



**Elder Services**

of Cape Cod and the Islands

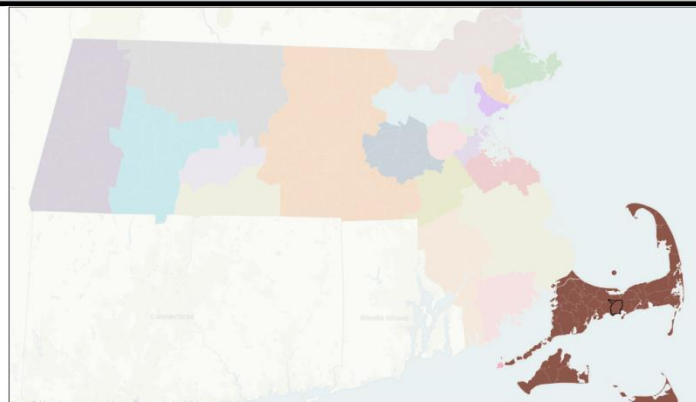
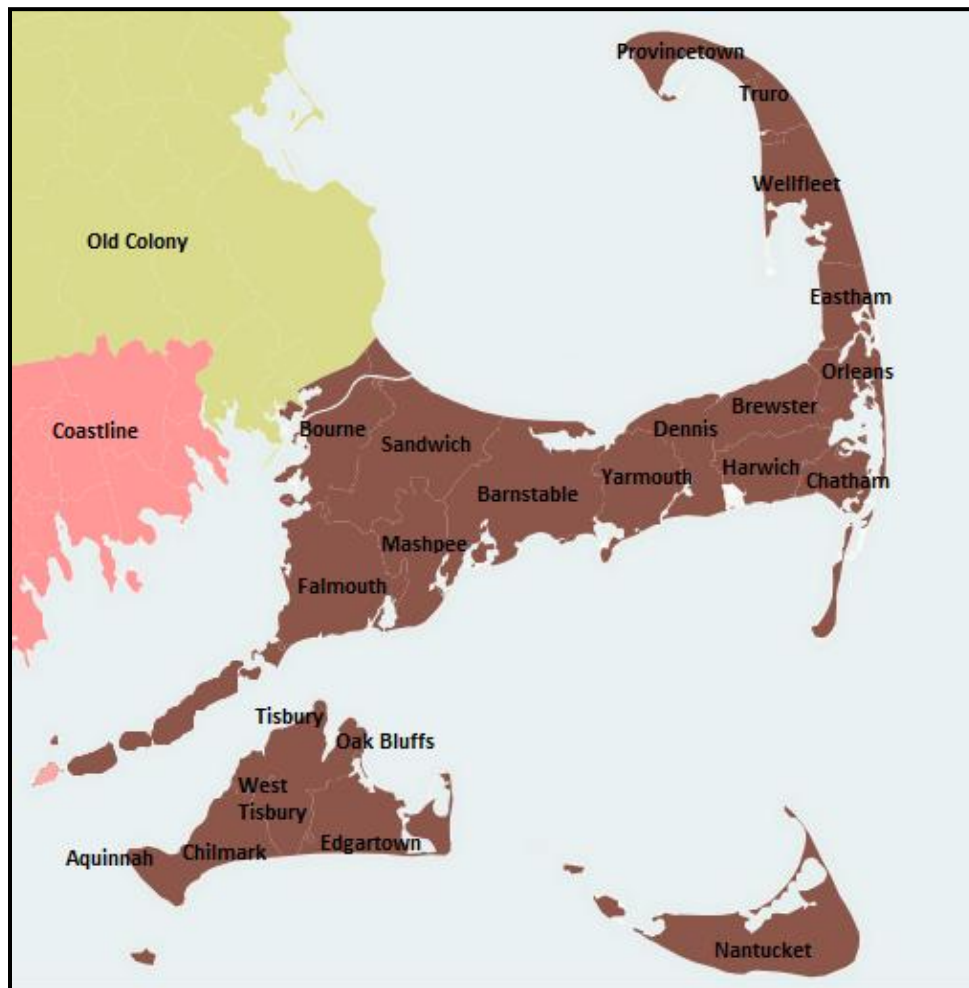
**ELDER SERVICES OF CAPE COD  
AND THE ISLANDS, INC.**

**AREA AGENCY ON AGING  
AREA PLAN 2026-2029**

**Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands, Inc.**  
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# Executive Summary

## Agency Overview

Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands, Inc. (ESCCI) is a private not-for-profit corporation. Incorporated in 1972, our planning and service area encompasses the counties of Barnstable (Cape Cod), Dukes (Martha's Vineyard) and Nantucket. ESCCI is the federally designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) as well as the state designated Aging Services Access Point (ASAP), and the region's Aging and Disability Resource Consortium (ARDC). Our planning and service area is comprised of the fifteen towns on Cape Cod, and the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket which can only be accessed by air or ferry.

