

Minuteman Senior Services Area Plan on Aging

Federal Fiscal Years 2022 – 2025



“Our mission is to empower and advocate for those impacted by aging and disability. We offer information and supportive services that enhance health, well-being, and independence.”

***Minuteman Senior Services
Mission Statement***

26 Crosby Drive
Bedford, MA 01730
Main: (781) 272-7177
Toll Free: (888) 222-6171
MassRelay: 711 or (800) 439-2370 (TTY/ASCII)
www.minutemansenior.org

Table of Contents

Planning and Service Area Map	3
Executive Summary	4
Focus Area Summary	11
Needs Assessment Summary	17
Funding Priorities for FFY2022-2025	22
FFY2022-2025 Goals and Objectives.....	23

Executive Summary

For more than 45 years, Minuteman Senior Services (Minuteman) mission has been to empower and advocate for those impacted by aging and disability. Minuteman offers information and supportive services that enhance health, well-being and independence. Minuteman builds on an individual's strengths, keep their families engaged and facilitate access to public benefits and local private pay resources.

As part of our designation as a Federal Area Agency on Aging, and as part of the Older Americans Act, Minuteman is required to create an Area Plan every four years that expands on our goals as an agency and aligns our funding priorities with what we have learned as part of our needs assessment activities. Over the course of the last year Minuteman participated in several stakeholder meetings, including the following; Council on Aging Directors, South Asian seniors and caregivers, MBTA Public Hearing regarding concerns from the disabled community and a Pride across the generations event with LGBTQ+ older adults. Minuteman also used data from a survey that was sent to over 2,000 Minuteman consumers and posted on our website as well as sent out via email to community members. In addition, Minuteman used data from the Metro Housing Impact Report, MA Dept. of Public Health COVID-19 Health Equity Advisory Group and the Black Lifetimes Matter Report from The Gerontology Institute. The top four areas of need that were identified were 1. Transportation, 2. Social Isolation, 3. Economic Security, 4. Housing.

The Covid-19 pandemic shed light on just how essential our programs and services are, as well as the importance Minuteman as an Area Agency on Aging has in prioritizing and administering funding in an effort to address unmet needs and underserved populations, including low-income elders, LGBTQ+ elders, Limited English Proficiency elders, Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOC) elders and rural elders. In FY21 Minuteman received over 6,000 inquiries to our Information and Referral Department and over 26,000 people received home care services from us. Our Nutrition program served 1,194 Meals on Wheels consumers. All of these services and programs continued throughout the pandemic. This is a tribute to the many volunteers our agency depends on to help support some of our most vital programs and vulnerable consumers. Our Nutrition Program is supported by over 400 volunteers, and our SHINE, Ombudsman and Money Management Programs all depend on our dedicated volunteers.

Over the course of the next four years, Minuteman Senior Services is very excited to work on the goals and objectives we have identified as being most important in our work as an Area Agency on Aging which are;

1. Expand our reach and service delivery to underserved populations, including persons under age 60 and disabled, Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOC) and the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBTQ+) community.
2. Measure the effectiveness, quality outcomes and value of Older American's Act (OAA) core programs and how they impact population health management.
3. Emergency Preparedness; be able to adapt, respond and support consumers during a pandemic or other extended state of emergency.
4. Support programming and new initiatives that address social determinants of health.

In the past four years, Minuteman has made great progress in some of the areas identified above, but we realize through our needs assessment activities that there is still much more to do. Going forward Minuteman will work to enhance our Federally funded core programs which include Nutrition, Caregiver, Information and Referral, Healthy Living and Ombudsman. Minuteman will work to continue providing grants, programs and services to better support identified needs in our communities, especially those involving underserved populations. Minuteman will begin this effort by making sure that all of our agency materials including access to our website are designed for people of all abilities and all languages. Minuteman will ensure that all of our programs and services are welcoming to people from all walks of life and that we maintain open communication to learn how we can do better. Minuteman will also ensure that our programs and services are person centered, that all consumers voices are heard and that they have choice as to setting their own goals and helping to participate in all aspects of care planning. We will also ensure that as an Area Agency on Aging that we have a strong focus on elder justice and making sure that Minuteman is doing all that we can to advocate for the well-being of those residing in our planning and service area (PSA), this will include continuing to advocate for not only those living in their own homes, but also those who are living in long-term care facilities. Minuteman's job as an Area Agency on Aging is to help educate people on the importance of knowing their rights and to help advocate for those who may not be able to do so themselves.

