



Massachusetts
Councils On Aging



Dementia Friendly Massachusetts Update and Survey Response Summary

March 2025



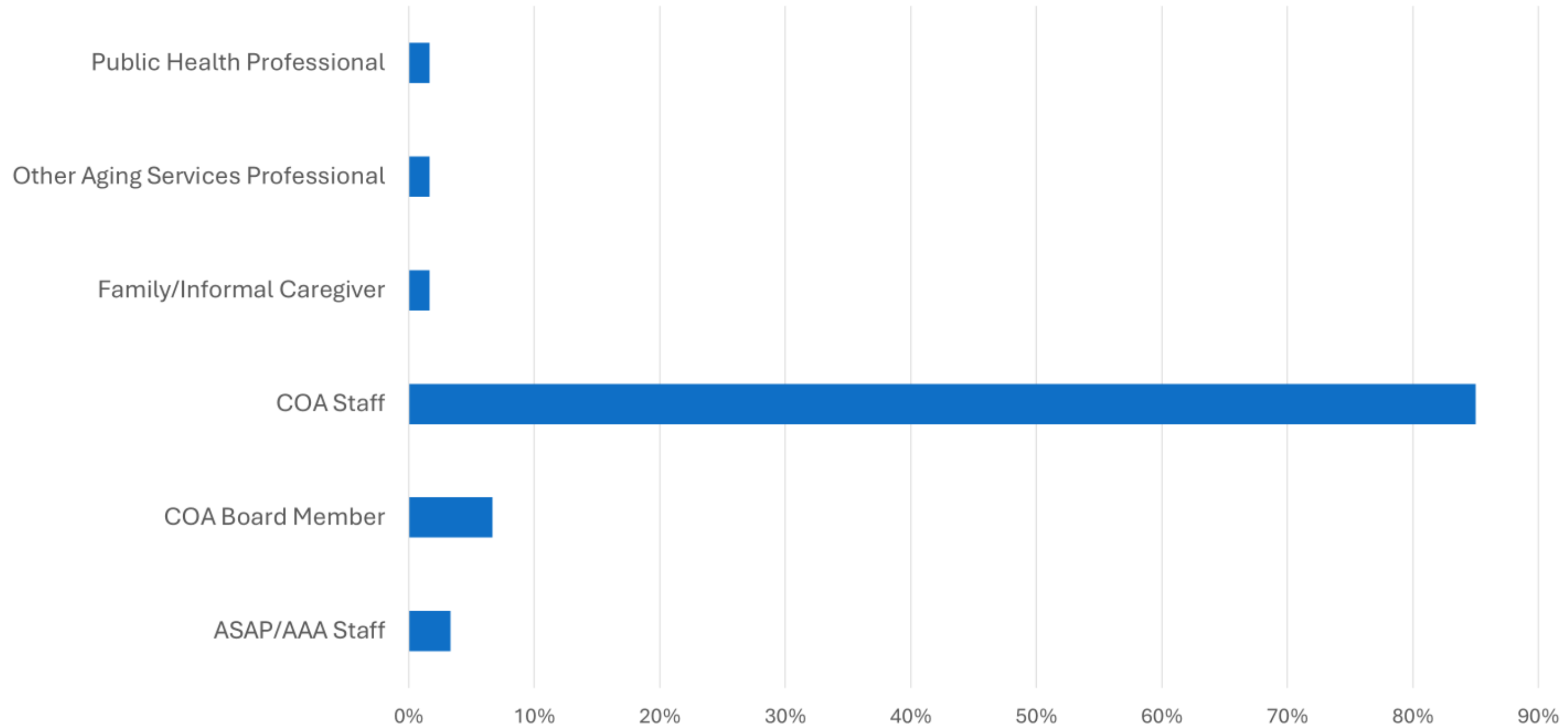
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Quantitative Responses