On June 27, 2024, the U.S. Census Bureau released its 2023 State and County Characteristics Estimates for Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, and the United States. The Donahue Institute at UMass 2023 report included a "blended base" population that integrated data from the 2020 Census and a 2023 demographic analysis. The combined data indicated that Barnstable County's population of adults aged sixty-five and older is 34.0% of the total population. Dukes County is 28.0% and Nantucket County is 17.1%. This compares to a statewide average of 18.5%. Barnstable County has the oldest population in the Commonwealth. Taking into account the persons who are 55-64 and are moving into the 65+ group demonstrates that the demand for services will continue to grow. Simultaneously, younger individuals are continuing to move from the region which leaves fewer workers to provide the additional services which are likely to be needed. Stemming from the Covid19 Pandemic and other factors, the shortage of home health aides and personal care attendants is at crisis level.

ESCCI provides a wide range of programs and services including:

|                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Information and Referral             | Protective Services        |
| Home Care Program                    | Senior Nutrition Program   |
| Family Caregiver Support Program     | Options Counseling         |
| Long-Term Care Screening             | Nelson Congregate House    |
| Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program     | Money Management Program   |
| Technology Assistance and Education  | Community Health Programs  |
| The Volunteer Resource Center        | Title III Community Grants |
| Senior Care Options                  | One Care                   |
| Veterans Independence Program        | Provider Specialists Team  |
| Community Transition Liaison Program | Hospital to Home Liaison   |

The Information and Referral department is the central clearinghouse for all services available to older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers on Cape Cod and the Islands, as well as the entry point for referrals to ESCCI's many programs.

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ESCCI's main office is located in South Dennis (mid-Cape area) with full service offices on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. There are thirteen Nutrition sites serving all twenty-two of the Cape and Island towns.

ESCCI is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and advised by the volunteer members of the AAA Advisory Council. The Board is comprised of individuals representing each of the Cape and Island towns and additional at-large members. The AAA Advisory Council is comprised of community members and local elected officials. At least 51% of the membership must be over the age of 59 for both the Board of Directors and AAA Advisory Council.

ESCCI has a paid staff of 149 full and part-time staff. In a typical year, more than 1,300 volunteers give their time and energy to ESCCI consumers and assist with the provision of services throughout Cape Cod and the Islands. In addition, these volunteers experience increased socialization and receive all of the other related benefits through participation in these volunteer opportunities.

ESCCI's primary financial support comes in the form of contracts with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Age & Independence. Funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Title III and V of the Federal Older Americans Act account for nearly 85% of the agency's budget. Additional funding comes from counties, towns (cash and in-kind), consumer donations/fees, private grants and private donations. The total budget for Fiscal Year 2024 was \$57,164,179 and approximately 86,986 (up from 30,045) individuals were served.

### **Area Agency on Aging Responsibilities**

As the federally designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) since 1976 ESCCI is charged with certain responsibilities as mandated by the Older Americans Act. These responsibilities include:

- To conduct periodic Needs Assessments throughout the service area in order to collect information about the critical needs of older adults, caregivers and others in the community who are served by AAA programs.
- To develop and administer a multi-year Area Plan which assesses and prioritizes the needs and concerns of older persons and caregivers, identifies deficiencies and gaps in service delivery and proposes possible solutions.
- To work with other agencies and organizations in the service area to ensure a coordinated system of service delivery.
- To serve as a community focal point for information and referral.
- To advocate for the needs of all older adults, persons with disabilities, and their caregivers, and others in the community who are served by AAA programs.
- To distribute funds authorized by the Older Americans Act (Title III) in an effort to fill gaps in priority service needs. These funds are allocated for community-based and in-home services which promote self-sufficiency and independence.

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- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of service providers who receive Older Americans Act Title III funding.
- To maintain an active AAA Advisory Council that will provide guidance and support to AAA staff and serve as a vital link between the agency and those in need.

## **Coordination with Service Provider Network**

As the region's Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Aging Services Access Point(ASAP), and Aging and Disability Resource Consortium (ADRC), Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands (ESCCI) takes the lead in providing services to older adults, their families, people with disabilities, caregivers and others in the community in need of the agency's programs and services. ESSCI will continue to promote and participate in the ongoing development of Dementia Friendly and Age Friendly Communities initiatives. In addition, ESSCI coordinates with a wide variety of organizations across the service area in order to create a seamless system of services and ensure that its consumers have access to all available resources. In FFY2024, the agency's Title III grants will provide funding for thirteen community based programs which help meet critical needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. Refer to FFY2024 List of Grantees in attachments under Supporting Documents.

