

Executive Summary (Narrative)
AAA Area Plan 2022-2025
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
- Benefits Counseling & Application Assistance Program
- Care Advisement/Case Management Services
- Homemaker/Personal Care & Companion Services
- Chore Services
- Home Health Services
- Respite Services
- Home Delivered Meals
- Personal Emergency Response Services
- Environmental Accessibility Adaptations
- Adult Day Programs
- Protective Services
- Money Management Program
- Ombudsman Services
- Clinical Assessment & Eligibility
- Comprehensive Screening & Service Model
- Options Counseling
- Family Caregiver Program
- Supportive Housing
- Community Dining Centers

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 seniors, caregivers and adults with disabilities who live at home. 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 Senior Services, Inc. (GSSSI), WestMass Elder Care (WMEC), 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 2022-2025 Area Agency on Aging Plan is a component of the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) developed the Massachusetts State Plan on Aging, 2022-2025, 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. Administration for Community Living (ACL) and Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA).

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 seniors stay as independent as possible in their homes and communities. In addition, OAA services help seniors 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. AoA is part of the Administration for Community Living (ACL) within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Under Title III of the Older Americans Act, 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 senior centers and other organizations serving elders. Meals are provided to seniors and disabled individuals under 60 years old residing in Supportive Housing.
- **Disease prevention and Health Promotion (Title III-D)** – the delivery of evidenced-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 visit, 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 funds programs and service options in our 24 towns and communities. Awarded programs are reviewed and monitored to ensure continued success in meeting the goals and objectives outlined in their proposals for funding. The Performance and Quality Improvement Director completes this work, along with the Title III Advisory Council, which is comprised of dedicated community members and HVES Board of Directors Representatives. 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 EOEA 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. Further discussion on the needs assessment are outlined in the Context of the Area Plan.

HVES will continue to work closely to collaborate with our communities to identify and work to develop programs to meet the needs of elders, 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 seniors 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 goal is to offer an alternative meal five days a week.
- 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 elders 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 2022-2025
Highland Valley Elder Services

Highland Valley Elder Services, Inc. (HVES) programs are provided under a contract with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA), 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 EOEA, 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. Six Home Care Resource Specialists respond to all requests for information and services. They are responsible for handling all of the intakes for Home Care, Senior Care Organizations (SCO), One Care, Home Delivered Meals, and Money Management. The staff work closely with databases, including 800AGEINFO, and paper resources to be able to respond 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 twelve community-dining sites. Given our challenging geography, some community-dining sites operate daily; others operate on a less frequent schedule. Most home delivered meals consumers receive meal delivery on a daily basis, however, we do have several frozen routes, which are delivered once a week to help with transportation costs. These consumers receive frozen meals at designated intervals during the week. 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. During FFY20, over 43,736 Grab & Go Meals and 115,359 Home Delivered Meals were served. 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.

Family Caregiving Program offers support and resources to identified caregivers through self-referral and referrals by HVES staff and other professionals. This is an important resource program and each year we conduct and provide approximately 100 referrals. Caregivers are community-based or are known caregivers who are connected to Home Care and Protective Service consumers receiving services. In addition, we have designated monies for family caregiving awards, one-time awards of \$500 for caregivers to use for respite services or supplemental supports. Monies are made available to provide relief to caregivers.

Evidenced-Based Healthy Aging Programs have been offered through HVES since their introduction in Massachusetts through Elder Services of Merrimack Valley. HVES has Leaders trained to conduct workshops for the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) and A Matter of Balance. HVES will be focusing on strengthening this program and developing new program offerings during this planning cycle. The Title III Grants Coordinator will be trained on Savvy Caregiver, along with at least one volunteer, and will be seeking volunteers to run various other evidenced based programs. HVES also awarded a sub-grant to the Hampshire Regional YMCA to provided Live Strong- Cancer Support programming in FY22-23.

