

Living with a Cognitive Impairment Diagnosis

RESOURCES

Provided by Acton Medical Associates' Behavioral Health Team



FINDING HELP AT HOME

After receiving a diagnosis of cognitive impairment, you or your loved one may be wondering what resources are available to help.

This guide provides resources that can help you navigate the major areas of life that may be impacted by a diagnosis of cognitive impairment either now or in the future.

Formal In-Home Support

Increasing formal and informal supports in the home may help you or your loved one to remain living independently. Here are some in-home support options:

Skilled care through a visiting nurse agency – There must be a medical need in order to qualify. Speak to your physician about this need.

Aging Service Access Points (ASAPs) – ASAPs can help assess needs in the home and implement support such as personal care or homemaker services.

Locate your local ASAP by calling MassOptions, (800) 243-4636, or visiting www.mass.gov/orgs/executive-office-of-elder-affairs

Minuteman Senior Services

Serves Acton, Arlington, Bedford, Boxborough, Burlington, Carlisle, Concord, Harvard, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, Wilmington, Winchester, Woburn

One Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 101, Burlington, MA 01803
(781) 272-7177

Springwell

Serves Ashland, Dover, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Hudson, Marlborough, Natick, Northborough, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury, Wayland, Westborough

33 Boston Post Road West
Marlborough, MA 01752-1853
(508) 573-7200

Aging Services of North Central Massachusetts

Serves Ashburnham, Ashby, Ayer, Berlin, Bolton, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Groton, Hubbardston, Lancaster, Leominster, Pepperell, Princeton, Shirley, Sterling, Templeton, Townsend, Westminster, Winchendon

680 Mechanic Street,
Leominster, MA 01453
(978) 537-7411



Alternative Housing Resources

Sometimes, living safely at home is no longer possible. Even if not a current issue, it is reasonable to explore alternative housing resources to understand options that may be available to support you or your loved one in the future.

Supportive Living/ Public Housing: Independent living based on income and disability/age. Contact your local housing authority to check eligibility and complete the Common Housing Application for Massachusetts Public Housing (CHAMP) application.

Find your local housing authority by visiting <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/local-housing-authority-contact-listing> or by contacting the EOHLIC Main Office (617) 573-1100.

Assisted Living: Provides housing, meals, rent, and personal care services to seniors for a monthly fee.

To find out more about assisted living facilities near you, read the “Assisted Living in Massachusetts: A Consumer Guide” on <https://www.mass.gov/learn-about-assisted-living>

Skilled Nursing Facilities: Long term care is helpful for those needing higher level medical care.

Find out more about Massachusetts skilled nursing facilities online at <https://www.mass.gov/nursing-home-consumer-information>

LEGAL/FINANCIAL PLANNING

Legal Support

Elder Law Attorneys: An Elder Law Attorney can help with:

- updating a will
- navigating estate planning
- other legal issues around aging
- completing or updating a power of attorney
- petitioning for guardianship or conservatorship

National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA) Massachusetts Chapter – Online directory can be located at <https://massnaela.com/> or by calling 617-566-5640.

Volunteers Lawyer Project – free legal information and referral to low-income residents age 60+ in Greater Boston area. Contact Massachusetts Senior Legal Helpline at (800) 342-5297 Monday-Friday 9AM-12PM to see if you qualify. Most people do not qualify for these services.

Financial Planning Options

Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone (SHINE) Program – Find your local SHINE Counselor by calling MassOptions at 800-243-4636 or visiting <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/find-a-shine-counselor>

US Department of Health and Human Services – Visit <https://longtermcare.acl.gov/> for more details about basic needs, costs and coverage, Medicare, and other questions about long term care planning.



MEDICAL DECISION-MAKING

All competent adults, ages 18 and older, have the right to make their own health care choices. Cognitive impairment can impact a person's ability to make informed decisions about their health. There are five important documents in Massachusetts that help ensure a loved one's choices are being honored throughout life:



Massachusetts Health Care Proxy is a legal document used to identify a Health Care Agent who would make medical decisions on a person's behalf if they lose the capacity to make medical decisions on their own. Ask a primary care doctor for a Health Care Proxy Form.



Personal Directive Personal Directive or Living Will is a personal document, not legally binding, to provide to a Health Care Agent with instructions and information on the kind of care a person wants for themselves.

Massachusetts Durable Power of Attorney is a legal document identifying who a person chooses to make financial decisions on their behalf.



Recommended to complete this form with an attorney

Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) is a medical order and form for adults with advancing illness to document their choices about life-sustaining treatment.



Recommended to discuss this form with a doctor to understand how these treatments may relate to specific medical needs.

