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BRISTOL AGING & WELLNESS' AREA AGENCY ON AGING - FOCUS  
AREA COORDINATION 2026-2029

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## Bristol Aging & Wellness' Area Agency on Aging – Focus Area Coordination 2026-2029

Founded in 1973, Bristol Aging & Wellness, Inc. (Bristol) is a not-for-profit organization funded in part through contracts with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Aging & Independence (AGE). Bristol is an open and affirming agency dedicated to being the leader in improving the quality of life for older adults, people with disabilities, their families, and caregivers. The agency's comprehensive system of in-home health and supportive services enables older adults to remain in their homes or to return to their homes after a stay in a hospital or nursing facility. Bristol serves as both the Aging Services Access Point (ASAP) and the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for the planning and service area (PSA) in the fifteen communities of Attleboro, Berkley, Dighton, Fall River, Freetown, Mansfield, North Attleboro, Norton, Raynham, Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset, Swansea, Taunton, and Westport.

As a AAA, Bristol is charged with serving older adults 60 years of age and older, with a special emphasis on those living alone (isolated), low-income, Native American, rural, socially isolated (geographic in nature, LGBTQ+, limited English proficiency), and their caregivers. In addition, Bristol investigates reports of abuse and provides protective services to older adults residing in Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Gosnold, Marion, Mattapoisett, New Bedford, and Rochester.

The agency collaborates with AGE to conduct a statewide Needs Assessment Survey every four years to identify target areas for the Area Plan on Aging. The Area Plan summarizes Bristol's efforts to define goals, set strategies, refine priorities, coordinate and promote activities, and offer services across the PSA. The results of Bristol's FY2024 Needs Assessment focused on the following top areas of reported needs related to aging as reported by survey respondents:

- 54.7% of respondents reported *Access to Services* needs related to aging to include assistance applying for public benefits, financial services, and/or health insurance, in alignment with 49.6% of statewide respondents.
- 66.3% of respondents reported *Access to Affordable Health Care Services* needs related to aging to include accessing health services, attending health prevention classes, receiving medical home visits, and/or finding a doctor, in alignment with 51.1% of statewide respondents.

- 58.4% of respondents reported *In-Home Support for Maintaining Independence* needs related to aging to include assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs), home and property maintenance (snow removal, lawn care, leaf removal), home modifications, and/or general household tasks, in alignment with 61.4% of statewide respondents.
- 48.4% of respondents reported *Transportation Access and Availability* needs related to aging to include non-emergency transportation, rides to appointments or social activities, help with public transportation, weekend transportation service, and/or bus/carpool opportunities, in alignment with 53.6% of statewide respondents.
- 46.3% of respondents reported *Active & Wellness Promotion* needs related to aging to include classes on healthy aging, information on physical wellness, fitness programs, exercise classes, and/or support for caregivers, in alignment with 47.2% of statewide respondents.

Bristol's targeted service priorities based on the 2024 Needs Assessment Survey results are to:

- Increase access to services for older adults and their caregivers.
- Strengthen access to affordable healthcare services for older adults and their caregivers.
- Enhance active & wellness promotion for older adults and their caregivers.
- Reinforce in-home support for maintaining independence for older adults.
- Expand transportation access and availability for older adults and their caregivers.
- Support legal services for older adults.

Through guidance from the Administration on Community Living (ACL) and AGE, Bristol will incorporate the targeted service priorities to address the following four focus areas. The developed strategies will direct Bristol over the next four years throughout the PSA and will expand and evolve as required.

