

# BECOMING AN AGE- AND DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE



**Summary:**

Community efforts to become age-friendly or dementia friendly stem from two separate movements. However, when communities take steps to integrate the work of both movements, they can reduce duplicated efforts, avoid confusion, save resources, and allow each movement to strengthen and support each other. This guide provides communities with recommended steps to becoming age- and dementia friendly. Because some communities are further along in the process than others and each has a unique set of needs, priorities and resources, communities should view the sequence of steps listed in this guide as flexible.

**For More Information Contact:**

Pam MacLeod

Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs

Pam.MacLeod@State.MA.US

# How to Become an Age- and Dementia Friendly Community

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## Who is this guide for?

Although it's encouraged that communities integrate their age- and dementia friendly work at the outset with an action team leader or coordinator, many communities have already engaged in one movement and want to begin integrating the other. This guide is useful no matter where your community is in the process and helpful under any one of the following three scenarios:

- Integrating the community's age- and dementia friendly work at the outset
- Integrating dementia friendly activity into the community's age-friendly work
- Integrating age-friendly activity into the community's dementia friendly work

## How do you use this guide?

1. If you are integrating your community's age- and dementia friendly work at the outset: simply follow the steps summarized on the next page.
2. If you are integrating the work of one movement into the other:
  - a) Identify a coordinator(s) to ensure your age-friendly and dementia friendly action plans and work are integrated or aligned beginning with the current year of the action plan.<sup>1</sup>
  - b) If your community's current work is solely around one movement, review your action team's membership; invite others to join your age- and dementia friendly action team.<sup>2</sup>
  - c) Follow the steps outlined on the next page with the following exceptions:
    - If you are already a member of AARP's Network, there is no need to reapply.
    - If your community has already submitted an action plan to AARP, or a Dementia Friendly Massachusetts (DFM) Pledge to DFM, there is no need to resubmit either one.

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<sup>1</sup> Although AARP requires that communities develop a three-year age-friendly action plan, Massachusetts does not require a specific timeframe for its dementia friendly action plans.

<sup>2</sup> Communities may instead choose to have two teams with a coordinator(s), or any other approach that ensures their work is integrated or aligned.

## How to Become an Age- and Dementia Friendly Community

The chart below is a summary of recommended steps to becoming an age- and dementia friendly community in Massachusetts. Following the chart is a more detailed description.

<b>Enrollment</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Form an age- and dementia friendly community action team</li><li>2. Submit an application to AARP, indicating your intention to include dementia friendly activity in your age-friendly work</li><li>3. Receive recognition for being in AARP's Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities<sup>3</sup></li></ol>
<b>Conduct Surveys and Listening Sessions</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Engage with residents to identify your community's age- and dementia friendly needs</li><li>2. Consider convening a community kick-off event or meeting</li></ol>
<b>Create an Action Plan</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Review data gathered about resident needs; assess options for addressing those needs</li><li>2. Develop and submit an action plan to AARP &amp; Dementia Friendly Massachusetts (DFM)</li><li>3. Find funding opportunities to support your age- and dementia friendly work</li><li>4. After your action plan is complete, sign and submit your community's DFM Pledge</li><li>5. Receive recognition from AARP &amp; DFM for being well on your way to becoming an age- and dementia friendly community</li></ol> <p>Note: To help identify options for addressing resident needs, refer to the <a href="https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit">Massachusetts Age- and Dementia Friendly Integration Toolkit</a> (<a href="https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit">https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit</a>)</p>
<b>Implementation</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Review your action team's membership and invite others to join if needed</li><li>2. Implement age- and dementia friendly efforts as outlined in the community's action plan</li></ol> <p>Note: For implementation ideas by focus area, refer to the <a href="https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit">Massachusetts Age- and Dementia Friendly Integration Toolkit</a> (<a href="https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit">https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit</a>)</p>
<b>Progress / Status Update</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Review and communicate your age- and dementia friendly status and progress</li><li>2. Identify and take steps to continuously improve</li></ol>

<sup>3</sup> Communities receive public recognition for participation in Dementia Friendly Massachusetts (DFM) after they submit their age- and dementia friendly action plan and DFM Pledge listed in the step below entitled, "Create an Action Plan." Also, communities can consider joining Dementia Friendly America's (DFA) "Network of Communities." Requirements and benefits around joining DFA's network are described in [DFA's Readiness & Recognition Review](https://www.dfamerica.org/community-toolkit-phase-1) (<https://www.dfamerica.org/community-toolkit-phase-1>).

