA is a leading voice for older Americans and does this by:

- **Advocating** for policies that support their health, financial security, and independence. This includes fighting against ageism and strengthening programs like Medicare and Social Security.
- **Providing resources** like online tools and information to help older adults and their caregivers navigate important issues such as benefits, healthcare options, and fall prevention.
- **Offering best practices** and support for professionals who work with older adults in community organizations.

*"Most Local Officials
(including fellow department
heads) do not know what you
do.*

*Invite/ask them to attend
COA programs/activities and
have board members
welcome them."*

E. SCHMARSOW



The work of the COAs in Massachusetts is grounded in NCOA's guiding principles of advocacy, providing resources, and adopting best practices to grow and develop senior centers for the future. To learn more, see (*See Appendix I: National Council on Aging*)

Statewide Advocacy - Partnering for a Stronger Aging Network: You may be asked to engage in MCOA's statewide legislative advocacy to support funds for COAs and Massachusetts' regional aging

network partners. MCOA's advocacy alerts are calls-to-action for increases in state budget line items for the Executive Office of Elder Affairs' community-based services and supports, and the COA's Formula Grant. The COA directors are notified by MCOA and are sent specific calls to action.

EOEA's Legacy of Advocacy- Cornerstone of EOEA's Origin Story: The organization's mission of advocacy for older adults is embraced by COAs and our aging network partners. Before EOEA existed, there was Frank J. Manning, a retired union organizer and passionate older adult advocate. Thousands of older adults, led by Manning, joined forces, and called themselves "Senior Power," in the late 1960's to fight for better benefits, housing, health care, recognition, and change. Their efforts lead to the foundation of the Department of Elder Affairs in 1971, (now known as the Executive Office of Elder Affairs/EOEA). Massachusetts was the first state in the U.S. to have a state level office for older adult affairs. MCOA's goal is to motivate COA board members by sharing tools, resources, and stories to engage in advocacy efforts. For links to videos featuring Frank J. Manning's legacy of advocacy and action: (*See the Section - Resources and Links*).

COAs and Aging Network Partners Statewide may be asked to:

- *Collaborate with COA directors to support and respond to advocacy alerts.*
- *Respond to MCOA's legislative advocacy alerts for additional funding.*
- *Participate in calls-to-action, such as calling your local elected State Representative and State Senator.*
- *Collaborate with aging network partners. We are in this together.*

***“Consistent thanks are
cherished.***

***Volunteers are not free:
they’re unpaid.
Badges (especially drivers)
should have photos and
renewal dates.***

***Confirm/affirm job duties
regularly.”***

E. SCHMARSOW



Volunteers - Know their Value: Volunteers substantially increase and may even double the value of local appropriations. The Point of Light Foundation tracks the work of volunteers and values one hour of work in today’s dollars at \$31.80 (as of May 2023).

- *Acknowledge and recognize the essential contributions of volunteers.*
- *Approximate the full-time equivalent (FTE) worth of volunteers by assuming that each 2,000 hours of volunteer service equals the cash value of one local, full-time FTE paid employee.*

Combating Ageism - National Center to Reframe Aging:

Reframing Aging defines ageism as treating someone differently or unfairly just because of their age. It is the same as judging someone based on their skin color or gender, but it's about their years instead.

Ageism can happen in many ways:

- *Thinking older adults are incapable or out of touch, even if they are not.*
- *Excluding young people from opportunities because of their age or experience.*
- *Making assumptions about someone's skills or abilities based on their age. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and fairness, no matter how old they are.*
- *Links: www.reframingaging.org and [Quick Start Guide](#)*

THE AGING NETWORK

COUNCILS ON AGING

A COA's Role in Augmenting the Quality of Life for Older Adults: As a COA board member, the goal of enhancing the quality of life for older adults is key. COAs are partners in the continuum of service known as "community-based care." This care model involves various human services organizations working together to help seniors stay independent, vibrant, and safe in their own homes for as long as possible. COA staff are experts at navigating the complex network of aging services in their region; they know about the resources and how to find and access help. It is about fostering dignity, respect, and well-being throughout their later years.