### **(I.) Older Americans Act (OAA) Core Programs**

*OAA core programs are found in Title III (Supportive Services, Nutrition, Disease Prevention/Health Promotion, and Caregiver Programs), VI (Native American Programs), and VII (Elder Rights Programs) and serve as the foundation of the aging services network.*

#### **Goal: Increase Access to Services for Older Adults.**

- Provide access to information and referrals to programs and services for older adults and their caregivers, at no fee.
  - Maintain three Information and Referral Department staff members *Inform USA Community Resource Specialist-Aging and Disabilities in the field of Information and Referral* certification.
  - Redesign the agency website for easier access.
  - Conduct community presentations on various agency programs and resources both in-person and virtually, as requested.
- Utilize Title III funding to expand outreach positions at local Councils on Aging (COA) and community-based organizations serving older adults.
- Assist older adults with applying for public benefits.
  - Retain an Options Counselor position to develop individualized benefits options, screening, and application assistance.
  - Maintain staff member certification as a MA Health Connector/MassHealth Certified Application Counselor.
- Expand congregate meal sites and/or *Grab and Go* sites availability in all fifteen (15) communities.
- Continue collaboration between Bristol's Options Counseling Program, Information and Referral Department, and AGE's 3% Housing Program to find and promote affordable housing units available throughout the state.

#### **Goal: Strengthen Access to Affordable Healthcare Services for Older Adults.**

- Utilize Title III and/or private grant funding for programs that provide Information & Technology (IT) assistance navigating online patient portals and access to telehealth care.
- Maintain and distribute general resource information on affordable health care programs and services, including Senior Care Options (SCO) and One Care programs.
- Coordinate with MassHealth Behavioral Incentive Program Unit for inquiries when working with MassHealth members/applicants.

- Collaborate with the Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone (SHINE) Program to provide office space at Bristol's location for SHINE Counselors to assist older adults in applying for health insurance.

**Goal: Enhance Active & Wellness Promotion for Older Adults.**

- Research available health promotion resources, programs, and activities.
  - Develop and disseminate information through Bristol's online Resource Directory, staff electronic newsletter, and the agency's electronic newsletter, *The Bristol Buzz*, to older adults, caregivers, professionals, and community members.
- Promote older adults' ability to manage their own health and well-being utilizing Title III funds.
  - Offer evidence-based programs to include *Chronic Disease Self-Management*, *Matter of Balance*, and *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* at community locations throughout the year.
  - Offer nutrition presentations at Supportive Housing sites and COAs.
- Utilize Title III funding to increase access to fitness programs at local COAs and community-based agencies.
- Convene a Nutrition Consumer Advisory Committee to provide input on the meals served by Bristol's Nutrition Program.

**Goal: Reinforce In-Home Support for Maintaining Independence of Older Adults.**

- Increase fundraising efforts towards the Bristol Relief Fund to provide aid with housing modifications and property maintenance for older adults.
- Attend Dementia Friendly MA quarterly meetings to explore opportunities for expanding Age and Dementia Friendly programs and services.
  - Offer a Dementia Friends training opportunity to interested community members as a trained Dementia Friends Champion.
- Utilize federal and state funding to provide nutritionally balanced lunchtime meals to homebound older adults.
  - Explore private grant opportunities for enhancing meal choices including shelf-stable meal packs for all Nutrition Program participants.

**Goal: Expand Transportation Access and Availability for Older Adults.**

- Expand availability of non-emergency transportation service at COAs through use of Title III grant funding.
- Promote public transportation options and resources to community members.
  - Disseminate information through Bristol's Resource Directory to COAs.

### **Goal: Support Legal Services for Older Adults.**

- Maintain a legal service provider using Title III funding to provide free legal aid.
  - Enhance advocacy and resolution of concerns of residents of nursing and rest homes provided by Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) staff and volunteers.
- Increase communication between Bristol's LTCOP and the Title III legal service provider by providing annual training for Ombudsman volunteers on Guardianship and Defense of Guardianship.
- Utilize Title VII funding to expand the staffing of Protective Services Workers to develop and implement service plans for preventing, eliminating, or remedying abuse.