# How to Become an Age- and Dementia Friendly Community

Below is a more detailed description of the steps to becoming an age- and dementia friendly community in Massachusetts.

## Enrollment

### 1. Form an age- and dementia friendly community action team

Create an action team with an identified team leader and representatives from three or more community sectors, domains, or areas of focus. For example, the team could include town officials and department heads, first responders, transportation officials, the business community and others who engage directly with the community.

### 2. Submit an application to AARP, indicating your intention to include dementia friendly activity in your age-friendly work

Complete and submit AARP's brief application along with a letter of commitment from the highest official in your community. Within the application, indicate your intention to ensure that your community's age-friendly work meets the specific needs of people living with dementia and their care partners. Download [AARP's application and view sample letters of commitment](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/sample-letters.html) (https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/sample-letters.html)

### 3. Receive recognition for being in AARP's Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities<sup>4</sup>

After AARP approves your application, your community will receive a certificate and public recognition as a member of AARP's Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. The application includes automatic membership in the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. (An opt-out option is available.)

## Conduct Surveys and Listening Sessions

### 1. Engage with residents to identify your community's age- and dementia friendly needs

There are a variety of ways communities can assess their age- and dementia friendly needs. For example:

- Create questionnaires and conduct resident surveys
- Convene focus groups, listening sessions, or one-on-one interviews with residents
- Search for and review any resident feedback data that may already exist

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<sup>4</sup> Communities receive public recognition for participation in Dementia Friendly Massachusetts (DFM) after they submit their age- and dementia friendly action plan and DFM Pledge listed in the step below entitled, "Create an Action Plan." Also, communities can consider joining Dementia Friendly America's (DFA) "Network of Communities." Requirements and benefits around joining DFA's network are described in [DFA's Readiness & Recognition Review](https://www.dfamerica.org/community-toolkit-phase-1) (https://www.dfamerica.org/community-toolkit-phase-1).

- Apply an approach that mixes any or all of the above assessment methods

As you gather information about your community's needs, remember to attain feedback from residents living with dementia and their care partners. Also, as part of your planning, review and utilize data from the local Community Profile found in the [Massachusetts Healthy Aging Data Report](https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/data-report/explore-the-profiles/community-profiles/) (https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/data-report/explore-the-profiles/community-profiles/).

The following sample questionnaires, tips and guidance are available for your community's reference and adaptation as you plan your community engagement approach:

- [AARP's Community Survey Questionnaire](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/aarp-community-survey-questionnaire.html) (https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/aarp-community-survey-questionnaire.html)
- [Dementia Friendly America's tips and sample questionnaires](http://www.dfamerica.org/community-toolkit-phase-2) (www.dfamerica.org/community-toolkit-phase-2)
- AARP's Community Listening Session Tool Kit: <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/livable-documents/documents-2018/Book-2-Roadmap-To-Livability-Listening-21318-lr.pdf>

## 2. Consider convening a community kick-off event or meeting

Most communities convene a community kick-off event to educate residents about their age- and dementia friendly movements. This event can be convened before or after the community has completed its assessment of needs. After the kick-off event, many communities will convene ongoing gatherings to update residents about their work. During kick-off and ongoing events, some communities recruit residents interested in participating in their age- and dementia friendly movements. Below are links to examples of kick-off events:

- [Example of an age- and dementia friendly kick-off event](https://adfca.org/2019/05/aging-together-age-dementia-friendly-cape-ann-community-summit/) (https://adfca.org/2019/05/aging-together-age-dementia-friendly-cape-ann-community-summit/)
- [Example of a dementia friendly kick-off event](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqcOFP1z1VE) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqcOFP1z1VE)

To attain additional advice, ideas for speakers, or flyers to share at your community kick-off event, contact any of the individuals listed in the final section of this document entitled, "Guidance and Technical Assistance."