There are two major purposes of the service provided by COAs:

- **Senior Center:** The physical plant and the public face of the COA. The COA staff works in the building. Many events are offered at the senior center. Older adults enjoy fun activities socializing with friends, attending educational classes, recreational programs, special events, meal programs, and volunteer activities.
- **Senior Center Outreach:** The second purpose is behind-the-scenes social service help given to older adults. The COA director and the outreach staff, in confidence, counsel older adults and caregivers who may need a helping hand. The staff's expertise is in identifying, researching, and tapping a variety of community-based services and assistance from the aging network to help older adults and their caregivers. The staff ensures seniors have access to resources, social connections, and the support they need to thrive in their own homes.

Outreach is the COA's Superpower: COA outreach services excel at connecting older adults and their caregivers with resources and support for services, such as homecare, transportation, public benefits, memory cafes, age and dementia friendly programs, nutrition and more. From home visits to phone calls the staff also tackle sensitive issues like grief, behavioral health, end-of-life care, and protective services reporting involving physical, verbal, or financial abuse of older adults.

MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ELDER AFFAIRS (EOEA)

EOEA has a unique dual role, functioning as both:

- **A state agency:** Known as EOEA, it's responsible for providing resources and services to older adults and individuals with disabilities within the Commonwealth.
- **A federal agency:** Recognized as the State Unit on Aging by the federal government, it receives funds allocated under the Older Americans Act and Administration for Community Living.

This dual designation brings significant benefits and resources to support older adults and their caregivers. Access to state and federal funding means:

- Leveraging state and federal funds specifically dedicated to community-based care for older adults and their caregivers. Offering older adults, a wide range of programs and services to meet diverse needs to continue to receive their care in the community, at home, where they want to stay.
- Distributing funds to the Massachusetts Aging Network that includes Aging Service Access Points (ASAPs), Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) and Councils on Aging (COAs).
- Services provided by Aging Network are detailed below.

STATE UNIT ON AGING'S AREA PLAN ON AGING FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE OF ELDER AFFAIRS: (EOEA)

- **The early history of the EOEA is excerpted in the indented text box:** The information from the State Unit on Aging Area Plan on Aging was published in October 2021. The excerpt below is from page 8 of the document. (Please note the figures from this excerpted section are from 2021). A link to the complete Area Plan for 2021-2015 can be found in the appendix. (*See Appendix J.*)

“The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) is the principal agency of the commonwealth responsible for mobilizing human, physical, and financial resources to develop, implement, and evaluate innovative programs that ensure older adults and their caregivers have opportunities to thrive in the communities of their choice.

EOEA became one of the nation's first agencies responsible for addressing the needs of older people in 1971. Elder Affairs assumed its mandate to fund services in 1973 with the passage of M.G.L. c. 19A, §4.

- **Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs):** Today, EOEA strives to support all 1.7 million older adults, and their caregivers, in Massachusetts and manages services to hundreds of thousands of older people across the commonwealth through state

and federally funded programs and is located within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS). Through the aging services network, EOE provides programs and services locally via ***21 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), *25 Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs)**, 350 Councils on Aging (COAs) and senior centers, and 11 Aging and Disability Resource Consortia (ADRCs) in communities across the commonwealth. This network reaches older adults with services that include home care, caregiver support, nutrition programs, protective services, health and wellness services, housing options, insurance counseling, dementia and behavioral health services, and a variety of other programs.” (***numbers of AAAs/ASAPs as of October 2021**).

- **State Home Care Services/Aging Services Access Points:** The Home Care program is administered throughout the commonwealth through contracts with 24 Aging Service Access Points (ASAPs), which provide case management services that include a comprehensive, interdisciplinary needs assessment and care plan. ASAPs contract with a variety of agencies to provide services such as homemaker, personal care, home health aide, skilled nursing, medication dispensing, transitional assistance, transportation, home delivered meals, laundry service, grocery shopping services, adult day care, chore services, companionship, personal emergency response, adaptive housing, and emergency shelter. State Home Care is a Massachusetts program that provides various services to help older adults and people with disabilities live independently in their own homes. Key services:
 - Home care: Includes personal care, housekeeping, home health aides, skilled nursing, transportation, meals, and more.
 - Caregiver support: Connects caregivers with resources and training.
 - Nutrition programs: Provides hot meals and groceries.
 - Protective services: Helps ensure safety and well-being.
 - Money Management Assistance for help with bill paying.
 - Health and wellness services: Promotes healthy living through screenings, education, and other programs.
 - Housing options: Helps find affordable and accessible housing.
 - Dementia and behavioral health services: Provides support for those with dementia and behavioral health challenges.How to access services:
 - Contact your local Aging Service Access Point (ASAP).
 - Call the MassOptions call center at 1-800-243-4636.
 - Link to the Massachusetts [State Home Care Program](#)

GLOSSARY

Alphabet Soup of Aging

AAA

Area Agency on Aging. Regional planning organization, oversight, and grant issuing agency.