ESCCI staff members participate as board/advisory council members and also represent ESSCI in many collaborative efforts including:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Healthy Aging-Cape Cod                         | Cape & Islands Workforce Board                   |
| MCOA 55 plus Job Seekers                       | Cape Cod Citizen Corps Council                   |
| Healthy Living Cape Cod                        | Cape Cod Elder Abuse Coalition                   |
| Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard                | Cape Cod Hoarding Task Force                     |
| Suicide Prevention Coalition                   | The MA Transportation Taskforce                  |
|  | Lower Cape Community Solutions (Rural)           |
| Parkinson's Support Network                    | Cape Cod Hunger Network                          |
| The Falls Prevention Coalition (MV)            | Massachusetts Meals on Wheels Association        |
| The Homeless Prevention Council                | Senior Planet OATS Technology                    |
| Dennis Community Crisis Intervention Team      | Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce                     |
| Department of Mental Health Advisory Board     | Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe                          |
| Nantucket Behavioral Health Advisory Group     | Martha's Vineyard Health Council                 |
| Barnstable County Emergency Planning Committee | Wampanoag Tribe Gay Head (Aquinnah)              |
| Healthy Aging Task Force – Martha's Vineyard   | Community Action Committee                       |
|  | Nantucket Healthy Community Collaborative        |
|  | The Cape Cod Hospital Quality of Life Task Force |

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Cape and Islands Regional Network on Homelessness  
Cape Cod & Islands Community Health Network (CHNA )  
Barnstable County Health and Human Service Advisory Council  
Cape Cod LGBTQ Coalition for Older Adults  
Barnstable County Regional Substance Abuse Council  
Policy Board for Cape and Islands Regional Network on Homelessness  
DMH Citizen Advisory Council  
MA Coalition to Build Community and End Loneliness

As a AAA, ESCCI works to increase awareness among other agencies and the public about the needs of older adults, educate caregivers, and inform the public about our services. We make efforts to reach and prioritize the delivery of services to the following population:

- Elders who are isolated and/or live alone
- Low income elders
- Minority elders
- Native American populations
- Rural older adult populations
- Veterans
- Socially Isolated populations including limited English-speaking older adults, and lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender elders: LGBTQ.

We advocate for older adults, younger disabled individuals, and caregivers. For example, we provide in-home services, nutrition, and money management. Through contract and grants to other agencies we are able to offer critical services such as transportation and legal advice.

With fifty+ years of serving Cape Cod and the Islands, ESCCI has been responsive in meeting the needs of an ever growing population. Through the on-going recruitment and support of a dedicated group of volunteers and our partnerships with other organizations, ESCCI will continue to promote the independence, empowerment and well-being of older adults, people with disabilities and their caregivers on Cape Cod and the Islands

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## **Introduction and Mission Statement**

The Focus Areas that comprise the 2026-2029 Area Plan reflect a continuation of existing services provided by the Agency and plans for new initiatives. Current activities will be evaluated for effectiveness and, when possible, enhanced or expanded. New projects will be developed and implemented according to identified needs and available funding.

The Area Plan reflects Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands' (ESCCI) Mission Statement: "Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands is a nonprofit, community-based organization dedicated to promoting the welfare, enhancing the quality of life, and maintaining the dignity of elders in Barnstable, Dukes (except Gosnold) and Nantucket Counties. The organization works through communities and their citizens to identify and respond to the needs, problems and concerns of elders and their families. ESCCI acts as a central source for information and referral, as an advocate, collaborator and catalyst, as a coordinator of services and care, as an educator and as a provider of direct services". Since its incorporation in 1972, ESCCI still embodies the principles of its original mission statement which is closely aligned with the mission statement and values of the Executive Office of Aging & Independence and the Administration for Community Living. These common values, intrinsic to autonomy, independence and wellbeing, embrace partnership, inclusion, justice, community, connection, individual choice and humanity as a whole.

## **Needs Assessment Project**

Information collected through the FFY 2025 Needs Assessment Project helped to form the basis for many of the Area Plan's objectives. In Fall 2024 there were thirteen (13) public forums that were held within the region, both in person and online. These listening sessions were directed towards elders who were identified as being representative of "minorities" and "target populations" i.e. Lesbian/Gay/Bi-Sexual/Transgender (LGBTQ) and elders who are socially isolated and/or low income, including a contingent of seniors experiencing homelessness (via Duffy Health Center). Caregivers were also targeted for participation in this needs assessment process, including grandparents raising grandchildren. Elders from a local faith-based community were heard, under employed seniors were addressed, as were residents of several skilled nursing facilities. Comments and feedback shared by forum attendees was recorded in detail and compiled by the AAA Planner. In addition, a survey created by the Executive Office of Aging & Independence was conducted. This survey was offered electronically and via paper copies to different groups including caregiver support groups, 1200+ ESCCI volunteers, consumers of our AAA services, all ESCCI providers, all area Councils on Aging, SCSEP Program partners and participants, LGBTQ elders, and at stakeholders' meetings. Over 2000 known contacts received surveys. There were a total of 355 surveys returned.

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The following are the findings of the 2025 Needs Assessment Project:

The most frequently identified critical needs of Older Adults include access to home-based services, caregiver respite, access to affordable healthcare, affordable housing, transportation, nutrition support, and technology education and assistance. Additional critical needs identified include access to mental and behavioral health (including inpatient beds), access to primary care physicians, staying active, combatting social isolation, access to long term care supports and legal services.

A specific section of the survey was dedicated to caregivers. Data reported here indicates the following needs: Respite, in-home services, financial assistance, transportation, information regarding resources, home modification, support groups and training and education.