Background

Established in 1975, Minuteman Senior Services (Minuteman) is the hub of a network of support services that has been helping people live independently in their own homes and communities for over 45 years. Minuteman Senior Services is one of 26 state designated Aging Services Access Points and one of 670 federally designated Area Agencies on Aging. The federal designation of Area Agency on Aging stems from the 1965 passage of the Older Americans Act, as amended, which was established to create a comprehensive and coordinated system of care for older Americans. Through the Older Americans Act, the federal government created the Administration for Community Living, each state was required to designate an office in state government to address aging issues called the State Unit on Aging, which in Massachusetts is the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. A final requirement of the Older Americans Act was that each State Unit on Aging was charged with contracting on a regional level to provide Area Agencies on Aging, which plan for and monitor the needs of all people over the age of 60, and their caregivers, within their designated geographic area. Minuteman Senior Services is also part of the MetroBoston Aging and Disability Resource Consortium (ADRC) which is state and federally funded to provide access and resources to people age 18 and over who are in need of long term care supports.

As a designated Aging Services Access Point and Area Agency on Aging, Minuteman Senior Services is responsible for providing services and representing residents in need of long-term care resources in our planning and service area (PSA) which is sixteen communities: Acton, Arlington, Bedford, Boxborough, Burlington, Carlisle, Concord, Harvard, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, Wilmington, Winchester and Woburn. Minuteman Senior Services provides many different programs as shown below (some are state funded, some are federally funded and some are a combination):

State Funded:

- State Home Care
- Protective Services
- Money Management
- Supportive Housing
- Nursing Home Screening

Private Insurance Funded:

- Senior Care Options (SCO)

Private Pay :

- By Your Side Care Management

Federally Funded:

- Information and Referral
- Caregiver Support
- Options Counseling
- Meals on Wheels
- Nutrition Consults
- Senior Dining Sites
- SHINE
- Nursing Home Ombudsman
- Legal Services
- Healthy Living Programs
- Education/Support Groups

Focus Areas

These past four years have been exciting for Minuteman Senior Services (Minuteman), with the expansion and addition of several new programs and initiatives. It has also been a time of challenge with increased budget constraints and a global pandemic that has shed additional light on gaps in service needs for older adults and a need to continue to innovate service delivery to improve health equity and outcomes.

Strategic Plan Development: Beginning in June 2018, Minuteman began an effort to review and revise the agency's strategic plan. This collaborative effort, led by our Senior Management Team and representatives of our Board of Directors, was facilitated by the non-profit consulting organization SOAR Consulting over the course of several months. In November 2019, our three-year strategic plan was adopted by our Board of Directors. Our strategic plan aligns with our goals and objectives as part of our Area Plan and includes the following goals:

1. Ensure an infrastructure that allows for sustainability and/or scalability of programs and ensures a consistent process of measurement and analysis for organizational decision-making.
2. Be a financially viable organization that makes necessary investments in employees, systems, and programs; and maintains the balance between mission and fiscal responsibility.
3. Develop an infrastructure that consistently measures our value and impact to key stakeholders and creates opportunities to engage with other payors.
4. Adapt and respond to the changing cultural demographic composition of our consumer base.
5. Increase consumer base within our 16 communities through outreach to consumers, caregivers and professionals, and promotion of culturally sensitive programs that address the needs of vulnerable populations.