### **(II.) Greatest Economic Need and Greatest Social Need**

*The OAA requires services to be targeted to older adults 60 years of age and older, with a special emphasis on those living alone (isolated), low-income, Native American (where germane), rural (where germane), socially isolated (geographic in nature, LGBTQ+, limited English proficiency), and their caregivers.*

### **Goal: Increase Access to Services for Older Adults.**

- Provide information on programs and services in multiple languages, as need is found.
  - Translate agency and program materials in Spanish and Portuguese.
- Expand outreach efforts targeting Native American older adult members of The Pocasset Wampanoag Tribe of the Pokanoket Nation/Watuppa Reservation, The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, and their caregivers.
  - Maintain contact information within Bristol's Emergency Management Disaster Relief Plan.
  - Include on the distribution list for the agency's electronic newsletter, *The Bristol Buzz*, and Title III Request for Proposals public service announcement.
- Participate in various committees on food insecurity throughout the community.
- Utilize Title III funding to offer in-home mental health treatment to assist older adults in crisis struggling with mental health issues.
- Provide resources from the Alzheimer's Association on how to offer LGBTQ+ culturally sensitive care to agency staff.
  - Make resource materials available to community members and COAs through the agency Resource Directory and *The Bristol Buzz*.

**Goal: Strengthen Access to Affordable Healthcare Services for Older Adults.**

- Utilize Title III grant funding for programs that target LGBTQ+ older adults and their caregivers with supportive connections to services to decrease social isolation.
- Support person-centered planning for older adults by collaborating with the Southcoast and Southeastern Massachusetts Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) Coalitions serving older adults and individuals with disabilities.
- Expand partnerships with One Care plans to provide a comprehensive health care plan, available on a voluntary basis to MassHealth members, which covers added benefits not previously covered by Medicare and MassHealth.
- Provide care management by a Geriatric Support Services Coordinator to MassHealth members enrolled in SCOs to meet health and long-term service and support needs.
- Provide medically tailored meals for nutrition program participants with specialized dietary needs.
  - Offer puree, renal, and cardiac specialized meals to individuals found in need.

**Goal: Enhance Active & Wellness Promotion for Older Adults.**

- Maintain resource information on Memory Cafes available throughout the PSA.
  - Promote program materials to COAs and the Family Caregiver Program Team, as received.
- Offer wellness activities at congregate meal sites before or after a nutrition meal to increase social interaction among participants.
  - Present nutrition education on heart health and healthy aging.
- Offer virtual programming for evidence-based programs, as allowed, to alleviate social isolation and allow for homebound/caregiver individuals to take part.
- Explore grant funding opportunities to increase access to assistive IT options for older adults.
  - Research and apply for grant opportunities.
  - Explore possible program collaborations with Massachusetts Broadband Institute and/or AARP Senior Planet.

**Goal: Reinforce In-Home Support for Maintaining Independence of Older Adults.**

- Increase referrals by the Veterans Administration to aid veterans in developing an individualized budget and service plan that meets their needs through the Veteran-Directed Care Program.

- Assist nursing facility residents who are considering transitioning to a community setting through the Community Transitions Liaison Program (CTLTP).
  - Include individuals with criminal justice system involvement, behavioral health needs, or those experiencing housing insecurity.
- Expand advocacy and other support services through the Advocacy & Navigating Care in the Home with Ongoing Risks (ANCHOR) Program targeting older adults with behavioral needs who are at risk of institutionalization or homelessness due to their inability to accept services.
- Maintain the staffing of Case Managers at two Supportive Housing sites within the PSA to provide onsite case management, access to resources, and coordinate services to residents.

**Goal: Expand Transportation Access and Availability for Older Adults.**

- Advocate for increased transportation options and services for those with mobility issues.
  - Participate in coalitions with the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, RTA Advocates Coalition, and regional transport authorities.
- Utilize Home Care transportation service providers for increased service availability and access.
  - Expand service days/hours availability to Adult Day Health and Supportive Day programs.

**Goal: Support Legal Services for Older Adults.**

- Maintain availability of legal service provider staff that are bi-lingual in Portuguese and Spanish.
  - Distribute legal program materials in Portuguese and Spanish, as requested.
- Participate in coalitions to work on housing and homelessness.
  - Maintain active membership in the Greater Bristol County Attleboro Taunton Coalition to End Homelessness.