Additionally, the assessment determined the following barriers to getting help: Reluctance to ask for help or admit financial need, fear of discrimination, fear of falling, lack of awareness of available services and ineligibility for services. Despite the end of the Covid 19 Pandemic, seniors continued to express fear and concern over becoming ill by participating in public or group programming.

Programs that were considered the most successful were: Meals-on-Wheels, the State Homecare Program, caregiver support services and support groups, the Senior Planet computer basics courses, Councils on Aging programming for staying physically active (exercise, yoga and walking), volunteering opportunities and attending faith based services.

As stated previously, information collected through the FFY 2025 Needs Assessment Project helped to form the basis for many of the Area Plan's objectives. This includes the following: During the term of the Area Plan 2026-2029, ESCCI senior staff will continue to be active members of the "Healthy Aging Cape Cod" steering committee whose mission is to "promote the ability of persons to age successfully on Cape Cod, regardless of income." ESCCI Communications and Public Information Officer is the Co-Chair of the Health and Human Services Workgroup. In partnership with multiple community agencies there is an ongoing assessment of consumer needs and commitment to implementing new initiatives that will address those needs. Where funding allows, the work of Healthy Aging Cape Cod and other needs assessment data will be reviewed for the purpose of developing new services/programs that can meet the changing needs of elders within the Cape and Islands planning and service area. ESCCI's AAA Planner intends to host networking and problem-solving meetings on various community needs. One such area, identified in the Needs Assessment and validated by the National Strategy to Support Family Caregiving document, is addressing caregiver stress with an aim to provide respite and self-care opportunities to Family Caregiver Support Program consumers. Similarly, as a member of the Massachusetts Coalition to Build Community and End Loneliness, the AAA Planner will



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prioritize ways the agency can address mental health needs of consumers, advance public policy, and ensure that community members experience a strong sense of social health through meaningful connections. ESCCI's continued Cape wide offering of Senior Planet workshops, free computer basics courses for seniors, demonstrates our effort in bridging the digital divide and making assistive technology more accessible.

A new feature for the planning period; ESCCI's revised, state-of-the-art website, managed by senior staff, now offers the latest, most up to date information on programming, and the ability to connect to services electronically. Likewise, consumers and community partners may make referrals through the website. The goal here is to put consumers in touch with services quickly and more efficiently.

### **Minority and Hard to Reach Populations**

Although there were few identified Native Americans who responded to the Needs Assessment Project, the AAA has cultivated a strong relationship with Tribal Elders. The AAA planner regularly meets with health and human services leaders of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe. The AAA Planner often acts as a liaison for the tribe's Indian Health Services: an important avenue for service referrals and information for Tribal Elders. A connection which has enhanced relations, a Tribal Elder holds a position on ESCCI's AAA Advisory Council.

The AAA serves approximately 450 Tribal Elders of the Aquinnah and the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe. Tribal Elders are participants of Meals on Wheels, Home Care, Senior Care Options, Consumer Directed Care Programs, Options Counseling and the Family Caregiver Program. During the previous planning period, ESCCI began sponsoring the Tribe's third day of weekly, congregate dining. Based on the success, a larger Title III C funding allocation will be awarded going forward. In particular, the funds will be used for "Grab and Go" style meals.

A current recipient of a Title III B community grant, which provides home based services for Tribal Elders who are caregivers, The Aquinnah and Mashpee Tribes will be encouraged by the AAA to apply for future Title III B and Title III D funds in the FFY 2026 upcoming grant cycle.

To encourage wellness and prevent social isolation, Tribal Elders have expressed a desire for collaboration with the AAA to support the following: expanding exercise and health programs as well as caregiver support. As funding allows, the AAA will sponsor equipment and program materials for the Tribe's fall prevention exercise classes. The Evidence-Based program Fit & Strong will be made available to Tribal Elders on an annual basis. To further address caregiver needs, AAA staff will facilitate a quarterly caregiver support group at the Tribe's main facility. This activity will include continuing education on relevant topics like self-care and stress relief.

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The growth in our Brazilian Portuguese speaking community continues. The AAA plans ongoing publishing and distribution of brochures of services in the Portuguese language. Currently, interpreter services are available from the AAA for anyone in the community who speaks Portuguese and needs our services. The brochures have shown to assist the AAA with targeted outreach to this minority community.

AAA planner, along with other AAA/ASAP staff, participate, volunteer, and help organize programs for the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer) older adult community. The AAA CEO organizes the “Cape Cod 55 Plus LGBTQ Group” on Meetup, an online forum where community activities are posted for this population, and questions and information about resources are exchanged. In the service area five COAs host LGBTQ community meals and social events for LGBTQ older adults (Bourne, Chatham, Eastham, Orleans, and Yarmouth). ESCCI has a long history of providing Title III B grants to agencies who propose to offer LGBTQ programs and support services to older adults.