## Create an Action Plan

### 1. Review data gathered about resident needs; assess options for addressing those needs

Review the needs of your community that were identified during the community engagement phase of your work. Identify, discuss, assess and prioritize options for addressing those needs. When evaluating each option, consider available people, time, funding and the required level of effort. Decide upon age- and dementia friendly goals and

activities that can be realistically accomplished within the agreed upon timeframe. To help identify options for addressing resident needs, refer to the [Massachusetts Age- and Dementia Friendly Integration Toolkit](https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit). (<https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit>)

## **2. Develop and submit an action plan to AARP & Dementia Friendly Massachusetts (DFM)**

Create a three-year action plan. The plan should include measureable goals and activities required to achieve those goals, indicators for monitoring progress, a timeline, responsible parties, other required resources, and if needed, strategies to seek funding to support and sustain the plan.

It is important to ensure that the needs expressed by residents living with dementia and their care partners are among those being addressed in the action plan. It's also essential that the plan include processes for attaining feedback from older adults of all abilities during all phases of the community's age- and dementia friendly work.

Below are links to AARP's guidance as well as sample action plans:

- [AARP's guidance on action plan format and content](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/how-to-create-a-community-action-plan.html): (<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/how-to-create-a-community-action-plan.html>)
- [Action Plan for Age and Dementia Friendly Cape Ann, MA, May 2019](https://secureservercdn.net/72.167.25.126/42x.b30.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ADFCA-ActionPlan-20190501.pdf) (<https://secureservercdn.net/72.167.25.126/42x.b30.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ADFCA-ActionPlan-20190501.pdf>)
- [Action Plan for Age \(and Dementia\) Friendly Massachusetts, January 2019](https://www.mass.gov/lists/age-friendly-massachusetts-action-plan) (<https://www.mass.gov/lists/age-friendly-massachusetts-action-plan>)

To attain additional advice on the development of your action plan or more samples, contact any of the individuals listed in the final section of this document entitled, "Guidance and Technical Assistance."

## **3. Find funding opportunities to support your age- and dementia friendly work**

You can seek out funding opportunities available to support your age- and dementia friendly work. Some communities have been successful in attaining funding from a variety of sources, including their local community foundations and organizations. Other examples appear below:

- [AARP's Community Challenge Grants](https://press.aarp.org/2019-2-20-AARP-Community-Challenge-Grant-Program-2019-Applications) (<https://press.aarp.org/2019-2-20-AARP-Community-Challenge-Grant-Program-2019-Applications>)
- [Tufts Health Plan Foundation's Momentum Fund](https://www.tuftshealthplanfoundation.org/focus-areas.php?page=focus-areas/momentum-fund) (<https://www.tuftshealthplanfoundation.org/focus-areas.php?page=focus-areas/momentum-fund>)
- [Massachusetts Community Compact Initiative](https://blog.mass.gov/blog/government/the-massachusetts-community-compact-initiative/) (<https://blog.mass.gov/blog/government/the-massachusetts-community-compact-initiative/>)

- [Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative's Listing of Funding Alerts](https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/tag/grants/) (regularly updated) (<https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/tag/grants/>)

#### **4. After your action plan is complete, sign and submit your community's Dementia Friendly Massachusetts (DFM) Pledge**

The DFM Pledge is a signed pledge submitted to DFM by the age- and dementia friendly action team. It's a reflection of the team's commitment to implement the steps outlined in the community's age- and dementia friendly action plan designed to meet the needs of residents living with dementia and their care partners. The following three steps are required prior to signing and submitting your DFM Pledge:

- a) Consult with the DFM Project Manager
- b) Create an age- and dementia friendly action team with an identified team leader and representatives from three or more community sectors, domains, or areas of focus
- c) Create an action plan that includes involvement of persons living with dementia

View and attain more information about the DFM

Pledge: <https://dfmassachusetts.org/dfm-communities/sign-the-dfm-pledge/>

#### **5. Receive recognition from AARP & DFM for being well on your way to becoming an age- and dementia friendly community**

After AARP approves your age- and dementia friendly action plan and DFM receives your signed DFM Pledge, you will receive certificates and public recognition for being well on your way to becoming an age- and dementia friendly community.