**(III.) Expanding Access to Home and Community Based Services (HCBS)**

*HCBS are fundamental to making it possible for older adults to age in place.*

**Goal: Increase Access to Services for Older Adults.**

- Maintain adequate Home Care and I&R/Intake staffing coverage to process referrals for in-home services in a timely manner.



**Goal: Strengthen Access to Affordable Healthcare Services for Older Adults.**

- Expand accessibility of Home Care service providers offering medical home visits.
  - Offer in-home assistance with foot care and medication management.
- Collaborate with SCOs to deliver managed in-home services.
  - Present increased in-home service opportunities as unmet needs are identified.

**Goal: Enhance Active & Wellness Promotion for Older Adults.**

- Promote older adults' ability to manage their own health and well-being by conducting evidence-based healthy aging programs throughout the PSA.
  - Offer *Chronic Disease Self-Management*, *Matter of Balance*, and *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* at no charge to interested individuals.

**Goal: Reinforce In-Home Support for Maintaining Independence of Older Adults.**

- Promote the Consumer Directed Care program that allows program participants to directly employ a worker to provide in-home services.
- Enable frail older adults receiving MassHealth and at imminent risk of nursing home placement to receive assistance to remain at home through the Choices Program.
- Offer enhanced services through the Enhanced Community Options Program to Home Care consumers that are clinically eligible for nursing facility care but want to live at home.
- Promote the CTLP to enable residents of long-term care facilities the opportunity to explore receiving alternative in-home care.
  - Provide cross-training of program information with LTCOP volunteers and CTLP staff.

**Goal: Expand Transportation Access and Availability for Older Adults.**

- Increase the number of Home Care transportation service providers.
  - Expand transportation service availability and accessibility throughout the PSA.

**Goal: Support Legal Services for Older Adults.**

- Utilize Title III funding to provide legal service clinics at COAs and community settings throughout the PSA, as demand presents.

#### **(IV.) Caregiving**

*Services for caregivers that offer a range of support services to family and informal caregivers to help in caring for loved ones and focus on promoting person-centered support and developing tools and services that address caregiver needs.*

##### **Goal: Increase Access to Services for Older Adults and Their Caregivers.**

- Coordinate with ACL's Lifespan Respite Care Program to provide information on Bristol's Family Caregiver Support Program for easier public accessibility.
- Maintain two Caregiver Specialists to strengthen and support the direct care workforce.
- Better support family caregivers by identifying and encouraging I&R callers who are caregivers to explore a referral to Bristol's Family Caregiver Support Program.

##### **Goal: Strengthen Access to Affordable Healthcare Services for Older Adults and Their Caregivers.**

- Research grant opportunities for funding in-home respite care to offer financial relief to caregivers.

##### **Goal: Enhance Active & Wellness Promotion for Older Adults and Their Caregivers.**

- Utilize Title III funding for conducting evidence-based, *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*, classes targeting caregivers.
- Maintain an online resource directory on support groups and resources accessible to caregivers and professionals.

##### **Goal: Reinforce In-Home Support for Maintaining Independence of Older Adults.**

- Collaborate with the Alzheimer's Association to offer free CEU trainings for program staff throughout the year.
- Work with Home Care service providers to expand respite bed availability at area nursing and rest homes.
- Expand Respite Care service type choices to aid in relieving the caregiver from the stresses and demands of daily caregiving.

##### **Goal: Expand Transportation Access and Availability for Older Adults.**

- Research grant opportunities to provide stipend non-emergency transportation to caregivers of older adults.
  - Target Supportive Day and Adult Day Health programs as a form of respite assistance.

- Expand hours and service areas of Home Care transportation service providers in the PSA.
  - Include transportation to and from Supportive Day and Adult Day Health programs.

**Goal: Support Legal Services for Older Adults and Their Caregivers.**

- Provide support and information through a Title III legal service provider to caregivers of older adults.
  - Distribute Power of Attorney and Health Care Proxy documentation, as requested.
  - Hold monthly scheduled free legal clinics in the greater Attleboro and Taunton areas for easier accessibility.
  - Maintain accessibility of a pro bono private attorney group for Estate Planning referrals.