ACL

Administration for Community Living is a federal agency that supports older adults and people with disabilities to live in their communities independently. Established in 2012 by the Department of Health and Human Services. ACL is the merger of 3 administrations: Administration on Aging, Office on Disability, Administration on Developmental Disabilities.

Activities of Daily Living

Activities or skills necessary to maintain oneself in the community, including bathing, dressing, walking, meals preparation, feeding and similar/related functions.

Adult Day Health

Provides skilled (medical) services and assistance with Activities of Daily Living.

ADRC

Aging and Disability Resource Centers provide streamlined access to services to assist elders and individuals with disabilities with living independently in the community.

AAA Advisory Council (for Area Agencies on Aging)

Made up of community representatives from PSA, all of whom are residents of the service area, with at least 51% being elderly.

Affirmative Action

Planning for positive proportional representation of all segments of the community in hiring and promoting, providing services and letting contracts.

AF/DF

Age-Friendly describes a community or environment designed to be accessible and promote healthy independent Living. Dementia-Friendly describes a community or environment that understands and supports people with dementia.

ASAP

Aging Services Access Point (ASAP). Regional private nonprofits designated by Elder Affairs to plan, develop and implement the coordination and delivery of Community-Based Long Term Care Services. Functions include information and referral, case management, protective services, clinical screening and others.

Assisted Living Facility

A residential facility with rental apartments that provide a variety of supportive services. Licensed by EOEA. Some are in public housing developments.

Barrier Free

Without physical or psychological barriers for elders and disabled persons, as at a senior center, meal site, etc.

COA

Council on Aging. A municipal department authorized by M.G.L. Chapter 40, section 8b.

COA grants

Annual Formula and Service Incentive Grants through EOEA.

Congregate Site

Typically a municipal senior center that provides meals in a group setting.

Elder Affairs

Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). Under the state cabinet Office of Health and Human Services, EOEA's role is to provide overall aging program oversight and administration. Toll-free: MassOptions (800-243-4636). For those with hearing disabilities, call: TTY 1-813-7787. Online <https://www.massoptions.org/massoptions/>

Elder at Risk

Under Elder Affairs, short term and targeted intervention provided to elders who have lost the ability to meet their own basic needs and are "at risk" of losing independent functioning in the community. Includes self-neglect. Toll-free: 1-800-922-2275.

Ethics Commission

State agency that identifies and advises Boards/Board members about conflicts of interest, fund raising and similar public issues. Toll-free/confidential: 1-888-485-4766.

FY

Fiscal Year (state/local) runs from July 1st through June 30th (FY25 is July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025). FY - Fiscal Year (federal) runs October 1st through September 30th (FY25 is October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025).

I & R

Information and Referral

Letter of Intent (LOI)

If required, submitted to Area Agency on Aging in response to an RFP - for review by Advisory Council.

Long Term Care (LTC) Assessment Tool

The procedures used by ASAP case managers and nurses to assess an elder's need for services.

Mandate

Requirement of the law.

Matching Funds

needed for Title III-B/C grants. Refers to that portion of the budget that is non-federal cash or related in-kind (donated) services.

MCOA

Massachusetts Association of Council on Aging and Senior Center Directors, Inc.
The nonprofit membership organization of/for COAs. (413) 527-6425.

Means Test

Participation based on income/assets: not permitted for COA activities.
OAA - Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended (overseen by AOA).

Memory Cafe

A social gathering for people with memory loss and their caregivers, offering support and connection in a safe space.

Outreach - (Client Finding)

Activities initiated by a provider to identify/contact clients and encourage use of existing services and benefits. For statistical purposes, does not include ongoing peer support, e.g., friendly visiting, escort, companionship or other.

Prescription Advantage

State insurance program assists elders (& disabled non-elders) with meeting prescription drug costs. Toll-free: 1-800-AGE-INFO (1-800-243-4636).

Protective Services

System of care to investigate allegations of abuse and mistreatment of elders and provide appropriate services and intervention. Includes possible physical, sexual, emotional abuse (or neglect) and/or financial exploitation by caregivers. Toll-free: 1-800-922-2275.

