



MCOA recommends combining dementia friendly and age friendly efforts with the guidance of Age- and Dementia-Friendly Integration Toolkit. However, the actions in this checklist are focused on activities that support DFM designation.

If you are considering starting the DFM process or want to reinvigorate an effort that could use a new infusion of ideas, please contact either of MCOA's DFM co-leads, Maddie Noonan for communities east of Worcester County, and Hayley Wood for communities west of and including Worcester County.

**Maddie Noonan: [madeline@mcoaonline.org](mailto:madeline@mcoaonline.org) | Hayley Wood: [hayley@mcoaonline.org](mailto:hayley@mcoaonline.org)**

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- Review the steps to becoming dementia friendly ([mcoaonline.org](http://mcoaonline.org))
- Assess your readiness to launch a dementia friendly effort and invite individuals and your community at large to be members of a DFM Action Team (or AF/DF Action Team). It's important to look for local champions who are willing to spearhead your initiative.

**Here is a list of great potential candidates for involvement:**

- COA Director and other staff
- First responders
- Business leaders and Chamber of Commerce staff
- Caregivers, family, and friends of people living with dementia
- Elected leadership
- Faith community leaders
- COA participants and volunteers
- Aging Services staff including ASAPs/AAAs and Certified Dementia Practitioners
- Faculty of nearby colleges (Nursing faculty can be excellent!)

- **Municipal employees (Town Planners, Public Health, Librarians, DPW, Clerks, Collectors, HR, etc.)**
- **Healthcare and human service professionals**
- **High school or college students**

**Find and read your community's profile on the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative website** ([mahhealthyagingcollaborative.org](http://mahhealthyagingcollaborative.org)) and share it with staff, board members, and people on your Action Team if you have one.

**Seek opportunities to hear the voices of people living with dementia and their caregivers.** Invite caregivers to share their experiences with you in a private setting and learn from them what they need most. If appropriate, invite the participation of someone living with dementia on your Action Team.

**Conduct a scan of the current resources available in your community to people living with dementia and their caregivers and identify where there may be gaps and unmet needs.** In addition to any dementia-specific programs and services offered directly through the COA, learn about local resources and be ready to provide referrals and seek opportunities for partnership and collaboration.

**Consider whether your effort will require a funding source beyond existing resources and explore options.**

**Explore working with your regional planning agency;** some of these have begun to incorporate age and dementia friendly principles in their work with cities and towns.

**Determine an approach for surveying your community to engage stakeholders and solicit feedback for your DFM Action Plan.** Sometimes it's possible to add dementia friendly questions to an existing survey or put a printed survey form in a town-wide mailing from another department (like the Clerk or Collector – annual municipal census mailings are a great opportunity to reach all households). Web-based surveys are relatively simple and inexpensive to create.

**Read sample Action Plans from other MA communities:**

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PWuhJc4t4hpbpW\\_PL1Y1rggyHABeeEWS](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PWuhJc4t4hpbpW_PL1Y1rggyHABeeEWS)

**Review the Dementia Friendly America community toolkit and sector guides:**

<https://dfamerica.org/sector-guides/>

**Ask your municipality's authorizing officials to sign the DFM pledge.** Often, it's ideal to start with a one-on-one conversation with a mayor or town manager to propose adding an

agenda item to a City Council or Select Board meeting, introducing that body to the goals of the DFM movement. Be sure to involve Action Team and/or COA Board members in this step, as they can be powerful advocates. MCOA can also support your advocacy efforts. Sharing stories or testimony from people living with dementia and their caregivers can be very compelling in building the case and gaining support for the initiative from local leaders.

**Celebrate the work you've done to promote dementia friendly initiatives in your community.** DFM kick-off events to introduce the initiative to the community or celebrate a DFM designation are always good for increasing awareness and energy.

### **Ways that many COAs are helping their communities be dementia friendly include:**

- Hosting supportive day programs and other respite programs such as Memory Cafés
- Offering educational programming about dementia and prevention strategies
- Caregiver support groups
- Information and referral to other community resources
- Alzheimer's Association trainings and programs
- Dementia Friends and Dementia Champions trainings
- Providing transportation to people living with dementia and their caregivers
- Encouraging dementia trainings for first responders, municipal employees, and community members

The nature of this work is long-term and will have ebbs and flows. Patience with your own natural pace is needed, as well as a willingness to continue efforts even when progress isn't visible. It's not possible to undertake it and succeed as an individual—Action Teams are essential to develop goals and priorities, ensure implementation of action plan recommendations, and future sustainability of the initiative! Regular invitations to community members to join your Action Team will be required over time, and keeping an eye out for prospective candidates is always helpful. Don't miss opportunities to speak to your community about this work, engage with your local cable station, newspaper, and local festivals and events.

For samples of promotional materials that other DFM leaders have created, contact Hayley or Maddie.

**OFFICE ADDRESS:**  
9 SUMMER ST., SUITE 306,  
FRANKLIN, MA 02038

**CONTACT: HAYLEY WOOD**  
**EMAIL: HAYLEY@MCOAONLINE.ORG**  
**CONTACT: MADELINE NOONAN**  
**EMAIL: MADELINE@MCOAONLINE.ORG**