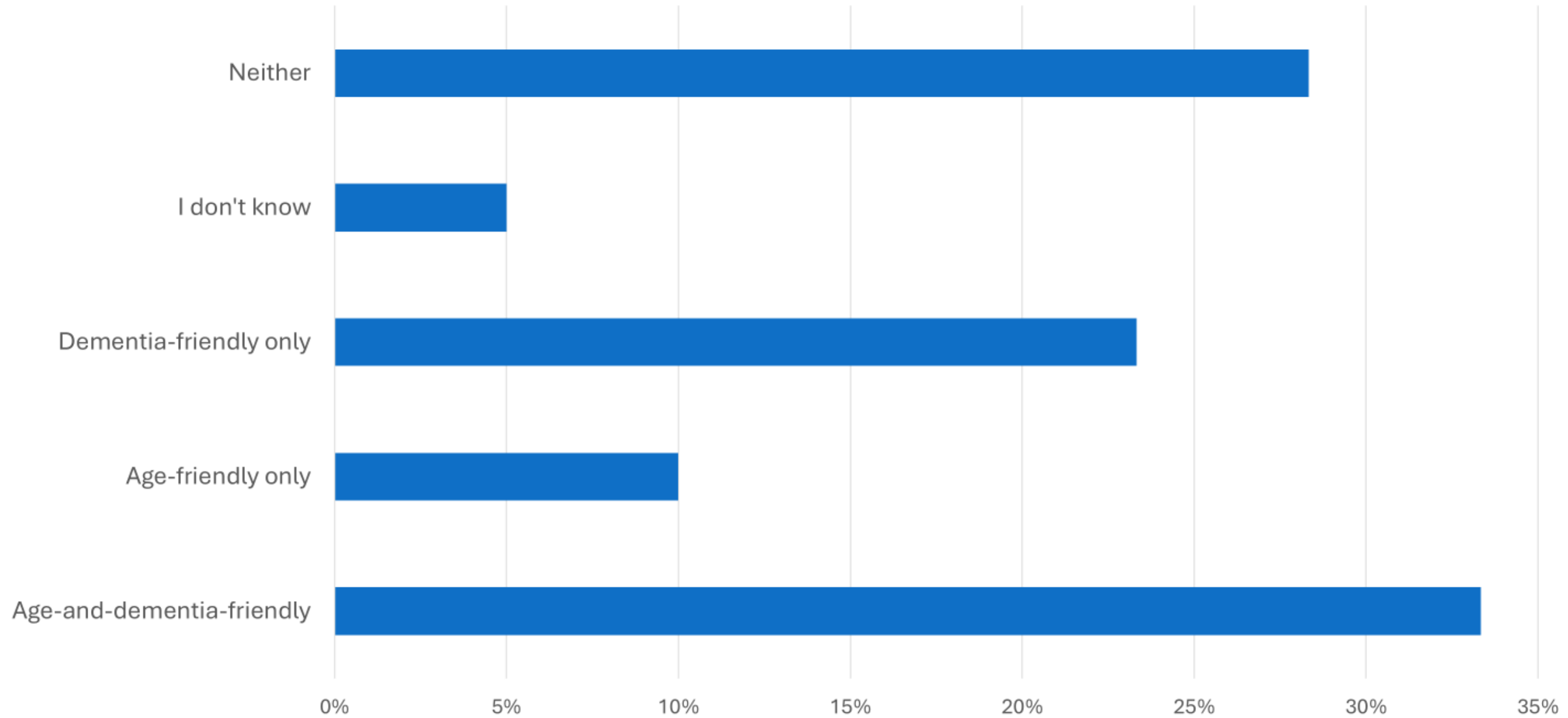


Please check which role best applies to you.