Comfort Care/Do Not Resuscitate Order (CC/DNR) is a medical order and form to document a choice to receive comfort care measures, but not have medical personnel attempt to restart the heart beat and breathing if a person's heart and breathing stopped.



Recommended to discuss this order with a doctor.

Medical Decision-Making Resources

The Conversation Project – Offers starter kits to help guide conversations about care wishes and end-of-life preferences. Visit <https://theconversationproject.org/> for general information and starter kits, as well as a starter kit specifically for “Families and Loved Ones of People with Alzheimer's Disease or Other Forms of Dementia”.

Honoring Choices Massachusetts – Offers “The Getting Started Tool Kit” to help you understand and choose a trusted person to be your Health Care Agent and explore your care choices, as well as “The Next Steps Toolkit” to help direct your care as your choices and needs change. Visit <https://www.honoringchoicesmass.com/>

Dementia Directive – Provides a helpful guide to outline how care preferences might change if you or your loved one develops worsening dementia. Find this Dementia Directive Form at <https://dementia-directive.org/>

SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Local Social Programming

Local Councils on Aging & Senior Centers: Prioritize advocacy, services, and activities for local elders based on their community's needs and resources.

Senior Centers provide a welcoming space to help seniors flourish while living independently in the community. These centers may offer outreach, transportation, congregate or home-delivered meals, health insurance counseling, socialization, and fitness/wellness/recreation activities.

Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA) – Find your local Council on Aging by visiting <https://mcoaonline.com/>

Adult Day Health Programs: Day programs for older adults and those living with dementia provide respite from home care and oversight from trained staff. Some programs offer transportation to/from home to these sites.

Massachusetts Adult Day Services Association (MADSA) – Manages 121 of the 151 adult day health programs in Massachusetts. Find an Adult Day Health program near you by calling (617) 469-5848 or visiting <https://www.madsa.net/>

- Cooperative Elder Services, Inc offers adult day health programs in Acton, Burlington, and Arlington, as well as caregiver support groups and memory cafés. Phone: 978-448-1400.
- Manor on the Hill offers adult day health program in Leominster. Phone: 978-537-1661
- Mentor Adult Day Health offers adult day health programs at various locations in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, including some sites with bilingual services. Website: <https://mentoradh.com/map/> or calling headquarters at (508) 618-7961.

Social Engagement Programs: Provide a welcoming space for people with dementia and caregivers to connect with others going through similar experiences and foster relationships.

Community Resource Finder (by CareLike) – Find local social engagement programs and early stage programs taking place in Massachusetts or near you: <https://www.communityresourcefinder.org/>

Memory Cafés- Many Local Councils on Aging may run their own memory cafés - check with your local Council on Aging to find out more. Or visit the Memory Café directory managed by Beth Soltzberg (phone: 781-693-5628) at Jewish Family and Children's Services online at <https://www.jfcsboston.org/our-services/services-for-older-adults/home-community-supports/alzheimers-related-dementias-family-support/memorycafedirectory>

Telephonic Friendly Visiting: Isolation and loneliness are very common among seniors, and can have a negative impact on their overall health. Calling to check in on your family member can be helpful but may not always be feasible on your own.

Irish Senior Connect – A free telephonic friendly visiting program run by seniors, for seniors in Massachusetts to address senior isolation and loneliness. Call (855) 249-5146 to make a referral.

Other Resources

SAGE Connect (877) 360-5428– A free, nationwide telephonic friendly-visiting program for LGBTQ+ seniors. Phone: 877-360-5428 to find out more.

Call2Talk run by Mass211 offers 24/7 confidential, compassionate listening to support mental health, emotional support, and suicide prevention. Also offers TeleCheck, which is a telephone check-in service for isolated older adults living at home in the MetroWest MA area. Call 2-1-1 ext 25 from a Massachusetts telephone to connect or dial 9-8-8.

CAREGIVER SUPPORT

Support Groups

Alzheimer's Association – Visit <https://alz.org/help-support/community/support-groups> to find an in-person support group near you.

Alzheimer's Foundation of America – Contact the AFA Helpline at 866-232-8484 to register for their telephonic support group offered Mondays 7PM-8PM (ET) and Thursdays 7PM-8PM (ET).

Council on Aging – Contact your local Council on Aging to see if they offer any caregiver support groups.

Helplines

Alzheimer's Foundation of America National Toll-Free Helpline (866) 232-8484 – Staffed by licensed social workers trained in dementia care and available to provide general information and support. Available seven days a week from 9 AM to 9 PM (ET).