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. The consumer directed model has historically been a preferred option for some culturally diverse consumers and for those consumers who reside in our more rural areas who face challenges and difficulties in accessing services. Person-centered planning is at the heart of service planning for all program areas, with the elder at the center of the discussion, whether it is a home care consumer or a consumer in a nursing facility or hospital setting. By keeping the elder as the primary focus, we can ensure service planning will result in the elder receiving the services she/he needs, in the setting of their preference, and thus promoting well-being and ultimately quality of life.

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 understand that they are mandated reporters and are trained 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 through the PS program for 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 educate and update community partners/mandated reporters regarding their responsibilities of reporting.

HVES is pleased to provide a state designated **Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program** that supports eleven 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 attorney's in the area.

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) encourages Area Agencies on Aging to address focus areas as part of the plans efforts. The focus areas set forth for FFY 2022-2025 are:

- Older Americans Act Core Programs
- Participant-Directed/Person-Centered Planning
- Elder Justice

HVES is following the guidelines set by the ACL and EOEA 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 (where germane)
- Rural Older Adult Populations (where germane)
- Socially Isolated Populations (i.e., geographic in nature; LGBTQ+; limited English proficiency; separations from friends and family/COVID-19 related; and other socially isolated populations)

Highland Valley Elders Services Needs Assessment Project:

In preparation for the development of the 2022-2025 Area Agency on Aging Plan, HVES took part in a Statewide Needs Assessment by collecting data on needs in the PSA, as well as gathering input from all Area Agency on Aging's (AAA). The intent of the Needs Assessment is to focus attention on identifying and addressing the needs of people 60 and older and their caregivers, who reside in the 24 towns in the HVES service area. The Needs Assessment is an important tool in the development of the agencies area plan and the agencies goals and strategic plans for the future.

Throughout the Fall of 2020, HVES conducted eleven needs assessment activities. The purpose and process were explained to participants. The Needs Assessment is conducted every four years as part of HVES Area Agency on Aging (AAA) plan. The purpose is to focus attention on identifying and addressing the needs of consumers, their caregivers, and the communities we serve. These activities gathered information to help develop programs and services to meet elder needs.

The AAA Needs Assessment Survey was the main source of data collection during the needs assessment process, with 362 surveys submitted between September and December 2020. The needs assessment survey was distributed to a sample of current HVES consumers, recent callers, home delivered meals participants, staff members and volunteers, local COAs, local healthcare group, visiting nurse associations, hospital case management staff, and various other community members. The needs assessment survey was accessible on the agency website and was advertised through the agency social media.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, activities were conducted using various virtual means, in addition to survey methods. Three of the needs assessment activities engaged consumers and caregivers directly in conversations related to the stated needs of seniors in the PSA. These engagement activities took place by phone call and video meeting. Participants were also asked to complete the needs assessment survey. Needs discussed during these listening sessions included transportation, housing, affordable food, companionship/ opportunities to socialize, living on a fixed income, and COVID-19 related challenges.

One needs assessment activity took place on video call with the Northern Hilltown Consortium of Councils on Aging (COA), which is a group of COA Directors from rural communities within the PSA. Input was gathered on the video call and participants were asked to complete the needs assessment survey. Needs discussed during this listening session included need for socialization, transportation, access to public benefits, access to internet/tech assistance and training, and COVID-19 related issues.

Five sessions were completed with HVES staff in the State Home Care, Senior Care Options, Nursing, Protective Services, and Information & Referral departments. Staff were solicited for their feedback on the most commonly identified needs of seniors in the PSA. This group also provided helpful input on potential solutions to cover the areas where gaps in services exist. Participants were also asked complete the needs assessment survey. Needs discussed during these listening sessions included access to technology, caregiver support, housing assistance, in-home services, opportunities to socialize, mental health supports, food costs, in-home medical support, and application/public benefit assistance.

Reported data collected identified the top six identified need areas to be: 1) living on a fixed income 2) transportation 3) in-home supports/care 4) food costs 5) opportunities to socialize and 6) affordable housing. See *Attachment K: AAA Needs Assessment Summary Data 2020* for full needs assessment summary details.

