

MASSACHUSETTS

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The state report is a resource to inform donors and funders about the local context of social issues affecting at-risk populations. This report can be used to better understand the social and economic situation in which the issue exists as well as statewide initiatives and trends in private and government funding directed

to address the issue. This state level research complements the related social issue report that provides an overview of the issue and approaches to address it and the guide to giving that provides criteria to evaluate organizations working to address the issue.

FACTS: HEALTHY AGING IN MASSACHUSETTS

Percentage of Massachusetts' population that is age 65 or older¹

13.9%
(2009)

Number of older Massachusetts residents who live in poverty²

1 in 6
(2009)

Annual expenditure on facility care for older Massachusetts residents³

\$1.6 billion
(2009)



SOCIAL ISSUE INDICATORS

Presently, no single indicator defines healthy aging effectively for all seniors. Individuals who age-in-community require different service matrices to support a variety of needs. Such services may be grouped into three broad categories: physical and mental health, social engagement, and personal independence. Measuring successful supports for physical and mental health proves challenging. While changes in medical test results, frequency of physician visits, and number of hospital stays may serve as proxies, no single, holistic measure of physical or mental well-being exists. Similarly, social engagement is difficult to evaluate, as no one level of involvement can be applied to all individuals. As with health and engagement, only certain aspects of personal independence, such as public safety or economic security, can be evaluated. Although indicators that describe all aspects of healthy aging do not exist at this time, nonprofit organizations are developing specific measures to evaluate the services they offer.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MASSACHUSETTS

STATE STRUCTURE

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (Elder Affairs) was created in 1971 to address the needs of older adults.⁴ Since its creation, Elder Affairs has overseen a network of public services that facilitate healthy aging for older Massachusetts residents in communities throughout the state. The primary service delivery organizations overseen by Elder Affairs include Massachusetts Area Agencies on Aging, Aging Services Access Points, and Councils on Aging.

Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) were created at the national level by the 1965 Older Americans Act to provide support for community-based services to meet the needs of older Americans at the city and county levels.⁵ Unique to Massachusetts, localized AAAs receive federal funding and work with state-funded nonprofit Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs) to provide services that facilitate healthy aging to older Massachusetts residents. There are 27 ASAPs and 23 AAAs in cities and towns across Massachusetts.⁶ The range of services offered by AAAs and ASAPs varies based on local needs, and these agencies may also contract with other, local service providers. All AAAs and ASAPs provide programs that address physical and mental health needs, social engagement, and personal independence.

Councils on Aging (COAs) were created by policymakers in 1956 to be volunteer-run, municipally appointed agencies that help coordinate services for older residents.⁷ Typical services provided by COAs include transportation, meal delivery, informational programs, recreation, and related activities that promote healthy aging across the state. There are 348 COAs in Massachusetts.⁸

The network of public services that facilitates healthy aging for older Massachusetts residents includes special attention to low-income, minority, immigrant, and rural-dwelling populations. Services are available across the state so that both urban and rural communities have access. Many AAAs, ASAPs, and COAs also provide services in multiple languages or have translators available to help older residents who do not speak English. These public services are available to older residents of Massachusetts regardless of income level.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In 2010, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick announced his administration's Aging Agenda, which includes nine key focus areas to address in the coming decade. These focus areas

are economic security, physical and mental health, affordable housing, independence, supportive services, transportation, abuse prevention, caregiver support, and public understanding of aging issues.⁹ This agenda follows his administration's "Community First" approach, which encourages healthy aging at home with supportive services from the community. Organizations throughout the state have also aligned with state initiatives by contracting to provide needed services, especially targeting low-income, minority, and immigrant seniors.

Transportation has been a particular concern in Massachusetts, as residents worry about the condition of roadways, sidewalks, and public transportation systems, particularly in the greater Boston metropolitan area, where more individuals rely on

public transit. For older Massachusetts residents, access to transportation is often critical to healthy aging, as transportation encourages independence and access to basic services, such as the ability to visit a doctor's office, purchase groceries, or attend a place of worship. Although seniors in the Boston area have access to discounted fares on public transportation, some critics still cite concerns over the costs of transportation for low-income older Massachusetts residents. In addition, not all public transport is accessible for older people who use wheelchairs or other ambulation devices. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority is addressing some of these concerns through its Department of System-Wide Accessibility, which was created in 2007.

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

ORGANIZATION

WEBSITE

Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs

www.mass.gov/elder

Massachusetts Aging and Disabilities Information Location

www.madil.org

City of Boston Area Agency on Aging

www.cityofboston.gov/elderly/agency.asp

Individual towns also have Councils on Aging and Agencies on Aging/Aging Services Access Points

ABOUT SOCIAL IMPACT RESEARCH

Social Impact Research (SIR) is the independent research department of Root Cause, a research and consulting firm dedicated to mobilizing the nonprofit, public, and business sectors to work collaboratively in a new social impact market. Modeled after private sector equity research firms, SIR conducts

research on social issues and independent analysis of program performance to provide leaders and funders with the rigorous, actionable information they need to make strategic decisions about creating and investing in social impact.

ENDNOTES

1. United States Census Bureau. State & County Quickfacts: Massachusetts. (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009), <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/25000.html> (accessed July 3, 2011).
2. United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey Subject Tables: Massachusetts. (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009), http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&-context=st&-qr_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_S0103&-ds_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_-&-tree_id=5309&-redoLog=false&-caller=geoselect&-geo_id=04000US25&-format=&-lang=en (accessed July 3, 2011).
3. Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services and Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Long Term Care in Massachusetts: Facts at a Glance (Boston, MA: MAHHS and Elder Affairs, 2009), www.massmedicaid.org/-/media/MMPI/Files/Long%2520Term%2520Care%2520in%2520MA%2520Facts%2520at%2520a%2520Glance. (accessed July 3, 2011).
4. Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Agency History (Boston, MA: Elder Affairs, 2011), http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eldersutilities&L=1&sid=Elders&U=agency_history (accessed July 3, 2011).
5. Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Area Agency on Aging (Boston, MA: Elder Affairs, 2011), http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=elderterminal&L=2&L0=Home&L1=Service+organizations+and+Advocates&sid=Elders&b=terminalcontent&f=serviceorgs_aaa&csid=Eldershistory (accessed July 3, 2011).
6. Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Area Agency on Aging (Boston, MA: Elder Affairs, 2011), http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=elderterminal&L=2&L0=Home&L1=Service+organizations+and+Advocates&sid=Elders&b=terminalcontent&f=serviceorgs_aaa&csid=Eldershistory (accessed July 3, 2011).
7. Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Overview of Councils on Aging (Boston, MA: Elder Affairs, 2011), http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=elderterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Service+Organizations+and+Advocate&L2=Councils+on+Aging&sid=Elders&b=terminalcontent&f=serviceorgs_coa&csid=Elders (accessed July 3, 2011).
8. Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Overview of Councils on Aging (Boston, MA: Elder Affairs, 2011), http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=elderterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Service+Organizations+and+Advocate&L2=Councils+on+Aging&sid=Elders&b=terminalcontent&f=serviceorgs_coa&csid=Elders (accessed July 3, 2011).
9. "Governor Patrick Highlights 'Aging Agenda' with Experts, Providers, and Massachusetts Seniors." (Boston, MA: Governor's Office Press Release, 2010), http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=gov3pressrelease&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Agov3&b=pressrelease&f=031610_aging&csid=Agov3 (accessed July 3, 2011).