In the 2024 Needs Assessment, the LGBTQ community had its own forum to discuss community needs. Social isolation was a prevalent concern expressed. For FFY2024 and FFY 2025, a Title III B grant was awarded to the Chatham Council on Aging in support of its program which provides monthly, free social and emotional programming for LGBTQ elders and their allies (of any town in the service area). This includes bereavement services, specialized legal support and educational and social experiences to enhance their lives. The AAA Planner will encourage this entity, and other organizations that support LGBTQ elders, to apply for future Title III B and D funds in the FFY2026 RFP.

## **Focus Area Coordination:** **Older Americans Act Core Programs**

The following discussion will represent ESCCI's efforts to meet consumer need and guide services in a direction supported by the results of the Needs Assessment Project. As funding allows, ESCCI will enhance and expand Older Americans Act core programming during the term of Area Plan 2026-2029.

### **Disease Prevention and Health Promotion**

ESCCI is an active partner with Healthy Living Cape Cod (HLCC). Free, Evidence-Based workshops (and leader training courses) are made available to participants to improve health and longevity. Also, working with The Healthy Living Center of Excellence, Evidence-Based programs such as A Matter of Balance, Chronic Disease Self-Management, Fit and Strong, Healthy Eating for Successful Living, Nordic Walking, and The Savvy Caregiver, are offered throughout the service area. In 2020 many in person programs were suspended due to the Covid 19 Pandemic, and online programming was introduced. By 2023, as the Pandemic ended, seniors expressed desire to attend workshops in person once again. Most online forums were discontinued. However, if requested a virtual program can be scheduled.

Title III D grants have been awarded to community partners, to offer caregiving, health promotion and Dementia education workshops on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. One such recipient is the Alzheimer's Family Support Center in Brewster and Hyannis.

A 2024 CDC study of community-dwelling older adults found that 44% of participants reported a fear of falling. This concern is also reflected in ESCCI's Needs Assessment results. ESCCI will focus on offering and advertising A Matter of Balance programs, Fit and Strong, and our Osteoporosis Prevention Exercise classes, to educate consumers on falls prevention.

### **Goals**

- Provide an Evidence-Based workshop quarterly within the service area.
- Provide the Fit & Strong Evidence-Based program annually to Tribal Elders of the Aquinnah and the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe.
- Provide Evidence-Based Leader training to ESCCI staff members and volunteers, with a focus on A Matter of Balance, Chronic Disease Self-Management and Fit & Strong.
- "Healthy Eating for Successful Living" will be offered a minimum of two times annually in different parts of the service area.

- “The Savvy Caregiver” will be offered two times annually in different parts of the service area.
- Offer exercise classes for older adults with Osteoporosis, by specially trained ESCCI volunteers, 1-3 times a week in 4 towns across Cape Cod.
- Provide Title III D funding via a competitive RFP process to community organizations for the provision of Title III D Evidence-Based programs on Cape Cod and the Islands.

### **Information and Referral**

ESCCI’s Information and Referral (I&R) department is the central source of information for the community about services that are available to older adults, individuals with disabilities, caregivers, family members, professionals, and other community members. It also conducts intakes for the agency’s many programs. In 2024, the I&R AAA Call Trends Report stated that the ESCCI Information and Referral department responded to 10,443 unduplicated calls. According to Call Trend data, 49.5% of callers requested information on home-based services. The 2024 Needs Assessment Project indicated that a significant number of participants require a greater awareness of resources and in a format that is accessible to them.

### **Goals**

- Increase awareness of ESCCI services through the I&R Department. The AAA will conduct ongoing outreach through participation in community events such as health/wellness fairs and at community hubs, (i.e. the Registry of Motor Vehicles, libraries). Information will be distributed to various media outlets and posted on the ESCCI website. Service brochures will be distributed to the local Councils on Aging, Cape Cod Health Care sites and other community locations.
- Phone messages, emails and website referrals will be addressed within 24 hours (Monday through Friday). The answering service is available after hours and on weekends to triage any caller who reports having an urgent problem. Otherwise, the caller may leave a phone message and they will receive a call back the next business day.
- To advocate for consumers, if an individual reports having difficulty obtaining services from outside of the ESCCI provider network, with the consumer’s permission the I&R Specialist may make a call on their behalf to follow up on their request. This will be on a case-by-case basis.

## **Family Caregiver Support Program**

ESCCI Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP) provides education, advocacy and connections to community resources that enable the caregiver to better care for their loved one as well as themselves. Since the onset of this program in 2002, the number of individuals served continues to increase. In the last fiscal year, ESCCI served over a thousand caregivers. Of the number of satisfaction surveys returned, 100% of caregivers said their “overall experience with our Caregiver Support Program was excellent”. The Covid19 Pandemic resulted in closure of many respite and social day programs. Caregiver Support Specialists actively worked with caregivers to provide unique services and support, offering more one on one services and telephone support. At times, caregivers had an option to spend allotted funds on what they needed most to support their role of caregiving and alleviating stress. This practice continues.

In 2023, as a direct response to pandemic-induced caregiver stress, ESCCI hosted its first Caregiver Expo Event. In honor of the challenges caregivers face, this free event offered attendees education on understanding Compassion Fatigue. Additionally, community resources were shared, self-care experiences were made available and a healthy lunch served. Respite was provided for care recipients. Feedback received was overwhelmingly positive.