As described in the Area Plan Focus Areas, HVES will use targeted strategies through the next four years to address the needs identified through this process. Some of the key initiatives to address each top need area are outlined below:

- **Living on a Fixed Income:** HVES will continue to support seniors to access the public benefits and services to which they are entitled. HVES will continue to assist seniors in accessing affordable healthcare through SHINE program and partnerships with Masshealth. HVES Options program will continue to assist seniors in exploring options for support and services to assist them in living independently in their setting of choice. HVES will continue to offer grant opportunities to seniors in need of critical items. HVES will continue to facilitate the Money Management program for rep-payee and bill payer services.
- **Transportation:** HVES will continue to support and expand the Transportation Concierge program, which avails seniors the opportunity to navigate their specific transportation needs with a skilled resource specialist who can assist in providing resources, scheduling appointments, and identifying long-term transportation solutions. HVES will continue to provide sub-grants to community partners to provide transportation in the PSA including, the Hilltown CDC, Williamsburg COA, and Northampton COA. HVES will continue to keep a current/updated resource database on the agency website to allow the community to search for transportation resources by town.
- **In-home Support/Care:** HVES will continue to onboard new in-home service providers and strategize with current providers to ensure that consumers' request for services are being fulfilled. HVES will maintain an updated resource database which includes private pay resources and information on local programs who can provide some in-home assistance on a volunteer basis or for reduced cost. HVES will continue to support Title III sub-grants that address the in-home service needs of seniors in the PSA including the Hilltown Elder Network, the Hilltown Outreach Program for Elders, the Williamsburg COA Companion Program, and the Easthampton COA Shopping/Delivery Program.
- **Food costs:** HVES will continue to provide home delivered meals and community dining in the PSA, which is available to consumers with only a voluntary donation. HVES will support seniors in exploring affordable food options to meet their needs and will maintain current information on the resource database on the agency website. HVES will continue to partner with the Western MA Food Bank to facilitate the Mobile Food Pantry and Brown Bag at Westfield sites. HVES will continue to work with consumers through the Benefits Counseling and Application Assistance Program to access SNAP benefits.
- **Opportunities to Socialize:** HVES continues to support Title III sub-grants that promote positive interaction, support, and socialization; including the Chesterfield COA Fitness and Multigenerational Programs, Russell COA Fitness Program, Huntington COA & Southampton COA Memory Cafés, Jewish Family Services Caregiver Support Groups, Williamsburg Companion program, and Northampton COA Virtual Senior Center. HVES collaborates with local COAs to share information on social programming with consumers and families in the PSA. HVES will continue community dining/grab-and-go nutrition programs and daily check-ins to home delivered meals consumers. HVES continues to offer activities in Washington House, HVES supportive housing program.
- **Affordable Housing:** HVES will continue to assist consumers in the search for appropriate and affordable housing through the Options Counseling program. HVES will work with local community agencies who assist individuals in obtaining housing, such as

Wayfinders and Elliot Community Services. HVES will maintain information on housing options in the PSA and surrounding communities which can be searched through the agency website resource database. HVES will bolster resources for affordable housing search by utilizing Title III funds to support a part time housing specialist who can directly assist consumers with affordable housing applications and follow-up.

**Focus Areas: Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Performance Measures:
AAA Area Plan 2022-2025
Highland Valley Elder Services**

Introduction:

Highland Valley Elder Services, Inc. (HVES) engages in the ongoing partnership between the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) and all statewide Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), to promote independence, empowerment, and well-being for the benefit of the older adults, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers in our Commonwealth. Our service area population informed our focus for the upcoming four years, in conjunction with Commonwealth identified areas of highest need. HVES consumers reside in a combination of small western Massachusetts (MA) cities and rural towns, to comprise 24 different communities. During the needs assessment that took place in the fall of 2020, HVES received 362 survey responses, and held ten listening sessions. Needs assessment engagement activities revealed, consumers, caregivers, and advocates report that the greatest challenges for seniors in the service area include living on a fixed income, access to in-home supports, and transportation. Other high areas of need identified during the engagement activities include assistance with food costs, affordable housing, and opportunities to socialize. The 2019 Profile of Older Americans showed that between 2008 and 2018, the population age 65+ increased by 35%, and is projected to reach 94.7 million in 2060 (ACL, 2020). The study also showed that the 85+ population is projected to more than double from 6.5 million in 2018 to 14.4 million in 2040 (ACL, 2020), which puts a greater emphasis on the need to bolster supports for the challenges faced by seniors in the Commonwealth. Our planned efforts as an AAA to address these areas of need for the upcoming four years are identified below in three detailed focus areas.