Impact of the Pandemic on Aging Services Delivery: In March 2020, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts declared a State of Emergency in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Given the nature of our work, Minuteman was deemed an essential service provider, and continued to operate programs while adhering to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Working in conjunction with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, many of the programs we offered had to pivot to a new and more creative way of delivering services, including expanding the use of tele-health as a component of assessment and modifying programs to ensure infection control and social distancing. Consumers and employees were screened before any face-to-face encounters, and these were limited in terms of duration. Where possible, visits were conducted outdoors, or modifications were made to limit contact, even with the use of personal protective equipment. Minuteman used such program flexibilities where possible, but wanted to ensure continued operation of programs, especially the delivery of daily home-delivered meals.

Older adults were amongst the most vulnerable to COVID-19 (the CDC reported that people in the United States over the age of 85 were 560 times more likely to test positive for COVID -19 infection, be hospitalized or die than were people aged 18-29); for communities of color rates of infection were also disproportionately impacted. In Massachusetts alone the rate of hospitalization

for COVID-19 was 2.4 times greater for Black people than it was for White (non Hispanic) people (MA Dept. of Public Health, DPH COVID-19 Health Equity Advisory Group: Recommendations, DPH Potential Actions and Updated Data Release Report). As a result, Minuteman sought to ensure we continued to operate programs to address the needs of the most vulnerable, as well as to ensure we contributed to efforts to support public health education through materials translated into multiple languages. As the COVID-19 vaccine became available in December 2020, Minuteman employees supported communication and outreach, as well as assisted with scheduling of vaccinations, supporting vaccine clinics in housing, and coordinating transportation.

Focus on Racial and Social Justice Issues: There has been increased national discussion over the past year on racial and social justice issues, generated both from identified racial disparities with COVID-19 and national events that have prompted necessary discussion on systemic and structural racism in the United States. Expanding our cultural awareness, delivering services in a culturally sensitive way and reflecting the diversity of communities are key to our mission and strategic plan. Building from this foundation, we sought to take a more active stance in terms of denouncing hate, recognizing bias, and taking meaningful action steps to support communities of color.

Expanding awareness through education and reflection:

Minuteman has developed an internal work group called “Do Better to Be Better” which brings together Minuteman employees from all departments and all contribution levels to focus on learning about unconscious bias, and how to counter it in our personal lives and at a systemic level in our organization. The group started meeting in June of 2020 and has met regularly for one hour every two weeks. Racial disparities exist within every measure, and the “Do Better to Be Better” work group focuses on one knowledge-based topic, discusses the topic in a safe, judgement free space and then works to see how we can make recommendations to improve our organization. Minuteman senior management also participated in a learning community symposium called “Building Racial Equity” which was a four-part program that has helped us build curriculum to share with leadership teams.

Expanding linguistic access: Minuteman has also adopted the National CLAS (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services)¹ standards and developed our own diversity statement (see box). As a service organization, our greatest strength is our workforce- the people who are Minuteman Senior Services. Minuteman is also keenly aware of the need to be able to offer communication services to those whose primary language is not English. Minuteman plans to enhance our training of staff to highlight the importance of translation services and to expand availability of program information available in several languages to promote enhanced access to our services.