### **Goals**

- Provide a variety of opportunities throughout Cape Cod to serve the diverse needs of caregivers. Educational groups include The Savvy Caregiver and Powerful Tools for Caregiving. Three support groups, including one online forum, will continue meeting weekly and will expand membership. A fourth support group designed for LGBTQ caregivers is in the planning stages.
- Address caregiver stress, with an aim to provide respite and self-care opportunities to caregivers. The Caregiver Expo Event will take place biannually.
- To reach caregivers in more rural and remote parts of the service area, Caregiver Support Specialists will provide a multi-week “traveling” Caregiver Educational Series.
- Advocate for caregivers via participation in variety of community groups such as Grandparents Raising Children, and groups like caregivers of adult disabled children.
- When funding allows, as suggested by the National Strategy to Support Family Caregiving, ESCCI will continue giving rate increases to providers of direct service respite workers.

### **Long Term Care Ombudsman Program**

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program monitors the care of nursing and rest home residents in 21 facilities throughout the region. With 19 trained and certified Ombudsman volunteers, the program visits residents on a weekly basis. 1,105 facility visits took place in FY2024. Within the period of the last Area Plan, the Covid19 Pandemic greatly challenged the Ombudsman Program. In person monitoring became impossible and advocacy was forced to take place over the telephone. With the Pandemic's end however, in person advocacy resumed. Residents experienced difficult issues because of the crisis. Note: the number of workers in skilled nursing facilities became significantly reduced. This influenced a rise in resident complaints related to unacceptable wait times for things like personal care, meal delivery and medication administration. For Area Plan 2026-2029, the ESCCI LTC Ombudsman Program will continue to prioritize regular oversight and response to residents' complaints and concerns. Ombudsman Program staff and volunteers will advocate for improved quality of life, maintaining resident rights and empowering residents to make choices based upon individual preferences and desires.

#### **Goals**

- Ombudsman Program staff will conduct outreach activities in person and online to community groups including but not limited to senior centers, church groups, civic organizations, etc. at least twice per year. This outreach will consist of information about the mission of the program, ways to seek quality care and the protection of residents' rights. Central to the outreach will be education on the newly revised federal nursing home regulations.
- Program staff and volunteers will advocate for residents' growing access to quality behavioral health services, and full-time personnel, employed directly by the nursing facility and located on site.
- Ombudsmen will conduct outreach to senior LGBTQ residents living within the nursing/rest home community. Ensure that all are aware of the program's intention to advocate for the rights of every nursing home resident, without discrimination.
- The Ombudsman Program, in collaboration with the Volunteer Resource Center, will actively recruit volunteers and manage certification training to provide appropriate coverage throughout the service area.
- Supporting self-determination and elder justice, staff and volunteers of the Ombudsman Program will ensure that a residents' rights presentation is made annually at every skilled nursing facility in the service area.

## **Nutrition**

The 2024 Needs Assessment Project once again identified the Elder Services Nutrition Program as one of the most successful resources in the region for meeting the needs of elders and preventing malnutrition. The Senior Nutrition Program faced great challenges during the 2020 Pandemic but bounced back, in some instances with vigor. In particular, the Home Delivered Meals program, which had seen an increase in service deliveries of 16 % in FY2021, went up an additional 10.3% in FY2024 . Not as quickly to rebound, the Senior Dining Program, suspended during the Pandemic, resumed in four locations. That said, in a combined effort to offer the benefits of congregate dining and coordinate Title III programs with Cape Cod's Native American population, ESCCI sponsored a third day of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's weekly, congregate dining program. This effort has been a success and will continue.

Meals-on-Wheels, available to consumers within each of the twenty-two-town service area, offers "healthy eating" and provides a valuable well-being check. During the period of the 2026-2029 Area Plan, efforts will be made to increase opportunities for older adults to access these programs, with an emphasis on outreach to elders living alone, in rural areas and elders with low incomes.

ESCCI will resume the popular holiday-time "Grab 'N Go" campaign, enjoyed by 300+ consumers in more remote parts of the Cape and Islands. New since the previous Area Plan was written, ESCCI's Meals-on-Wheels service now ensures a menu for consumers adjusted for cultural and medical preferences where practicable. Selections besides a traditional meal include Caribbean, vegetarian, diabetic and pureed.

## **Goals**

- ESCCI will provide information and education on making good nutritional choices to consumers and others in the community. The staff will conduct sessions at Senior Dining Centers, and other focal points throughout the region, regarding healthy eating. Meals-on-Wheels recipients will receive similar printed information regularly with the delivery of their meals.
- The Evidence-Based program "Healthy Eating for Successful Living" will be offered two times per year in different parts of the service area, with a focus on reaching residents of housing authorities and other subsidized housing, as well as elders in rural/remote areas of the region.
- In consideration of cultural and medical preferences, specially tailored meals will continue to be available. It is hoped expanded choices like dairy free, gluten free and Latino meals will be added.