Focus Areas- Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Performance Measures:

Focus Area 1 – Older Americans Act Core Programs

Goal #1: HVES will work with community partners to provide seniors with opportunities for socialization, increase access to in-home supports, and bolster transportation resources.

Overview: During the needs assessment process, HVES identified access to in-home supports and transportation, as two of the top three greatest challenges. These needs have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many local transportation programs have been on hold or are operating at limited capacity and the shortage of in-home workers has become more prevalent. Fiscal Year (FY)20-FY21 Statewide Aggregate Information and Referral (I&R) data indicates the highest call topics logged related to some form of in-home service and support, such as homemaking, personal care, and meals services (EOEA, 2021), showing a need in those areas statewide. The HVES needs assessment also identified that finding opportunities for socialization has been a challenge for seniors in the HVES PSA. This need is likely increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as councils on aging and other community organizations have not been operating at full capacity. HVES will address these areas of need using the objectives outlined below.

Objectives:

- Continue to utilize Title III B funding to support local programs who provide in-home support for seniors, particularly living in rural communities, and various companionship programs facilitated through the local Councils on Aging (COAs).
- Continue to utilize Title III B funding to support local programs who provide transportation services to seniors, particularly in the rural hilltowns. Work with Title III partners to return to their original capacity to provide transportation (prior to COVID-19 pandemic).
- Investigate options for subsidizing transportation costs for consumers.
- Continue to bolster transportation resources in the Home Care Program.
- Continue to utilize Title III B funding to support the Transportation Concierge program through HVES, which serves to assist seniors in identifying transportation options specific to their needs, and can assist in scheduling transportation for seniors.
- Continue to utilize Title III B funding to support local programs in providing grocery and prescription delivery services. HVES will continue to promote this as a safe option during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Continue to utilize Title III B funding to support local programs that reduce isolation and provide opportunities for socialization, particularly in the rural hilltown communities. Social groups, exercise programs, outreach programs, community dining, and multigenerational programs are among the programs currently funding through Title III.
- Promote all Title III B programs on the agency website, Facebook page, during community outreach events (such as health fairs), and will have ongoing education with HVES staff on all Title III program offerings, as well as other community programs that support seniors and caregivers.
- Seek additional opportunities to collaborate with community organizations to bolster transportation options and enhance supportive service offerings for seniors, particularly in the rural hilltowns.
- Promote the new Personal and Home Care Aide State Training (PHCAST), to assist in growing and strengthening the home care workforce, allowing for greater access to in-home supports for seniors in the PSA.
- Continue to ensure that Title III programs are offered without cost to consumers, to ensure low-income seniors have access to the same supportive services and resources.
- Encourage and promote programs that aim to serve minority populations.
- Utilize available Title III funding to advertise for these and other Title III funded programs and services.

Goal # 2: HVES will support seniors in obtaining access to affordable, nutritious food options that meet their needs and preferences.

Overview: Food costs were identified as one of the top five needs in the AAA Needs Assessment process. Access to nutritious and affordable food was a topic of discussion within HVES listening sessions, with a greater need identified for home-bound seniors. Around a third of HVES meals consumers surveyed indicated that they have a higher need for meals services as a result of COVID-19. The number of consumers served by the Nutrition Program at HVES increased significantly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 608 meals consumers in February 2020 and 819 in February 2021, showing the existence of food insecurity in the PSA.