PSA

Planning and Service Area

Revolving Funds

Authorized under M.G.L. Chapter 44, sec. 53½. Municipal COAs may retain and expend revenues earned through specific programs; subject to annual local approval.

RFP (Request for Proposals) or RFR (Request for Responses)

Notice of fund availability.

Senior Aide

Funded part-time elder employment program (federal dollars).

Supportive Day Care

Daytime supervision through a structured program of social activities and other support/s. (See medical model at "Adult Day Health")

SUA

State Unit on Aging - (The Executive Office of Elder Affairs)

Subgrant

Funding from the AAA to local community or agency.

Supportive Housing

Like Assisted Living, but in public housing.

Title III-B, TITLE III-C (of the Older Americans Act)

Funding for older adults that provides supportive services (T-III-B), nutrition program (T-III-C).

Source: Emmett Schmarsow's Alphabet Soup of Aging

RESOURCES AND LINKS

LINKS to VIDEOS

- **Video:** The Office of the Inspector General's How to be an Effective Public Board and Commission Member (YouTube link)
[How to be an Effective Public Board and Commission Member \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUQ8wjY8gRc)

Video: Frank J. Manning, Elder Advocate (remastered 8 min.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUQ8wjY8gRc>

Video: Frank J. Manning, Elder Advocate (long version: remastered 17 minutes)
[FM - v02 Fixed Audio](#)
- **Newsletters:** Every COA has a monthly (or bi-monthly) newsletter listing scheduled activities and programs. Newsletters are free. You will find one by:
 - Dropping by the senior center, library, or town/city hall to pick one up.
 - Call the senior center and ask to have a newsletter mailed to your home. There may be a small fee for this to cover postage.
 - Some COAs post the link to the newsletter on the municipality's website. Search for Council on Aging or Senior Center.
- **Alzheimer's Association**
<https://www.alz.org/>
- **MA Health Aging Collaborative** <https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/>
- **Massachusetts Bar Association Elder Law Education Guide** [elep_booklet_05-23.pdf \(massbar.org\)](#)
- **Census Data, Massachusetts, Secretary of State Office**
<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/census2020/index.html>
- **EOEA Data specific to 60+ Population Data by Community**
<https://mcoonline.com/2023/08/23/2020-census-data-released/>

NEWS:

- **MASSTerlist**
Chronical of news and informed analysis about politics, policy, media, and influence in Mass. [Homepage - MASSTerList](#)
Statehouse News Service (Subscription required)
- <https://www.statehousenews.com/>
- AARP (Membership Service)
<https://www.aarp.org/>

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David P. Stevens, 1954-2022

PUBLIC SERVICES:

A. Municipal Services

- **Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA):** The trade association for Massachusetts Cities and Towns' Website link www.mma.org. MMA's Select Board Handbook link [Massachusetts Select Board Handbook 2024- Massachusetts Municipal Association \(MMA\)](#).
MMA's mission is to improve the effectiveness of local government in the Commonwealth. MMA is a private, nonpartisan nonprofit organization of 351 cities and towns, and regards itself as "the voice of cities and towns." The organization provides advocacy, training and education, publications, professional legal and personnel advisory services to its members.
- **MMA and MIIA Code of Conduct for Elected and Appointed Boards Resource:** https://www.mma.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/MIIA_Sample_Code-of-Conduct_2_5.12.21.pdf
- **MMA Local Governance 101:** <https://www.mma.org/local-government-101/>

B. State and Municipal Services

- **Office of the Attorney General's Office**
The Attorney General's Office provides this guide to help Board members of non-profit charitable groups such as, Friends of the COA, organizations carry out their important responsibilities.
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/charities-guidance/download>
- **Office of the Inspector General:**
Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General Jeffrey S. Shapiro
This training provides an overview of the tools needed to successfully conduct public Board activity, oversee organizations, and ensure taxpayer money is spent appropriately. Attendees will also learn how to identify and prevent fraud, waste and abuse and how to comply with key legal requirements applicable to public Boards. This office has a guide for members of public Boards and commissions. Link: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/guide-for-members-of-public-Boards-and-commissions/download>
- **Mass.gov: A summary of the Conflict-of-Interest Law for Massachusetts municipal employees:**
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/summary-of-the-conflict-of-interest-law-for-municipal-employees>. "All Town elected and appointed officials are expected to act

honestly, conscientiously, reasonably and in good faith at all times having regard to their responsibilities, the interests of the municipality and the welfare of its residents. Town elected and appointed officials must refrain from communicating or acting in disrespectful, abusive and/or threatening manner towards member of the community, other elected or appointed officials, Town/City administration or staff.” **Source: MIIA Risk Management**