- To address food insecurity, as well as caregiver stress, caregivers enrolled in the Family Caregiver Support Program, will be eligible to receive a home delivered meal, along with the care recipient, if that individual is aged 60 or over.

### **Elder Justice**

Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands has a demonstrated history of providing services which protect the independence, well-being, and financial security of seniors. In FY2024, the Protective Services Unit responded to 2,314 reports of abuse/neglect/financial exploitation or self-neglect and the Money Management Program assisted 692 consumers to pay their bills in a timely manner and protect their financial security. The Ombudsman Program made 1,105 facility visits and calls to nursing/rest homes to advocate for resident's concerns.

In addition to these direct services, the agency has collaborative relationships with other community organizations which provide protection for elders. The Elder Law Project (a program of South Coastal Counties Legal Services) is largely funded by a Title III grant. The Cape Cod Five Cents Savings Bank Fraud Unit assists seniors in identifying financial scams and recovering assets. The Money Management Program Advisory Board includes representatives from SHINE, the Elder Law Project, community banks, housing and law enforcement.

During the term of the Area Plan 2026-2029 these partnerships will be strengthened and new ones established to ensure Elder Justice.

### **Goals**

- The Ombudsman Program staff and volunteers will attend Resident Council and Family Council meetings to discuss residents' rights and self-determination. At least twice yearly they will offer presentations to the community on topics such as how to choose a long term care facility and how to ensure quality care.
- The Protective Services Program will provide at least twelve trainings per year to mandated reporters in the community. Trainings will consist of how to recognize reportable conditions and how to file reports either through the statewide hotline or online. This will include fire/police departments, COA's, and in-home provider agencies. Special attention will be given specifically to an elder's right to refuse, consent, and service planning. Trainings will be a combination of in-person and virtual.



- The Protective Services Program will work closely with AGE on our Designation Review and to establish a continuous quality improvement process.
- The Money Management Program will provide two trainings per year to volunteers to maintain quality control and conduct a minimum of two outreach presentations to banks, financial institutions, and senior serving organizations. These efforts are designed to promote awareness of the program and recruit volunteers.
- ESCCI will continue to partner with the Elder Law Project. In addition to continuing its practice of providing one-to-one legal counsel for older adults the Project advocates for initiatives such as:

\*Assisting older adults facing evictions due to circumstances/conditions caused by the 2020 Pandemic.

\*Housing Court expansion/implementation for the Cape and Islands.

\*Development of quality housing which is targeted for older persons and people with disabilities with lower incomes.

\*Consumer education regarding eviction rights, elder estate planning, reverse mortgages, credit card debt etc.

### **ACL Discretionary Grants**

During the term of the Area Plan 2026-2029, ESCCI will provide funding for services that have as their primary goal the removal of individual, social, economic and/or physical barriers which impede the independence of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers. ESCCI offers Evidence-Based programs throughout the region and will ensure that these programs and other discretionary grant programs help support self-sufficiency and well-being.

### **Goals**

- Conduct public hearings/focus groups on Cape Cod and the Islands to identify new priority areas that could be included in the Title III RFP.
- Request for Proposals for FFY 2026-2027 Title III B&D will be released in March 2025, pending allocation of funds.

- The Agency will continue to award Title III grants which address community needs in such areas as transportation programs, social isolation, in-home mental health/substance abuse assessment/intervention/referral services, caregiver support programs, assistance with technology, outreach for LGBT elders, and legal services.

### **Participant-Directed/Person-Centered Planning**

Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands continues its commitment to supporting participant directed care and person centered planning. It is imperative that people have choice and control over the supports they need to remain at home or return home from an institutional setting. To address this need, the Community Transition Liaison Program (CTLP) launched at ESCCI in August of 2023. The primary purpose: to assist eligible nursing facility residents transition back into the community. CTLP Program staff work closely with residents who express an interest in returning to the community by providing personalized support and guidance throughout the discharge process. Including helping individuals secure stable housing, CTLP staff ensure that residents have access to critical resources, state programs and local supports, essential for a successful transition. The CTLP team acts as a bridge between nursing home residents and the wider community, providing personalized referrals and assistance to each resident. To date, CTLP has enrolled over 350 nursing facility residents in the program. This has allowed staff to build individualized plans for each resident, with careful attention to their specific needs and preferences. Over 200 residents have successfully discharged home or have been accepted into waiver programs, making significant results toward our mission to support community integration and independent living.

### **Goals**

- Expand Community Partnerships to further deepen CTLP relationships with community organizations, state agencies, and local resources to ensure a seamless transition for every resident. Including housing options and increasing collaboration with community agencies.
- Increase the number of residents enrolled in the CTLP program by 20-30%, targeting more nursing facility residents via outreach efforts.

- Create more comprehensive support networks for residents post transition, ensuring they have access to ongoing services such as home health services, social support, and transportation, which are crucial for long term success.
- Refine internal processes to ensure efficient service delivery and responsiveness to the evolving needs of residents. This includes enhancing case management tools, improving communication, and ensuring timely access to resources.
- Expanding housing options for residents at risk of institutionalization, ensuring that those in need have access to safe, affordable, and supportive housing that allows for successful community reintegration.