Alzheimer's Association Helpline (800) 272-3900: Operates twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week in 140 languages to provide information about caregiving tips, respite options, services available locally, general information about Alzheimer's disease and treatment options, and emotional support.

MA/NH Alzheimer's Association local office: Offers in-person, by phone, or email care consultation to meet with families/loved ones for an in-depth assessment and strategize ways to best provide care to someone living with a dementia-related illness.

Find out more at https://www.alz.org/manh/helping_you or by calling (617) 393-2100 or emailing Careconsultationmanh@alz.org

AARP Caregiving Helpline (877) 333-5885: Provides general caregiving information for caregivers such as financial and legal issues, home care, medical care, and veteran and long-distance caregiving. Available Monday-Friday 8AM-8PM (ET). Also available in Spanish by calling (888)-971-2013.

Apps

Apps can be a helpful way for caregiving teams to manage caregiving roles and responsibilities.

AARP Caregiving App – Available for free download on iTunes.

Alzheimer's Caregiver Buddy – Available for free download on iTunes for iPhone or Android.



GENERAL RESOURCES

National Resources

Eldercare Locator – Contact 800-677-1116 or visit www.eldercare.acl.gov

Alzheimer's Association/AARP Community Resource Finder

Visit <https://www.communityresourcefinder.org/> for database of local resources.

Massachusetts Resources

MassOptions | <https://massoptions.org/massoptions/> 800-Age-info, (800) 243-4636, can provide general information to help with daily assistance needs, like food and nutritional needs, housing, skilled nursing care, long term illness and disability needs, or caregiving.

Private Geriatric Case Management

Consider working with a private geriatric case manager to explore long-term care options specific to you or your loved one's needs.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT COGNITIVE HEALTH

Educational Opportunities

Alzheimer's Association Training and Education Center – Visit <https://training.alz.org/>

AARP – Visit www.aarp.org

Dementia Friends Massachusetts – Find a Dementia Friend Information Session near you: <https://dementiafriendsma.org/>

Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center – Call 800-438-4380 (M-F 8:30AM-5PM ET) or visit www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers



ACTON MEDICAL IS HERE TO HELP

Need more help navigating these resources or have additional questions?
Social Workers at Acton Medical Associates are available to help you or your loved one.

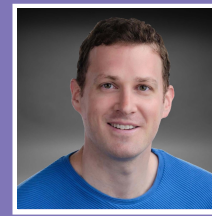
Contact one of our Behavioral Health team members.



Brooke Markt, LICSW
978-635-8918



Carrie Leggett, LICSW
978-635-8902



Sam Brown LICSW
978-635-8849

Acton Medical Associates is committed to providing convenient access to high quality care in a friendly, compassionate and respectful manner for patients of all ages.

Striving for outstanding health services, our teams are dedicated to providing educational materials, behavioral health services, and support to help patients of all ages and their families lead healthy and happy lifestyles.

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Safety Considerations

Cognitive impairment can cause changes in the brain and body that may affect judgement, sense of time and place, behavior, physical ability, and senses, which can in turn affect safety. An individual with mild cognitive impairment can continue to live in the comfort of their home and their community, as long as safety measures are in place.

Home Safety

The Alzheimer's Association has several guides and resources about creating a safe home space. One helpful beginners' resource is the Alzheimer's Association "Home Safety Checklist" located at their website: <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/safety/home-safety> .

Another helpful resource about safety considerations is Veterans Affairs' "A Guide for Families: Keeping the Person with Memory Loss Safer at Home" 2016 Edition available online at https://www.va.gov/geriatrics/docs/HOME_SAFETY_BOOKLET_March_2019.pdf .

Driving

The decision to give up driving can be a difficult one as there are emotional and logistical considerations to keep in mind. Consider what alternative transportation options are available in your area to get around. The Local Council on Aging might have some resources to explore. If you or a loved one are noticing signs of unsafe driving, you may also want to consider a Driving Evaluation typically conducted by an occupational therapy driving rehabilitation specialist.

Emerson Hospital offers a driver evaluation program called "Keys to Independence Driver Assessment". This program requires an order from your doctor for an "OT Driving Evaluation" faxed to Emerson Hospital at fax # (978) 287-8177. This program is not covered by insurance and has out-of-pocket costs associated with the 2-part evaluation. Contact Emerson Hospital's Driving Program at (978) 287-8244 or via email at DrivingProgram@emersonhosp.org for more information or to setup an appointment.

If your medical provider has concerns about your driving, they may request a medical evaluation through the Registry of Motor Vehicles. If so, you will receive notification from the RMV about scheduling a competency road examination.