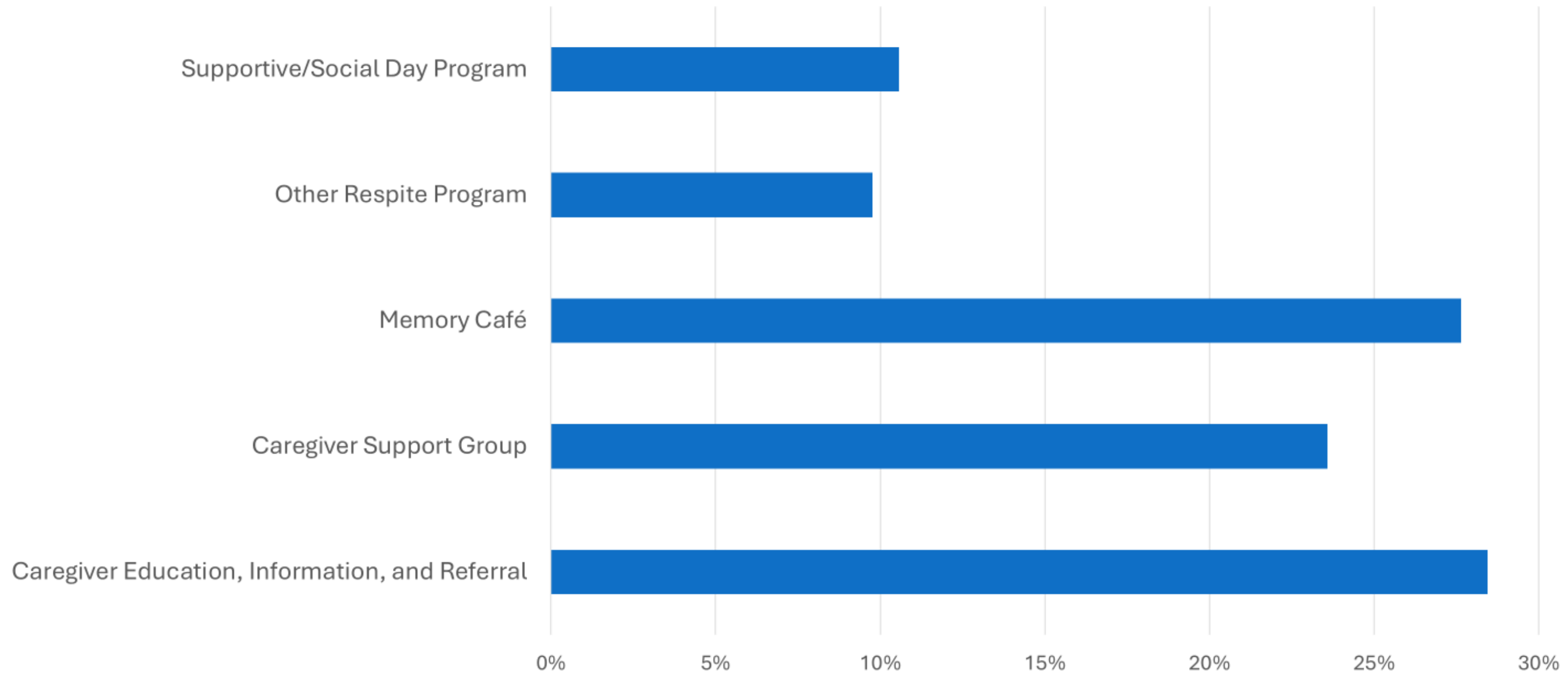


Is your city/town a designated age- and/or dementia-friendly community?





Please indicate which of the following programs and services your Council on Aging/community offers. (Check all that apply)





Dementia-Friendly Programming - Areas of Interest

- **93%** interested in receiving future DFM **email notifications**
- **78%** of respondents interested in **attending future DFM quarterly meetings** and training opportunities
- **88%** would like to receive more information on **caregiver training and education**
- **86%** would like more information on how to become a **Dementia Friend and/or Dementia Champion?**
- **57%** would like to receive the **Memory Café Toolkit** to learn about how to start and run a Memory Café in your community?
- **53%** interested in **sharing their story** about their dementia-friendly work at a future DFM quarterly meeting



Which of the following steps in the process of becoming dementia-friendly have been a **SUCCESS?**

- Getting buy-in from municipal leaders (61%)
- Implementing and making progress on activities in your action plan that address your community's dementia-friendly needs (61%)
- Integrating dementia-friendly activity in your age-friendly work (54%)

Which of the following steps in the process of becoming dementia-friendly have been a **CHALLENGE?**

- Securing funding/resources/personnel to support and sustain your dementia-friendly initiative (49%)
- Creating a dementia-friendly community action team (44%)
- Developing an action plan to address your community's dementia-friendly needs (36%)



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Qualitative Responses



Themes in the free-form, qualitative responses:

- Recommendations to start small
- COA Board awareness and advocacy
- Incorporating DFM goals in strategic planning
- Working collaboratively with other municipal departments and high schools
- Positive impact of Memory Cafés
- Need for and curiosity about funding opportunities
- Solo agers
- Need for caregiver support



Additional improvements, projects, or programming undertaken in COAs/communities to support people living with dementia (PLWD) and their caregivers

- Co-sponsoring a Memory Café with a neighboring town
- Partnering with library to have a special corner dedicated to the topic of dementia
- Televised programs
- Exercise program specifically for PLWD
- Dementia-friendly business programs
- Dementia support handbook
- Installing hearing loop in senior center
- Collaborating with police department on a “wanderers’ program” and Project Life Saver
- Working with public schools to incorporate dementia awareness in curriculum
- Starting a volunteer companion program
- Collaborating with local assisted living facility to host a Memory Café
- Annual Respite and Caregiver Programming Senior Safety Day Event
- COA staff becoming Certified Dementia Practitioners