In its capacity as the state designated ADRC, the agency has significantly expanded its outreach to people under the age of sixty – helping younger individuals with disabilities access the services needed to live independently. ESCCI's Options Counseling Program provides additional opportunities to reach even more individuals aged eighteen and older with disabilities. In FY 2024 the Options Program served 334 consumers. In the 2024 AAA Options Program Survey, a great majority of consumers stated they were better able to make informed decisions about their long term care support needs after speaking with the counselor.

The Area Plan 2026-2029 will ensure that the Options Counseling Program continues to offer consumers guidance in identifying appropriate living arrangements, services and support that allow for choice and the right to self-determination.

## **Goals**

- The Aging and Disability Resource Consortium (ADRC) will provide cross-training to staff to ensure that consumers, contacting either Cape Organization Rights of Disabled (CORD) or ESCCI, will receive appropriate Options Counseling services.
- Maintain a current knowledge base of community services by participating in community events/information fairs, and trainings. Options Counselors will continue membership in the Cape Cod Community Resource Group – a collection of for-profit and not-for-profit organizations providing services and support to individuals of all ages. Options Counseling staff will continue certification as trained SHINE counselors.
- As a designated Transitional Assistance Provider, in partnership with MASS ABILITY, Options Counselors will facilitate the purchase of goods and

services for an eligible consumer who wishes to transition out of a long term care facility to a home setting.

- When appropriate, Options Counselors will refer consumers to State approved Consumer Directed Care and the Medicaid Choices Programs. Both programs focus on consumer directed choices and decisions.
- ESCCI will continue to coordinate with a wide variety of organizations across the service area to advocate for participant-directed/person-centered planning. These organizations include Councils on Aging, Community Action Committee, Dukes County Health Council, Housing Assistance Corporation, the Nantucket Department of Human Services, Cape Cod Council of Churches, Cape Cod Healthcare, Alzheimer's Family Support Center, (dementia/Alzheimer's support), Cape Cod Hoarding Task Force, Suicide Prevention Coalition, Homeless Prevention Council and many others.
- ESCCI will distribute promotional materials and use social media throughout the service area. Opportunities to access the media – using public service announcements, cable television shows, and press releases will also be utilized in order to reach older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers. Special attention will be given to reaching the target populations of individuals living alone, socially isolated, and rural elders.

### **Expanding Access to Home and Community Based Services**

ESCCI's Home Care and Senior Care Options Programs secure the opportunity for older individuals to receive managed in-home and community-based long-term care services. Care Managers assess the needs of a consumer, develop a service plan and arrange for a variety of in-home supports such as homemaking, personal care, laundry service and personal emergency response systems.

As a direct result of the Covid 19 Pandemic, homemaking and personal care providers lost a large percentage of their workforce. The effects of this shortage lasted much longer than expected and forced the creation of ESCCI's Pending Services Waitlist. At one point in 2023, the waitlist peaked at over 700 individuals. In response, ESCCI increased provider rates in hopes we would see an uptick in Homemaker, Personal Care and HHA hiring. Internally it became clear that the Homecare and Senior Care Options departments were not able to keep up managing the rapidly growing Pending Services Waitlist and their caseloads. Thus, in January 2024 ESCCI created a Pending Services Team of Provider Specialists who work solely on filling cases from the waitlist. The three Provider Specialists operate as a unit on the following: daily communication with providers to fill the services for consumers who have been waiting the longest; calling all consumers on the waitlist to

reassure them we are working on finding them a provider, and to document any changes that may have occurred regarding their needs. As a result of their efforts, in December 2024 the waitlist was reduced to 259 individuals. Currently the waitlist is well under 100.

### **Goals**

- The Pending Services Team will continue to oversee the role of working with providers to fill cases for our Homecare and SCO departments as it has proven to be the most efficient way of keeping up with daily demand from consumers requiring HM/PC/HHA services.
- The Provider Specialists will continue to be prepared for the annual increase in pending services cases during the summer months, brought on by seasonal jobs which take direct care workers away from provider agencies (a problem unique to Cape Cod for over 20 years).

The Hospital to Home Partnership Program was developed to address the steady growth of residents over the age of 65 and the increased demand for home and community-based services. Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands partnered with Cape Cod Healthcare and Cape Cod Hospital following a grant allocation in June 2024. A Hospital Liaison position was created and filled by an ESCCI employee. The Liaison, an RN who is embedded in the hospital, meets with patients to address any potential needs that may arise at home post discharge. The Liaison follows up on referrals that are made to ESCCI programs, such as Home Care, Options Counseling, Family Caregiver Support or CTLP, to ensure the consumer is supported by the discharge plans. This also includes follow up with rehabilitation or skilled nursing facilities.

### **Goals**

- The Hospital Liaison will continue to address the numerous barriers patients face after an acute hospital stay, enabling individuals to return home and avoid hospital readmission.
- The program will facilitate successful discharges directly to the community by reducing discharges to skilled nursing facilities.