

Executive Summary (Narrative)
AAA Area Plan 2026-2029
Highland Valley Elder Services

Highland Valley Elder Services, Inc. (HVES), a designated Aging Service Access Point (ASAP) and an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) has existed since 1975 as a private, nonprofit 501(c) (3) organization, to plan, coordinate and provide information, resources, and services to older adults, caregivers, and family members in 24 towns representing Hampshire and Hampden counties in Western Massachusetts. HVES service area includes the following cities and towns: Amherst, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Easthampton, Goshen, Granville, Hadley, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Northampton, Pelham, Plainfield, Russell, Southampton, Southwick, Tolland, Westfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, and Worthington.

HVES delivers programs and services directly related to our agency's mission:
“Highland Valley Elder Services serves older adults and their families through collaboration, education, advocacy, and range of programs designed to support them where they live.”

Our core programs and services include:

- Information & Referral
- Care Advisement/Case Management Services
- Protective Services
- Benefits Support Program
- Money Management Program
- Ombudsman Services
- Clinical Assessment & Eligibility
- Community Transitions Liaison Program
- Options Counseling
- Family Caregiver Program
- Supportive Housing
- Community Dining Centers
- Home Delivered Meals
- In-Home Service Coordination
- Respite Services

See our website for more detailed descriptions of these programs and services:

<https://highlandvalley.org/>

HVES has evolved into a regional leader in the provision of long-term community services for older adults, caregivers and adults with disabilities residing in the community. HVES promotes the development of comprehensive and coordinated community-based long-term care systems to serve older and disabled persons as well as family caregivers. HVES, along with Lifepath, Inc., Greater Springfield Older Senior Services, Inc. (GSSSI), Access Care Partners (ACP), and Stavros Independent Living Center are part of the Pioneer Valley Aging and Disability Resource Consortium (PVADRC).

HVES continues to expand our efforts to understand, identify and offer resources and services to consumers under age 60 with disabilities. The 2026-2029 Area Agency on Aging Plan is a component of the Executive Office of Aging & Independence (AGE) developed the Massachusetts State Plan on Aging, 2026-2029, which is submitted to the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL). The Area Plan will provide information on how HVES will accomplish work on specific goals and objectives that correspond to the guidelines set forth by the U.S. ACL and AGE.

The Older Americans Act (OAA), originally enacted in 1965, supports a range of home and community-based services, such as meals-on-wheels and other nutrition programs, in-home services, transportation, legal services, elder abuse prevention, and caregiver support. These programs help older adults stay as independent as possible in their homes and communities. In addition, OAA services help older adults avoid hospitalization and nursing home placement and, as a result, save federal and state funds which would otherwise would be spent on such care. The original OAA established the Administration on Aging (AoA) and the aging services network that provides essential home and community-based supportive services. Under Title III of the OAA, AAA funding supports grants and direct services under the categories listed below:

- **Supportive Services (Title III-B)** - allocates funds for legal assistance, enhanced service access and a variety of in-home services.
- **Nutrition and Meal Services (Title III-C)** - to include home delivered meals and congregate meals (referred to as community dining at HVES) provided to older adult centers and other organizations serving elders. Meals are provided to older adults and disabled individuals under 60 years old residing in Supportive Housing.
- **Disease prevention and Health Promotion (Title III-D)** – the delivery of evidence-based healthy aging programs that are designed to assist older persons to be empowered to participate in their own well-being and care of their own health.
- **Family Caregiver Support Program (Title III-E)** – this program assists and empowers family caregivers of older persons and grandparents who are the primary caregiver of children 18 years and younger. Services include a free consultation visits, resources/services and recommendations on caregiver strategies, individual training to provide support and skills regarding important decision-making, respite care to provides some temporary relief of day-to-day care, and supplemental services to provide funds to caregivers for emergency needs, medical equipment, and other assistance.

Title III Funding- HVES uses available funds to support programs and service options in our 24 towns and cities. Awarded sub-grant programs are reviewed and monitored to ensure continued success in meeting the goals and objectives outlined in their proposals for funding. The Associate Director of Quality Assurance (serving as the AAA Planner) facilitates this work, along with the Title III Advisory Council, which is comprised of dedicated representative community members. The Advisory Council provides guidance and is integral to the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, reviewing and evaluating program applications for appropriateness and merit in meeting established criteria.

The AAA Area Plan is based on data collected through HVES participation in the AGE Statewide Needs Assessment, gathering input from the communities we serve. The intent of the Needs Assessment is to focus attention on identifying and addressing the needs of persons 60

and over and their caregivers who reside in the HVES service area. See the Context and Attachment D sections of this plan for more details on the AAA Needs Assessment.

HVES will continue to work closely to collaborate with our communities to identify and work to develop programs to meet the needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities and caregivers who reside in Hampshire and Hampden counties. Our collaborations include councils on aging, other ASAP's and AAA's, health care provider organizations, and private sector businesses. We have continued to see growth in the number of older adults seeking services. Our goal is to provide the experience, knowledge and resources to meet the needs of our elders so they may maintain the quality of life they deserve. The Area Plan for the next four years will be HVES' guide in meeting the challenges elders will be presented with over the coming years. Highlighted below are some of the components in the plan:

- HVES core services will continue to be managed for program efficiency and growth.
- HVES will use available Title III-C nutrition funds to provide nutritious meals for homebound elders and meals to our community-dining sites to promote social interaction. HVES will continue to offer an alternate choice meal, and will strive to expand the Nutrition Counseling program.
- HVES will use available Title III-B supportive services funds to award sub-grants to address key needs identified in the Planning and Service Area (PSA), including transportation, in-home supports, outreach, information & assistance, housing, and opportunities for socialization.
- HVES will assist older adults and disabled individuals dealing with chronic health conditions by providing evidenced based programming through the Title III–D healthy aging programs.
- HVES will use available Title III-E caregiver funds to award grants for caregiver support groups to provide support and resources to families and caregivers.