Our Diversity Statement

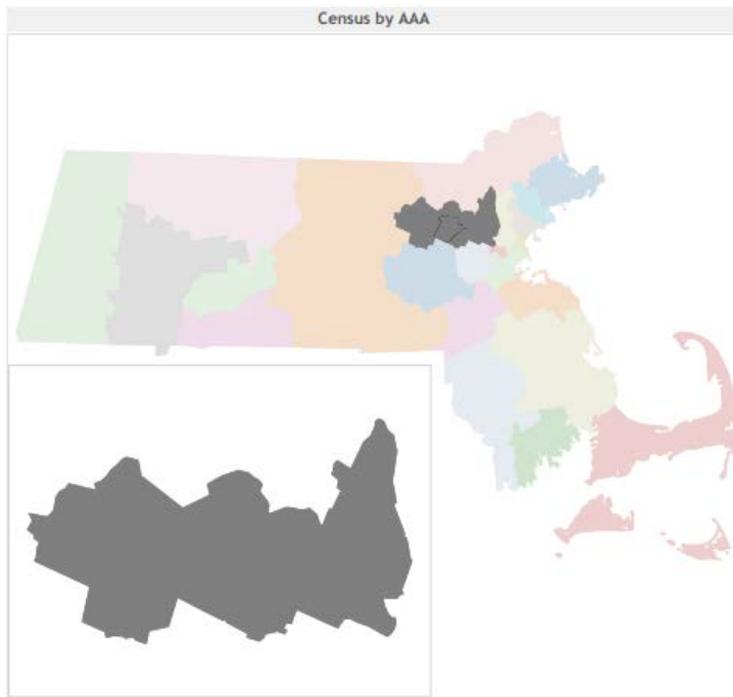
“We promote a collaborative, supportive, respectful environment that increases the contribution of all employees. We prioritize cultural awareness and competency across the organization and strive to address bias in our daily work. We are committed to expanding the diversity of our staff, volunteers and Board of Directors to better reflect the communities we serve. We continually explore ways to adapt our programs that will address social inequities, and we engage in advocacy aimed at addressing injustice. We welcome your partnership with us in this effort.”

¹ <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/clas>

Innovating Service Delivery by Leveraging Technology and Analytics: Technology has become central to creating efficiencies within aging services. In 2018, through grant funding, Minuteman sought to enhance the Meals on Wheels program by creating a Change of Condition (COC) intervention. Working with our technology partner Y Point Analytics, Minuteman designed a phone application that documents observable and/or consumer reported physical, cognitive and environmental changes noted by the driver during meal delivery. The application enables the driver to document observations in real time which issues escalation alerts to Nutrition and Care Management staff for timely follow up. Through COC Minuteman is quickly and efficiently identifying potential health problems or worsening symptoms among some of our most vulnerable community members. Minuteman is the first Area Agency on Aging to implement a COC project in Massachusetts and in 2020 was awarded an Aging and Innovation award from the National Association for Area Agencies on Aging (N4A). Minuteman is excited to expand on this work to help better improve the lives of residents within our community. Through the adoption of Patient Ping in agency operations, Minuteman will receive alerts around consumer hospitalizations, emergency room visits and other transfers within the healthcare continuum. Minuteman is looking to further understand healthcare utilization trends to identify how Minuteman can continuously enhance our interventions to improve health outcomes. A central component to this work will be analyzing our consumer data using population health measures and building towards health equity for historically underserved populations.

Area Demographics: Like trends across the Commonwealth in terms of demographics with aging residents, census data demonstrates (see table 1) a 15.6% increase in the population of those who are 60 and over in our planning and service area (PSA). Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOC) represent under 9.2% of the total population aged 65 and older, with residents identifying as Asian at 6.6%, Hispanic at 1.2% and Black at 1.1% of the population. Though census data suggests that only 5.8% of the population aged 65 or older has incomes below the Federal Poverty Levels, data from current Minuteman consumers suggest disparity in economic security from those receiving services from the agency. Based on data available on Minuteman’s consumer base, 71% of consumers reported having annual household incomes of \$26,500 or less (which reflects just 200% of Federal Poverty Levels). Hence, individuals in need of social service supports may face economic security challenges versus the broader population of older adults within the PSA.

Table 1



Census Data for AAA: Minuteman Senior Services, Inc.	
Total Population (2019)	301,740
Population 60-64 (2019)	19,252
Population 65-74 (2019)	28,623
Population 75-84 (2019)	15,626
Population 60+ (2019)	71,680
Population 65+ (2019)	52,428
Percent Population 60+ (2019)	23.7%
Percent Population 65+ (2019)	17.3%
Percent Population 85+ (2019)	2.7%
Rate of Change in Population 60+ (2010-2019)	15.6%
Rate of Change in Population 65+ (2010-2019)	16.6%
Rate of Change in Population 85+ (2010-2019)	12.7%
Percent Female Population 60+ (2019)	54.7%
Percent Asian Population 65+ (2019)	6.6%
Percent Hispanic Population 65+ (2019)	1.2%
Percent Black Population 65+ (2019)	1.1%
Percent American Indian Population 65+ (2019)	0.1%
Percent Native Hawaiian Population 65+ (2019)	0%
Percent Other Population 65+ (2019)	0.2%
Percent White-Alone Population 65+ (2019)	91%
Percent Non-White Alone Population 65+ (2019)	8.8%
Percent Population 65+ Living Alone (2019)	11.7%
Percent Population 65+ Below Poverty (2019)	5.8%
Percent Households with Elders 65+ (2019)	31.9%