HVES will continue efforts to provide nutritious, balanced meals to consumers, and bolster nutrition resources to seniors, using the objectives outlined below.

Objectives:

- Provide ongoing home and community dining meals, to include specialty meals as necessary, towards the provision of a third of the recommended daily intake (RDI) per EOE.
- Continue to provide nutritious and balanced meals using its own commercial kitchen and utilizing available USDA Commodity foods.
- Continue to provide home delivered meals (HDM) services to all 24 communities within the geographic region. HVES will continue to formulate a plan to offer alternate choice meals to HDM consumers.
- Continue to maintain twelve community-dining sites or grab-and-go, as permitted, throughout the PSA. Support and facilitate a safe re-opening of community dining programs, as soon as it is safe to do so. Continue to explore additional dining site options to expand community-dining programs.
- Encourage consumers to attend community-dining sites to promote socialization while minimizing costs, once the safe re-opening of sites occurs. Re-implement the alternate choice meal at community dining sites, once the safe re-opening of sites occurs. Enhance a participant directed model for dining sites by improving volunteer engagement and empowerment.
- Continue to screen and refer consumers for the nutrition services, as appropriate, through Home Care, Information & Referral, and Protective Service programs.
- Continue to promote an LGBTQ inclusive dining program through staff diversity education, representation of rainbow flag on nutrition advertising, and by participating in the annual Northampton, NoHo Pride Parade.
- Continue to collaborate with local COAs and human service organizations to engage consumers in community dining programs, as well as to support their need for transportation to access community-dining sites. Continue to support COA carpool programs using Title III B funding.
- Continue to promote nutrition education and food access programs through the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and other community organizations.
- Ensure ongoing trainings are held for program staff on nutrition support resources and will encourage staff to make referrals to SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs as necessary.
- Continue to offer nutritional supplement options for consumers in State Home Care.
- Increase nutrition education by Nutritionist at community-dining sites, once safe re-opening of sites occurs. Continue to provide nutritional education through mailings and menu attachments. Explore additional options for nutritional education, such as providing access to webinars on specific topics and by implementing a nutritional consultation service through the State Home Care (SHC) program.
- Increase volunteer support throughout the Nutrition program especially for meal delivery, via HVES recruitment efforts and partnerships. Continue to partner with RSVP and other community employment organizations for recruitment in the Nutrition program.
- Promote meaningful employment and volunteer opportunities for seniors, in the Nutrition programs.

Goal # 3- HVES will provide effective information and referral services, person-centered resources, and community programming to ensure elders, family members, and caregivers have access to core services and supports to address priority needs.

Overview: It is critical for seniors to have knowledge of and access to community resources in order to participate in the services that meet their person-centered needs. During the HVES needs assessment, access to in-home services and supports was among the top three greatest challenges identified by seniors, caregivers, and advocates. The HVES Options Counseling Survey for FY20 revealed that the vast majority of callers felt they were better informed to make decisions about long-term care options following their Options visit, indicating the critical importance of HVES Information & Referral services for seniors and caregivers. Also in HVES needs assessment, seniors noted that living on a fixed income, food costs, and affordable housing are three of the greatest challenges they are facing. The 2019 Profile of Older Americans shows that one in every ten seniors is living in poverty (ACL, 2020), exemplifying this need across the country. Statewide Aggregate I&R data and HVES PSA data shows a slight increase in calls related to housing, from the last two quarters of FY20 for the first two quarters of FY21 (EOEA, 2021), which may be, in part, a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. HVES will address these need areas using objectives outlined below.