Context

AAA Area Plan 2026-2029

Highland Valley Elder Services

Highland Valley Elder Services, Inc. (HVES) programs are provided under a contract with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Aging & Independence (AGE), as an Aging Services Access Point (ASAP), to provide services to frail, low-income elders in 24 towns in Hampshire and Hampden counties, who meet financial and clinical eligibility. Other funding, is provided through a contract with AGE, which designates HVES as an Area Agency on Aging (AAA).

Home Care Resource Program is responsible for the information and referral components of the agency. Seven Home Care Resource Specialists respond to all requests for information and services. They are responsible for handling all of the intakes for Home Care, Older adult Care Organizations (SCO), One Care, Home Delivered Meals, Nursing Screens, and Money Management. These staff maintain an updated resource database and research additional resources on an ongoing basis to ensure adequate response to inquiries regarding local, statewide and national resource and service information. In addition, they provide Options Counseling throughout the PSA, and Resident Service Coordination in the HVES Supportive Housing site and additional housing sites in Westfield and Southwick through a grant partnership with the Westfield Housing Authority.

Nutrition Program provides daily hot, nutritious meals that are cooked and prepared in our own kitchen in Northampton and delivered to twenty community-dining sites. Given our challenging geography, some community-dining sites operate daily; others operate on a less frequent schedule. Intensive preparation is given in the development of our menu to meet Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) requirements. HVES offers diabetic meals in addition to the regular meal. The menu is designed to utilize USDA Commodity food products available to us. HVES has established relationships with local farms and is able to offer fresh fruits and vegetables as essential ingredients in the menu planning. The Nutrition Project Council meets regularly and offers feedback regarding the meals received. HVES has expanded the program to include a two meal options each day to participants, as well as offers Nutrition Counseling services to eligible consumers.

Family Caregiving Program offers support and resources to identified caregivers through self-referral and referrals by HVES staff and other professionals. Caregivers are community-based or are known caregivers who are connected to Home Care and Protective Service consumers receiving services. HVES offers guidance through counseling and resources to support caregivers in their roles. In addition, available monies are designated for family caregiving awards for respite services or supplemental supports, as well as safety and wellbeing products.

Evidenced-Based Healthy Aging Programs have been offered through HVES since their introduction in Massachusetts through Elder Services of Merrimack Valley. HVES strives to develop new program offerings during this planning cycle. The Information and

Referral Supervisor, along with identified volunteers will facilitate evidenced based programs in the PSA. HVES will review and consider community partnerships to provide Evidence Based Programming.

Participant-Directed/Person Centered Planning continues to be the model for which HVES approaches care planning across departments, and remains a philosophy for the provision of care. HVES continues to offer consumer directed services for consumers in the state home care program and maintains information on PCA programs on the resource database. This model supports and empowers consumers to choose the mechanism of how and where services are delivered.

Protective Services is a core HVES program that focuses on ensuring the rights and safety of elders in the community. Protective Service Workers (PSW) visit consumers out in the community on a daily basis. PSW are trained to identify issues regarding safety in the home, self-neglect, caregiver neglect, financial exploitation, physical and emotional abuse and legal issues. PSW are mandated reporters and receive updated training each year. PSW inform consumers about ways to help improve their quality of life. PSW are available to assist consumers as they make their own choices on what form of resources, assistance or care they may need.

In addition, our **Money Management Program** provides support and oversight to consumers identified by staff or others as needing money management services. The program provides support and education to HVES staff and Money Management volunteers to understand a consumer's capacity to manage their accounts, including fraud and other financial exploitations. Community education occurs to ensure that community partners/mandated reporters are aware of the program and their responsibilities of reporting elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

HVES is pleased to provide a state designated **Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program** that supports nine long-term care facilities. Volunteers are the essential component of this program. Certified ombudsman volunteers work with residents and their families to help ensure the highest quality of life for residents. Ombudsman volunteers visit facilities regularly to speak with residents, provide advocacy, advise residents of their rights and investigate concerns regarding care.

Elder Justice remains a priority at HVES and is ensuring through internal programs and partners with community agencies. For many years, HVES has supported the Community Legal Aid (CLA) Elder Law Project, which offers access to free legal service and support to low-income elders who do not have access to the legal system. HVES HC Resource Specialists, Care Advisors in Home Care, and Protective Service Workers make referrals. This service is essential and an invaluable community resource. CLA is invited yearly to conduct in-services to staff and community partners to educate on the basic tenets of elder law and changes in the law. HVES also maintains an updated resource list of elder law attorneys in the area.

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) encourages Area Agencies on Aging to address focus areas as part of the plan efforts. The focus areas set forth for FFY 2026-2029 are:

- Older Americans Act Core Programs
- Greatest Economic Need and Greatest Social Need
- Expanding Access to Home-and Community-Based Services (HCBS)
- Caregiving

HVES is following the guidelines set by the ACL and AGE to focus on areas with populations targeted in the Older Americans Act and Title III services. The Massachusetts Title III program funding formula targets older individuals with the greatest economic need and older individuals with the greatest social need, with attention on low-income individuals and those living in rural areas. The populations identified:

- Living Alone (Isolated) Older Adults
- Low Income Older Adults
- Minority Older Adult Populations
- Native American Populations
- Rural Older Adult Populations
- Socially Isolated Populations

In addition to priority areas outlined by ACL and AGE, HVES prioritizes needs identified through the Needs Assessment process, as outlined in *Attachment D - Area Agency on Aging 2025 Needs Assessment Project and Public Input*.