Focus Area Summary

The Administration for Community Living has identified three major “focus areas” to be addressed through the 2022-2025 Area Planning Process.

1) **Older Americans Act Core Programs** - Minuteman Senior Services’ vision statement is “People of all ages and abilities will have the supports necessary to live with meaning, choice, and dignity”. The Older Americans Act funding helps us to provide core programs and services that embody this vision.

- a) **Family Caregiver Program:** According to AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving, there were 53 million Americans providing unpaid caregiving to an adult or child with special needs in the United States (Caregiving in the U.S., 2020). Hence, one in every five Americans assists with personal care, financial management, transportation, medical coordination or other responsibilities (Caregiving in the U.S., 2020). The Massachusetts Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP) provides services, resources, support and counseling to those who are caring for older adults or for older adults who are caring for grandchildren. FCSP Specialists educate and support caregivers on identified areas of need specific to their caregiving situation, as well as promote strategies for self-care. They advocate on behalf of caregivers for scholarship funding to help provide much needed respite services, durable medical and other safety equipment, or other resources needed by the care recipient, such as robotic pets, to provide emotional support and companionship.

When we surveyed consumers, caregivers, professionals and other community partners in our area, caregiver support was identified as one of the top five areas of need, and one of many that has been exacerbated by the pandemic. More specifically, caregivers reported the need for support groups and respite care for their loved ones.

Connection with other caregivers has been identified as a resource to ease the stressors that are often accompanied by caregiving, to share best practices, enhance connection, and share experiences. Minuteman has provided ongoing support through either facilitated or co-facilitated caregiver support groups in recent years. One example is an ongoing support group, co-facilitated in partnership with the Lexington Council on Aging, which provides caregivers an opportunity to connect and share resources on general caregiving topics. Minuteman also partnered with Emerson Hospital to offer a support group to its patients and caregivers. This group, facilitated by Minuteman’s Family Caregiver Specialist, meets on a monthly basis and provides an opportunity for sharing of experiences, strategies for self-care, and tips on caregiving.

Through our need assessment activities, respondents shared a gap in supporting the unique needs of caregivers within the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ caregivers expressed not always feeling welcomed in caregiver support groups and felt isolated. In July of 2020 Minuteman started a monthly support group to provide an affirming, confidential opportunity for caregivers to share experiences, learn from others and reduce the social isolation that can accompany caregiving.

As we consider the needs of family caregivers going forward, we want to focus on the following areas:

- **Caregiver Support:** Supporting caregivers through organized support groups, especially for underserved populations including LGBTQ+, other languages and other ethnic backgrounds.
- **Respite:** Being able to locate and in some cases offer financial assistance with respite to be able to provide caregivers a chance to recharge.
- **Technology:** Offer access and training in order to keep consumers connected to friends, family and services.

b) **Nutrition Services:** Food security is vital to the well-being of every person, but imagine you have limited mobility, limited income and limited means of transportation – how does one then get needed food? This is especially true of underserved BIPOC populations, as identified in several resources including the 2019 Lahey Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment and the 2018 Emerson Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment as well as the Black Lifetime Matters Report which reported nationally 43% of Older Black Adults were unsure that they could put enough food on the table over the course of 4 weeks, compared to 19% of Older White Adults. An important program that is funded through Title III of the Older Americans Act is the Meals on Wheels Program. This program is vital to the communities Minuteman serves and helps to reduce food insecurity as well as provide social interaction and safety checks.