## Implementation

#### **1. Review your action team's membership and invite others to join if/when needed**

Now that the action plan has been developed, review your action team's membership. Determine if there are any gaps in terms of the specific skills, knowledge, expertise or connections needed to effectively implement the plan. Invite other key community members onto the action team if/when needed.

#### **2. Implement age- and dementia friendly efforts as outlined in the community's action plan**

Using the action plan as a guide, conduct the activities required to accomplish the action team's agreed upon goals for the community. For implementation ideas by focus area, refer to the [Massachusetts Age- and Dementia Friendly Integration Toolkit](https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit). (<https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit>)



## Progress / Status Update

### 1. Review and communicate your age- and dementia friendly status and progress

With the action plan as your guide, assess and celebrate progress and identify new opportunities as activities are completed and goals are accomplished. Update your community and key stakeholders on progress and next steps using all types of appropriate media.

Develop progress reports outlining the team's progress against the indicators listed in the action plan. Many communities find it helpful to prepare progress reports on an annual basis. AARP requires that at least one progress report be submitted to AARP within five years of becoming a member of their Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities.

The following is a link to sample progress reports:

- Sample progress report: [Age-Friendly Boston Achievements - Year 1:](https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/document-file-06-2018/age-friendly_year_1_report_rev._june_6_2018_final.pdf)  
([https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/document-file-06-2018/age-friendly\\_year\\_1\\_report\\_rev.\\_june\\_6\\_2018\\_final.pdf](https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/document-file-06-2018/age-friendly_year_1_report_rev._june_6_2018_final.pdf))
- Sample progress report: [Age-Friendly Boston Achievements - Year 2:](https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/document-file-07-2019/age-friendly_year_2_report_0.pdf)  
([https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/document-file-07-2019/age-friendly\\_year\\_2\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/document-file-07-2019/age-friendly_year_2_report_0.pdf))

To attain additional advice on monitoring progress, developing progress reports, or for more progress report samples, contact any of the individuals listed in the final section of this document entitled, "Guidance and Technical Assistance."

### 2. Identify and take steps to continuously improve

Remember that the action plan is not a static document. As AARP states in its action planning guidance, "Revisions and amendments are a sign of program improvement and progress." Continuously improve by regularly reviewing the action plan and making adjustments as needed.

## Guidance and Technical Assistance

Guidance, advice and technical assistance are available as you begin and continue to conduct your work to make your community age- and dementia friendly. Request assistance or ask questions about the process of becoming an age- and dementia friendly community from any of the following leaders in Massachusetts:

- [James Fuccione](mailto:james.fuccione@mahealthyaging.org) (james.fuccione@mahealthyaging.org) of the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative
- [Patty Sullivan](mailto:patty@mcoaonline.com) (patty@mcoaonline.com) of the Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging and Project Manager for Dementia Friendly Massachusetts
- [Antron Watson](mailto:awatson@aarp.org) (awatson@aarp.org) of AARP Massachusetts
- [Pam MacLeod](mailto:pam.macleod@state.ma.us) (pam.macleod@state.ma.us) of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs

Links to other guidance:

- [Massachusetts Age- and Dementia Friendly Integration Toolkit](https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit) (https://tinyurl.com/AF-DFtoolkit)
- [AARP's Age-Friendly Livability Program Cycle](http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/getting-started.html) (www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2014/getting-started.html)
- [Dementia Friendly Massachusetts](http://www.dfmassachusetts.org) (www.dfmassachusetts.org)
- [Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative](https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/age-friendly/) (https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/age-friendly/)