Objectives:

- Uphold the standard that all call and email correspondences will be responded to within a twenty-four business hours, to ensure timely follow-up to consumer and caregiver needs.
- Increase the business acumen by providing ongoing education to staff areas of need identified by seniors and on appropriate resources available to meet those needs.
- Ensure appropriate staff are trained and CIRS-certified. Ensure that all staff have the required annual in-service trainings, as indicated by EOEA.
- Ensure that the resource database available on our website has current, updated resources, to ensure that seniors, caregivers, community members, and HVES staff benefit from this resource.
- Utilize database resources, paper resources and online resources to prepare a comprehensive response to consumer inquiries.
- Utilize the Options Counseling program to assist seniors in identifying what options may meet their person-centered needs, and referring to those options, as necessary. Bolster resources and training for Options Counselors on helping seniors obtain affordable housing.
- Promote Options Counseling through advertisement on brochures, on the agency website, on agency social media, and through outreach efforts with both community members, other professionals, and HVES staff and volunteers across departments. Resources through the Aging and Disability Resource Consortium (ADRC) will be utilized during Options Council sessions and will be shared with other HVES staff so they may promote these resources to the consumers, caregivers, and families served.
- Take opportunities to promote all core services and programs through community outreach efforts, such as health education events. Focus on reaching low-income seniors in outreach efforts, to ensure they have access to affordable supportive services and access to information and referral for public benefits and other supplemental programs.

- Assist seniors in obtaining the appropriate health insurance through referrals to the SHINE program. HVES will continue to support rural Health Connector programs, which can serve seniors in their homes, through Title III B funding.
- Support seniors in managing food costs and living on a fixed income by providing resources and guidance, and/or referring to the Money Management Program, which can assist with bill payer and representative payee services, as well as with applications for SNAP and other public benefits.
- Take efforts to address the increased isolation and depressive symptoms reported by seniors and caregivers by providing appropriate resources and opportunities for consumers with depression, substance use, and other behavioral diagnosis to receive assessment, screening, and ongoing support through a group or individual setting. Provide educational opportunities for staff to understand behavioral health challenges and options available in the PSA.
- Enhance quality assurance efforts by monitoring live calls and providing feedback to staff on performance. Continue to utilize satisfaction surveys to gauge caller feedback on their experience in speaking with HVES staff. Revise and update this survey to reflect current points of interest and ensure ease of completion.
- Continue utilizing call log data to assess reported needs of consumer and areas of frequent inquiry, to ensure that staff have the appropriate resources and services to refer consumers.

Goal # 4: HVES will continue to support families and caregivers utilizing Title III E funding to provide group and individual services and supports to those caring for seniors in the community.

Overview: Supporting the needs of caregivers in the community is essential for ensuring that seniors receive the care they need. The MA caregiver resource webpage indicates that, “approximately 53 million caregivers have provided unpaid care for an adult or child in the last 12 months” and “about 16.3 million adult family caregivers care for someone with Alzheimer’s disease or a dementia-related disorder” (MA, 2021). The HVES needs assessment reflected that caregivers are feeling increased strain as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with less formal supports available and many seniors and caregivers feeling reluctant to receive assistance from outside providers due to the risks. HVES will continue to support caregivers in the community using the techniques outlined below.

Objectives:

- Continue to provide one-on-one consultation assistance/counseling to family caregivers, as well as caregiving resources and support through the HVES Family Caregiver Program (FCP). FCP will continue to utilize Title III E funding to provider individual Caregiver Initiative Grants (CGI) to support respite costs and supplemental services.
- Ensure HVES Information & Referral department maintains an array of resource information to share with family caregivers on the agency website. Promote programs through the Alzheimer’s Association.
- Continue to provide education to all program staff on caregiver support programs and resources available in the community.
- Utilize Title III D funding to provide Powerful Tools for Caregivers and/or Savvy Caregiver programming to the PSA. Work towards this objective by first identifying and

training volunteer facilitators for the program. HVES supports caregivers by offering respite resources and service options to allow caregivers to participate in programs.

- Continue to utilize Title III E funding to support the caregiver support programs existing in the community, which are accessible to caregivers throughout the PSA, including the rural hilltown communities.
- Continue to seek additional Title III E funded caregiver programs, and will encourage and support individual and group caregiver programming in the PSA.
- Continue to bolster the respite services available under the Home Care Program to ensure consumers/caregivers have options to meet their person-centered needs.