Among the 1,500 older adults Minuteman serves through MOW each year, 75% say their delivered meal was their main meal of the day and nearly 80% say their delivered meal helps them to remain living independently in their homes. One-third live alone with no one to regularly check on them aside from their MOW driver. Our volunteer drivers have arrived at consumers' homes to find an older adult who has fallen to the floor and is unable to move. They have called the fire department in just enough time to contain a potentially disastrous fire and have found consumers unresponsive and in need of emergency medical assistance. While some of the consumers Minuteman serves are recovering from surgery and benefit from MOW on a temporary basis, most have a long-term need and receive meals five days a week over the course of years.

Another important service that was introduced to our Nutrition Program is the Medical Nutrition Therapy model of having a registered dietician provide dietary support to people diagnosed with diabetes or renal disease. As part of this program our Registered Dietician is able to meet several times with consumers who have these identified health conditions and talk with them about setting health and dietary goals as part of their overall well-being plan.

The Administration for Community Living has supported the Nutrition Program here at Minuteman through Title III funds for many years, which has helped with food insecurity issues that face many in our catchment area. Our Congregate Meal Program has helped to provide social interaction and a warm, nutritious meal to thousands of people over the

years. This past year, due to the pandemic, Minuteman was forced to close the doors of our congregate meal sites, many of which were hosted by local Councils on Aging, but this in turn gave us the chance to think creatively with our community partners about how to continue meeting the needs of those who have participated in this program. Minuteman also heard feedback from consumers who were mobile and wanted to continue receiving lunch through this program and not our Meals on Wheels Program, which helped to inspire our Grab and Go Program. Consumers who wanted to receive a lunch from us were able to continue to do so by driving their car through our “drive up” delivery system for a contact free meal. This concept of the Grab and Go model has helped to focus our agency on the need to be able to offer choices, which is something we hope to better incorporate over the next several years through use of technology and our Change of Condition program (as mentioned previously). Moving forward, Minuteman hopes to expand what we offer to consumers for meal choices, as well as build on our successful model of congregate meal offering to the Indian community. Over the past four years Minuteman was able to replicate our Indian meal program at the Burlington Council on Aging and the Lexington Council on Aging. Our goal is to be able to meet the needs of a more diverse population through choice and local partnerships. Minuteman also plans to increase access to our registered dietician, so that for consumers in need of a nutrition consult, we are able to provide help with education and support.

- c) ***Healthy Living Programs:*** These are evidence-based programs that are intended to help provide people with support, education and tools to be able to live healthier lives. Minuteman has partnered with Councils on Aging, faith communities and local medical providers to offer evidence based programs that have included, Chronic Pain Self Management, Diabetes Self Management, A Matter of Balance Fall Prevention, Powerful Tools for Caregivers, Savvy Caregiver and Tai Chi for Health. Many of these classes have been led by trained volunteers or Minuteman staff and are often requested year after year by community partners as they continue to bring people in who often are seeking support and resources for health concerns or in their role as a caregiver. Moving forward our plan is to hire a full time Healthy Aging Coordinator to enhance our existing offering of classes and provide more outreach and specific programs to underserved populations including programs that might be offered in other languages and to populations such as LGBTQ+ caregivers.

- d) ***Supportive Programs:*** Minuteman Senior Services provides several grants under our Title IIIB Supportive Program. As part of the Older Americans Act, we are required to provide legal services to those in our planning and service area (PSA). Minuteman provides a grant currently to Greater Boston Legal Services— they provide free civil legal services to those age 60 and over and priority is given to those who are lower income, BIPOC, limited English proficiency and living in rural areas. In FFY20 they provided legal services to over 70 individuals in our PSA. Minuteman also provides grant funding for identified need in our area of transportation. In FFY21 Minuteman provided a grant for Cooperative Elder Services to support transportation needs to and from their Adult Day Programs. Going forward Minuteman will continue this grant in FFY22 and have added additional funding to allow us to support Evergreen Adult Day

Health Program with program that will allow participants to attend faith services, shopping trips and non-emergency medical trips.