C. State Offices

- **Governor Maura Healey**
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor
Room 105, Boston 02133
617-725-4005
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/email-the-governors-office>
- **Attorney General, Andrea J. Campbell**
Office of the Attorney General
1 Ashburton Pl, Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-2200
<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-attorney-general>
- **Acting Secretary of Elder Affairs, Robin Lipson**
Executive Office of Elder Affairs: State Agency on Aging and principal agency of the Commonwealth to support older adults and their caregivers.
<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/executive-office-of-elder-affairs>
(617) 727-7750/(800) 922-2275
- **Massachusetts Guide for Non-Profit Organizations**
Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office [download \(mass.gov\)](#)
The Attorney General’s Office provides this guide to help Board members of non-profit charitable organizations carry out their important responsibilities. Link
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/charities-guidance/download>
- **MassOptions Info Line:**
Options is a **free** service. It can help an older person, an adult of any age with a disability, their family members, or caregivers make decisions on supportive services if they don’t know where to turn. Finding help with personal care, household chores, transportation, nutrition, medication management can be challenging. (800) 243-4636.
<https://www.massoptions.org/massoptions/>

D. Not-For-Profit Organizations

Elizabeth (Betsy) Connell, Executive Director

Massachusetts Association of Council on Aging & Senior Center Directors, Inc. (MCOA)

www.mcoaonline.org

413-527-6425

Betsey Crimmins, Executive Director

Mass Home Care: Trade association - Aging Services Access Points and Area Agencies on Aging

<https://masshomecare.info/wp/>

masshomecare.info@gmail.com

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A: MCOA's Summary of Services: About COAs

- [ABOUT COAs MCOA list Dec 2023 - Final Copy March 2024.docx](#)

APPENDIX B: MASSACHUSETTS LAWS & YOUR MUNICIPALITY

- **Legal Obligations Defined: Duties of Municipal Boards:** These laws pertain to you as a municipal volunteer. Your community's COA is a governmental body and functions within your municipality's legal framework. As a COA board member, you need to understand state laws that affect you and all board members across the state. Because you have a public responsibility, you share many of the legal and ethical obligations of elected officials (and town/city employees). The following laws apply to every COA and to you as a board member.
- **Open Meeting Law:** MA General Laws (c.39, s.23 A-C) states that, "All meetings of a governmental body shall be open to the public and any person shall be permitted to attend any meeting accept as otherwise provided..." This requires public posting of meeting notices and discussion topics prior to a COA meeting. All public bodies must post notice of any meetings. All meetings and deliberations within them must be open to the public unless there is a valid purpose for executive session. Minutes must be kept for all meetings and published, timely. Note: Any subcommittee (2 or more people) of a public body is itself a public body that must the OML. (Source: Anderson Kreiger) Check with your town or city clerk or go to the Attorney General's link for the Dec. 2023 latest

version of the guide. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2023-guide-with-ed-materials/download>

- **Public Records Law:** MA General Laws, c.4, s.7 states that, “Any person has an absolute right of access to public records.” Although that phrase continues to include items such as minutes and financial statements, an amendment to the COA enabling legislation (c.40, s. 8B) in 2002 precluded access to records containing personal identifying information such as name, address, telephone, or participation in specific programs/services. <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/public-records/download/guide.pdf>
- **Conflict of Interest Laws:** MA General Laws, c268 A, “Sets a minimum standard of ethical conduct for all municipal employees and officials.” ***This applies to municipal officials and employees whether elected or appointed, full, part-time, paid, and unpaid positions: anyone who serves in local government including volunteers and consultants.*** The purpose of the law is, “To ensure that public employees’ private financial interests and personal relationships do not conflict with their public obligations.” This includes even the perception and appearance of conflict it provides for full disclosure of any conflicts of interests in abstention of voting on such matters. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/summary-of-the-conflict-of-interest-law-for-municipal-employees>
- **Massachusetts Code of Conduct/Ethics:** As public employees, board members must complete conflict of interest training within 30 days of beginning public service, and every 2 years thereafter. The training provides an overview of the state conflict of interest law and covers various issues you may encounter as a public employee and provides examples of situations you may encounter that present a conflict of interest. In addition, every year all state, county and municipal employees must be provided with a summary of the conflict-of-interest law. Newly elected or appointed public employees should be provided with the summary within 30 days of election or appointment, and on an annual basis thereafter. All public employees must sign a written acknowledgment that they have been provided with the summary. Link: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/code-of-conduct-for-public-employees>
- **Solicitations of Political Contributions by Employees:** In the eyes of the state, COA board members are considered municipal employees therefore you cannot solicit funds for a political candidate or candidate/s.
- **Fundraising is Not Permitted:** MA General Laws, c.44 s. 53 E ½ authorizes the use of revolving funds. Municipal bodies such as COA may retain and expend program revenues with the annual approval of the municipality (which may also set limits as to how much