Current dementia-friendly priorities shared by survey respondents

- To help keep people with dementia living their best lives. To be supportive of them, as well as caregivers. To teach empathy and patience to those who are unfamiliar with dementia and the frustrations that can come from dementia changes in a family
- Memory screenings and follow up
- Expanding Supportive Day Program
- We are working with our High School creating a new curriculum that includes aging, dementia and brain health. Students of the 11th grade health class are also trained to help facilitate an art program and then come to the Senior Center and work with artists living with dementia to create art. The program is called Opening Minds Through Art.
- Working with our town's Disability Commission and supporting improvements around town, sharing resources with HR for staff who are caregivers
- Lunch programs that bring PLWD and others together
- Breaking the stigma through community education



Successes

- Library partnership
- Involvement from other municipal departments
- Partnership with South Shore Conservatory to provide movement and music therapy for a Memory Cafés
- Dementia-Friendly renovation of an existing space purchased for a new Senior Center site

Challenges

- Buy in from municipal leaders
- Reaching out to people with lived experience in the community
- Being a very small town with no businesses
- Funding
- Forming and maintaining the energy of an Action Team
- Solo agers who are also high-needs and often involved with first responders



Desired DFM Meeting Topics

- Working with community stakeholders (educating and getting buy-in)
- Working with cognitively impaired older adults without informal supports
- Keeping the momentum up
- Intergenerational opportunities
- Certifications in this field to enhance qualifications of COA staff speaking about dementia
- Reaching out to family members of PLWD
- Completing an Action Plan

How MCOA can support COAs with DFM work

- Board development guidance
- List of motivational speakers
- Involve MMA in creating and disseminating a DF training for municipal workers
- Ideas on presenting the benefits of being age and dementia friendly to town management
- Promote connectivity amongst DFM initiatives statewide
- Keep members up to date on legislative advocacy opportunities
- Identifying funding opportunities

Words of Wisdom from others doing this work

Just keep at it! Even small changes can have a big impact and can accumulate to make bigger changes possible.

It makes a lot of sense to combine age-friendly and dementia-friendly work. Start small with something that the community needs, like a support group. Tap into this network for many materials that have already been created to make the work less daunting.

Subscribe and connect with MCOA, the Massachusetts Dementia Friendly movement and the Memory Cafe percolator emails. Getting the pledge signed is an easy ask for Select Board members to vote and agree on to get started. Community partners are important, no-one can do this work alone. Including the COA Board to have an awareness of the work and include in strategic planning is key.



Recommendations and Action Steps

- Reintroduce DFM and Supportive Day Program meetings for our membership (COA staff members) on a quarterly basis
- Update new contacts and other DFM-based data in MCOA's CMS to improve accuracy of knowledge of DFM engagement and leaders
- Connect those who requested it with the new Memory Café Guide
- Invite DFM leaders as featured presenters at future DFM Quarterly meetings
- Prioritize DFM peer-to-peer learning formats (i.e. roundtables) at MCOA's Spring Symposium and Annual Conference
- Continue to be responsive to DFM leaders who seek one-on-one support, make referrals to other DFM leadership team members as appropriate, and attend community events when invited
- Develop guidance for advocating for municipal buy-in
- Develop a workshop on DFM action plans and best practices
- Continue to learn about, update, and share grant resources and other funding opportunities
- Share survey data and insights with DFM contacts and MCOA membership



Dementia Friendly



MASSACHUSETTS

DFM Logo

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Quarterly DFM Zoom meetings

Wednesday, April 9

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

The April DFM Quarterly Meeting features Peggy Cahill, a community educator and humanities practitioner who creates art and culture programs to improve quality of life for adults, individuals with memory loss and care partners. She will discuss using arts as a basis for programs

MCOA Leads Dementia Friendly MA, Offering Resources and Grants

MCOA is the state lead for the Dementia Friendly Massachusetts (DFM) initiative, a community-based, grassroots movement to grow awareness, services, and infrastructure to support the lives of people living with dementia and their caregivers. Communities often choose to merge DFM goals with corresponding and overlapping goals for network membership in the Age-Friendly Massachusetts movement, which is steered by AARP-MA.

MCOA offers ongoing support in these meaningful endeavors:

- One-on-one counseling with COA staff members starting and continuing AF/DF work
- Useful step-by-step documents to guide your process
- Quarterly DFM meetings with a broad array of colleagues in the field, featuring presentations from experts and highlighted COA leaders who share best practices
- Dementia Friendly Massachusetts designation certificates, distributed to MA communities who have signed the DFM Pledge
- Continually updated training opportunities, resources, and publications
- A current events calendar of relevant, AF/DF virtual and in-person programming in the state



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INTERESTED IN PURSUING DFM DESIGNATION? CALL US!

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