Information and Referral services also receive Title IIIB funding under supportive services. This program is often referred to as the hub of the agency, as this is where all calls are received and triaged to determine how we can best help support the needs and requests of callers. In FY21 our Information and Referral Dept. received over 5,500 calls. Our calls come from consumers themselves, family members, professionals in the community and community members looking for information on long-term care services and programs. In FY22 Minuteman has added additional staffing to this department as our goal is to deliver great customer service in a timely manner and continue to have updated resources available to callers and to staff at our agency. Minuteman will also continue to train staff on use of translation services and making sure we have information and resources available to consumers in the language of their choice.

- e) ***Ombudsman Program:*** Our Ombudsman Program is dedicated to the mission of advocating for the rights of consumers in long-term care facilities in our sixteen communities. This program is comprised of a Program Director and volunteer Ombudsman who are trained by the state Long-term Care Ombudsman Program to visit and meet with consumers and families who are residing in long-term care facilities. In the past year and a half the pandemic has been devastating to this particular population. Our Ombudsman Program was forced to stop in person visits at facilities and change to over the phone conversations with residents who were able to do so, and daily check ins with facility staff members. In FY21 the Ombudsman Program met with over 620 residents (this number does not include phone calls to residents). It has been a particularly difficult time for long-term care residents and their families, with lack of in person visits allowed and fear of COVID-19. Moving forward to FY22 in person visits have been allowed (vary depending on positive case numbers from facility to facility) and our Ombudsman Program volunteers will continue to advocate for resident rights.

2) Participant-Directed/Person Centered Planning - For over 45 years, Minuteman Senior Services has been a resource for connecting people to long-term supports and services by offering conflict-free options that place the person at the center of their planning. This is core to our mission and operationalized through each of the programs and services we offer. Minuteman strives to empower consumers, to the greatest extent possible, to engage in goal setting and decision making as this relates to their care.

Our Options Counselors support individuals aged 18 and over who have needs for long-term care and supports through identification of goals, care plan development and accessing community resources. The intervention is short-term, with the objective of connecting consumers with the resources necessary to achieve their long-term goals. Often, our Options Counselors become involved at a time of crisis, which might be a change in medical or functional status, or there is a risk of housing and/or homelessness. As cited in several of our Needs Assessment activities, including the Metro Boston Housing Report, affordable housing options are extremely limited in our catchment area as well as surrounding communities. Challenges to affordable housing have only been further complicated by the pandemic, particularly for low-income individuals and communities of color; Metro Housing saw a 47% increase in households assisted by Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT). Many who have lost jobs or income because of the pandemic have been at greater risk of evictions or homelessness. Though a State and Federal moratorium on evictions was enacted to prevent evictions, the impacts of the pandemic on housing security will be felt for many years. Going forward, one of our goals as an agency is to enhance the availability of the Options Counseling program to low income and underserved populations by exploring different partnerships with local housing authorities as well as with other community partners.

3) Elder Justice - Minuteman's commitment to protecting the rights and safety of elders in our community includes those who are in long-term care facilities. The Ombudsman Program is responsible for advocating for the rights of long-term care residents and their family members. The Ombudsman Program Director is often involved in Family Council meetings at facilities as a way to help residents and their loved ones understand their rights and help advocate for themselves and their loved ones. Over the past year nursing homes in all areas across the country have been devastated by death rates due to COVID-19. The sixteen long-term care facilities in our catchment area have not been immune to this devastation. In 2020, Minuteman saw most of our facilities lose residents to COVID-19 and close their doors to all visitors in an effort to help protect the residents in their care. For the Ombudsman Program this meant needing to find a different way to help support residents and their families. This was mostly done telephonically, involving close contact with staff at facilities, to ensure that residents were continuing to receive good care and have some contact with loved ones. Information about the program was mailed to residents at every long-term care facility and our Ombudsman Program Director remained available and in contact with family members and residents to help answer questions. Minuteman is starting to see a bit of light at the end of this long, long year with new guidelines allowing residents to have visitors, and the Ombudsman Program is now allowed to return to visiting facilities. What has been wonderful is seeing connections being made and residents of long-term care facilities once again being able to see loved ones, as well as Ombudsman volunteers returning to their important work.

