



Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging

History Serving Central Massachusetts Since 1974

In September of 1974, supported by legislation amending the Older Americans Act of 1965, a new organization was formed to plan and allocate funds under Title III of the Act. This organization, at the time named Region II Area Agency on Aging had as its mission to bring services to older Americans in the Worcester County region. With offices in Holden, and with James M. McNamara of Clinton as the first appointed agency coordinator, Region II Area Agency on Aging also began offering an Information and Referral Service to seniors throughout the region's cities and towns.

An eleven member Board of Directors was formed with individuals from throughout the region. Shortly after the Board was in place, they formed an Advisory Council, which consisted of thirty-four people drawn from consumers, providers and Councils on Aging. The original staff consisted of four persons who managed a budget of \$450,000, which covered administration and grants for community-based elder support services.

In 1976, the Agency began administering a Title V, Senior Aide program, which places 38 elder enrollees in various community work settings. The affiliation with this program ended in 2002. In 1977, the Agency gained responsibility for three Nutrition Projects; the overall budget had reached \$1.5 million. In 1980, the Advisory Council was sub-divided into three sub-area advisory councils (SAAC's) in North, Central and South County. In 1983, the Board increased to seventeen members, adding two seats from each of the three SAAC's.

A more enhanced Information and Referral (I&R) service was established at the Agency in 1985. In 1987, the State began supplementing the Agency's federal funds, which had started leveling off in the early '80's. This State supplement (\$100,000) ceased in 1990.

The Board of Directors, now with 17 members, changed the Agency's name in 1989 to more accurately reflect our planning and service area of sixty-one communities in Central Massachusetts. The Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging (CMAA) moved to its current location in West Boylston in 1990. The mid-90's saw the addition of a new program, Serving the Health Information Needs of Elders, or SHINE. This program, with some paid staff and a large volunteer corps, was an extension of our Information and Referral Department, offered free

counseling and assistance to all Medicare beneficiaries. This program went to CEMACA in the early years of the new millennium, and now resides at the Milford Senior Center. In 1996, the Advisory Council was reestablished as a single body, and now includes up to 45 members representing all three major sections of our region.

In the late 1990's, Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging inaugurated a presence on the World Wide Web with the *SeniorConnection* website. Filled with information about the Agency and its Title III grants, it also includes an interactive database of over 1800 programs and services throughout central Massachusetts. In 2002, *SeniorConnection* was enhanced to include the *Connection for Caregivers*, a fully interactive website providing information in multiple formats, including a 24/7 peer support group, online training, and a monthly live support group.

The reauthorization of the Older Americans Act brought an infusion of new funds under Title III E, the National Family Caregiver Act. Under the direction of the Executive Office of Elder Affairs in Boston, Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging entered into an important collaboration with the three Aging Services Access Points in our region to form the Central Massachusetts Family Caregiver Support Program. This program offers information and assistance, along with training and respite scholarships to caregivers of seniors throughout the region.

The year 2006 saw the addition of a new program for the Agency, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP). Again with a few paid staff and a dedicated volunteer contingent, CMAA adopted LTCOP after the failure of a grantee. This program offers services to residents of long-term care facilities (nursing homes) to help settle a variety of disputes with facility administration. CMAA was proud to be able to bring this important program on-board, and keep it's critical services stable. The following year, the program again migrated to grantee status outside of the Agency.

In 2013, CMAA began to refocus its outreach efforts to use existing technology to its full extent. Expansions of our website, www.SeniorConnection.org, and the use various social media have brought the face of the Agency into the "digital world." At the same time, CMAA continues to offer information to consumers by phone, email and in person keeping close to our mission. Reflecting this, the Information and Referral Department is now known as the Community Outreach and Education Dept. Additionally, CMAA is a partner in the local ADRC, or Aging and Disability Resource Consortium seeking to offer a "no wrong door" approach to help consumers find the services that best fit their needs.

Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging is the largest, both geographically (1,500 square miles in 61 municipalities) and numerically (over 130,000 elders) of the twenty-three area agencies on aging (AAA) in the Commonwealth. Under an expansion of Title III of the Older Americans Act, CMAA also reaches out to

caregivers, numbering upwards of 50,000 in the Central Massachusetts area. Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging works with three independent aging services access points (or ASAPs, once known as home care corporations) as well as sixty-one Councils on Aging and Senior Centers, and dozens of human service providers to build the capacity of the entire elder service system. CMAA also works in cooperation with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and the Federal Administration on Aging, an agency of the Administration for Community Living.

The annual budget is over \$2.5 million, each year granting Older Americans Act funds to as many as 30 programs in various organizations around the planning and service area. Nutrition programs, legal services, home repair, medication management and transportation are only a few of the programs supported in whole or in part by these allocations. The staff numbers 7, with numerous volunteers and interns assisting in our work.

August 2017