revenue may be generated from the revolving fund). Nonprofit Friends of the Council on Aging are often created to raise funds on behalf of the COA, with the permission of the Council on Aging. Link to the AG's nonprofit boards' guide.

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/charities-guidance/download>

- **Fair Information Practices Act (FIPA):** MA General Laws, c66A, s.2. The FIPA is a state law that gives individuals control over their personal information. Organizations that collect personal information from Massachusetts residents must: Obtain consent before collecting the information.
 - Tell individuals how the information will be used.
 - Provide individuals with access to their information and the opportunity to correct it.
 - Protect the information from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure.
 - Dispose of the information properly when it is no longer needed.

Individuals have the right to file a complaint with the Massachusetts Attorney General if they believe that an organization has violated the FIPA.

Link to FIPA information. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/940-cmr-11-fair-information-practices-act/download>

- **Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS):** MA General Laws, c.6. s.167A, 172; c.30A. In Massachusetts, Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) checks are required for certain individuals who work with seniors, including COA staff, board members, volunteers, and others likely to have unsupervised contact with seniors. This is to protect the public from exposure to potentially dangerous ex-offenders. CORI checks are conducted by the Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB). If the individual has a criminal record, the CHSB will provide a copy of the record to the requesting organization. The organization will then review the record to determine whether the individual is eligible for the position or volunteer opportunity. Link <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/department-of-criminal-justice-information-services>. Link to DCJI booklet; <https://www.mass.gov/doc/cori-booklet/download>
- **Massachusetts Statutes:** How to find information on all Massachusetts State Laws <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws>

APPENDIX C: Board Member Job Descriptions Examples:

- [Georgetown COA's Model](#)
- [MCOA's Model](#)

APPENDIX D: Emmett Schmarsow's Classic Matrix, Aging Network, Quotes

- COA Board Matrix (BEST PRACTICE) [MATRIX - Emmett S.pdf](#)
- Classic Emmett Schmarsow quotes, witticisms, words of inspiration [Emmett-isms COA Boards .pdf](#)
- Network Chart [4 MA Aging Network Chart \(002\) LARGE FONT.pdf](#)

APPENDIX E: COA By-Laws Examples

- Barnstable COA: [COA By-laws 2021 \(002\) Barnstable COA.pdf](#)
- Norwell COA: [COA By-laws Norwell Updated 080921 Word.docx](#)
- Northbridge COA: [COA By-Laws Northbridge COA .pdf](#)
- Provincetown COA: [COA BOARD BY-LAWS Revised 2023.pdf](#)

APPENDIX F: Code of Conduct Example - Massachusetts Municipal Association and Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association. <https://www.mma.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/MIIA-RISK-Code-of-Conduct-Policy-Elected-Officials-and-Appointed-Volunteer-Members-6.22.22.pdf>

APPENDIX G: [Friends of Councils on Aging, 501\(c\)\(3\) non-profit Role and Purpose](#)

APPENDIX H: Massachusetts Town Clerks Association (MTCA):

<https://www.masstownclerks.org/>

APPENDIX I: National Council on Aging (NCOA) article on, "The State of Today's Senior Centers: Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities." <https://www.ncoa.org/article/the-state-of-todays-senior-centers-successes-challenges-and-opportunities> Link to: www.ncoa.org

APPENDIX J: Massachusetts Office of Elder Affairs; State Area Plan on Aging, 2021-2025

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-state-plan-on-aging-2021-2025/download>