Goal # 5: HVES will continue to support the Ombudsman Program in long-term care facilities to ensure consumers are aware of their rights, benefits, and entitlements, and have support as issues arise.

Overview: The Ombudsman Program has been a longstanding support for seniors residing in skilled nursing facilities and rest homes. The program aims to ensure consumers are aware of their rights and have the support and advocacy to address concerns as they relate to rights, benefits, and entitlements. HVES Ombudsman Program has continued to provide this support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, although visitor limitations in facilities have made the task challenging. HVES will continue to promote resident quality of life through the objectives outlined below.

Objectives:

- Continue weekly outreach to each facility in the PSA to ensure seniors are supported and can address their needs. This outreach will generally take place in the facility, but due to COVID-19 pandemic, remote methods may also be utilized. Continue to investigate and implement safe outreach measures to residents. Help to facilitate a safe reintegration plan for skilled nursing facilities, when possible.
- Ensure HVES staff and volunteers continue to have access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and receive infection control training, to ensure safety of residents, staff, and volunteers during on site facility visits.
- Recognize that residents in long-term care facilities may feel isolated and will encourage participation in group activities, community programming, and other avenues of social support.
- Continue to encourage visitations and support from outside family and friends, to enhance resident quality of life and reduce isolation.
- Attend resident council meetings and individual care and discharge planning meetings to advocate for the needs and rights of each resident, as appropriate.
- Continue to offer mediation when families, staff, and residents are in disagreement about care.
- Increase volunteer education and development through workshops and trainings. Focus educational efforts on working with residents from diverse backgrounds. Continue to promote inclusion, equity, and diversity within the long-term care settings.
- Have adequate volunteer Ombudsman to cover all facilities, and will recruit additional volunteers, as needed, to support the program.

Goal # 6: HVES will continue to utilize Title III D funding for facilitation of Evidenced Based, Healthy Aging programs, which promote the health, well-being and quality of life for seniors.

Overview: The Evidenced Based Programs offered through the Healthy Living Center of Excellence have provided a long-standing support network for seniors and caregivers around chronic health conditions and shared experiences of getting older and/or being a caregiver to an older adult. The model of service delivery for these programs has changed significantly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, creating a need for re-education of HVES volunteer facilitators and a re-organization of the overall program. HVES will continue efforts to offer valuable evidenced based programming using the objectives outlined below.

Objectives:

- Continue to identify and expand opportunities to host Chronic Disease-Self Management and A Matter of Balance workshops. Current leaders in these programs will receive the necessary refresher training needed to provide these programs remotely.
- Explore options to implement other Evidenced Based Programs in the PSA.
- Continue efforts towards adding a part-time position to oversee the Healthy Aging program. This position will be focused on coordinating volunteers for programs, working with community organizations to host programs, and co-leading some programs.
- Promote caregiver education and support through Title III D funding by providing Powerful Tools for Caregivers and/or Savvy Caregiver programs in the PSA.
- Engage community partners by inviting them to host programs, refer their consumers to active programs, and to encourage partners to apply for Title III D funding when they have the interest and ability to facilitate Evidenced Based Programs.
- Continue to support the Western Mass Healthy Aging Consortium by hosting workshop series and providing books and materials to expand healthy aging projects.
- Support current Leaders and Master Trainers by offering the opportunity to attend trainings each year offered by the Healthy Living Center for Excellence to maintain certification. Encourage current leaders to be cross-trained in other healthy aging programs.
- Work to implement remote programming that is now available as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Support seniors in providing information and referral to transportation resources to attend on site programming, once on-site programming can be offered safely.

Focus Area 2 – Participant-Directed/Person Centered Planning

Goal #1- HVES will continue to offer consumer direct services, to empower consumers, families, and caregivers in making informed decisions regarding services, and to support needs of maintaining independence and safety at home.

Overview: HVES recognizes that ensuring consumers have the right to choice and are engaged in all care planning decisions is essential to maintaining independence. It is important that seniors, caregivers, and families have knowledge of choices available for care and support, so they make informed decisions on what is best for them. HVES will promote participant directed care and person-centered care planning using the objectives outlined below.

Objectives:

- Promote the Take Charge, consumer directed program to eligible seniors, at the time of intake and at reassessment intervals. Enhance advertising for this program to ensure that individuals in priority populations have knowledge of, and access to this service option.
- Encourage this service offering for consumers in minority groups, consumers residing in rural communities, and to seniors who already have identified caregivers, so long as the program meets their identified needs.
- Increase staff education on the Take Charge program to ensure all program and service staff are comfortable explaining and referring to this program option. HVES staff will also receive education on Masshealth funded Personal Care Attendant program, to ensure that all consumers have the choice of a consumer-directed model, regardless of program enrollment.
- Ensure Care Advisors are trained on person-centered care planning. They will encourage and support consumers to consider personal preferences regarding service provision and care planning decisions. HVES upholds that the consumer is entitled to choose how, when, and where their care is delivered.
- Continue to explore and implement additional service offerings in the SHC Program, as a greater variety of service options will allow more effective and individualized care plans.
- Continue to provide Option Counseling to assist seniors and their families in making informed decisions regarding services and living arrangements that best meet their long term care needs.
- Continue to provide support to family caregivers with one-on-one support sessions to relay resources and supports specific to their needs, through the FCP.
- Receive ongoing training to educate staff on issues of dementia, mental health, and diversity, along with appropriate resources to ensure that they are equipped to provide consumers and caregivers with helpful, person-centered supports.
- Promote consumer right to choice and participant directed care in nursing facilities and rest homes, through the Ombudsman program.

Focus Area 3– Elder Justice

Goal # 1- HVES will support seniors in our PSA to live free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Overview: Protective Services is a core program through HVES which serves to support and protect seniors in the PSA from physical and emotional abuse, financial exploitation, self-neglect and neglect. HVES leverages critical partnerships in the community, such as with legal service providers, to enhance efforts to protect the rights of seniors. Consumers receive support for issues like housing evictions and mediations, unemployment issues, access to public benefits,

among other areas from legal service providers. Through February 2021, Community Legal Aid has served 67 unduplicated consumers in the PSA for FY21, with 234 units of service provided. HVES will continue to promote elder justice following the objectives outlined below.

Objectives:

- Continue to support the Community Legal Aid (CLA) Elder Law Project through Title III B funding. CLA offers access to free legal services to low-income seniors.
- Continue to partner with CLA to conduct an annual in-service for staff and community to educate basic tenets of elder law and changes in the law.
- Continue to ensure that the resource database maintained on the agency website contains information on CLA and other trusted elder law attorneys, for those who do not qualify for CLA services. HVES staff will continue to refer consumers to legal services as appropriate.
- Continue to partner with the MA Attorney General Office of Consumer Protection to provide in-services to staff and consumers on common scams, and will refer to them as necessary.
- Continue to identify and investigate issues of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation through the Protective Service department.
- Provide community and staff education through Protective Services on elder rights, mandated reporting, and financial exploitation, abuse, & neglect. Work with employees and community partners to ensure that elder rights issues are reported appropriately.
- Ensure consumers have access to public services and benefits through the Money Management Program, which now provides benefits counseling and application assistance, and leverage support from CLA in navigating issues with public benefits.
- Maintain a Money Management Advisory Council that is comprised of community representatives from local banking institutions, the Northwest District Attorney Office of Consumer Protection, and the Board of Directors. The program provides support and education to HVES staff and Money Management volunteers to understand consumer's capacity to manage their accounts.
- Seek to address the identified need of living on a fixed income, by conducting community trainings on financial literacy. These programs will empower consumers to have a greater understanding regarding their financial situation.
- Provide advocacy and education for resident rights in long-term care settings through Ombudsman.
- Promote Protective Services, Money Management, Ombudsman, CLA and other legal services, as well as educational opportunities for seniors on the agency website, social media, advertisements, and in community outreach efforts.

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