Minuteman Senior Services also continues to help advocate for the legal representation and needs of those age 60 and over who reside in our catchment area. Through Title III funds from the Older Americans Act, Minuteman was able to provide grant funding to Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS). The COVID pandemic, along with the economic crisis of the past year, disproportionately affected older adults including those residing in nursing homes, older adults experiencing homelessness, and older adults in underserved communities. GBLS's focus over the next several years will be to address some of these issues in the following ways:

- Continue to work with elders at risk of eviction to stabilize their tenancies, and partner with Minuteman and other community-based organizations to help them access the benefits, services, and supports they need to age in place and avoid homelessness or premature institutionalization in a nursing home.
- Continue to assist older adults by helping them access the critically important social determinants of health they are entitled to. For example, Minuteman can combat food insecurity by getting people on SNAP and we can help chronically ill elders age in place by accessing Frail Elder Waivers.

Needs Assessment Summary

The Needs Assessment activities are a vital part of Minuteman’s development of our Area Plan and a critical tool in how we create our goals, strategies and funding priorities for the next four years. The Needs Assessment activities take place about six months before our final Area Plan is submitted to the Executive Office of Elders Affairs. As part of our strategy for how Minuteman determines what data and what focus groups to include as part of our Needs Assessment activities, we look at how we can best incorporate information from underserved populations including low-income elders, BIPOC elders, LGBTQ+ elders, limited English proficiency elders, socially isolated and rural elders. Our goal is to include all stakeholders in the discussion regarding what the needs are of those aged 60 and over and their caregivers. Given the time frame in which we started this process, many things have changed as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and Minuteman as an agency has learned a lot, both about the population we serve and just how essential our programs and services are. In previous years Minuteman would host in-person meetings and focus groups and attend community presentations, but the development of this Area Plan was vastly different in that all of these activities were performed virtually, which does not allow for all community members to have access or ability to participate. Minuteman was aware of these inequities going into the development of our Needs Assessment activities, which helped us to pivot a bit and use existing data sources and mailings for surveys to those who may not have access to technology for virtual meetings.

In the fall and winter of 2020 Minuteman Senior Services conducted several virtual focus groups, as well as received information and feedback from the following underserved populations and data sources:

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQ+) Elders (participated in the LGBTQ Pride Across Generations Program on zoom with over 40 participants on September 29, 2020)
- Low Income Elders and Caregivers (over 500 surveys returned from home care consumers and submitted via our website)
- Southeast Asian Elders (15 people attended this virtual focus group held on November 1, 2020)
- Disabled Adults (Participated in MBTA Public Hearing meeting on zoom with over 100 participants on December 2, 2020)
- Data from the following sources:
 - Metro Housing Boston, Helping a Region in Need 2020 Impact Report²
 - UMASS Boston, The Gerontology Institute, McCormick Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies, Black Lifetimes Matter: How Systemic Racism Shapes the Lives of Older Black Adults³
 - The MA Dept. of Public Health- DPH COVID-19 Health Equity Advisory Group: Recommendations, DPH Potential Actions & Updated Data Release Report⁴

² https://www.metrohousingboston.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MHB_Impact2020_FNL-SCROLL.pdf

³ https://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/centers_institutes/nantucket/P6_UMass_Disparities_Whitepaper_0720.pdf

⁴ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dph-covid-19-health-equity-advisory-group-recommendations-data-release-dph-response/download>

Areas of Concern Identified:

Amongst respondents to surveys and participants in Needs Assessment stakeholder sessions, the four areas of most concern were: 1) Transportation, 2) Social Isolation, 3) Economic Security and 4) Housing. Historically Transportation, Economic Security and Housing have all been in the top areas of concern identified, but this Needs Assessment came at a time of increased social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has especially affected older adults. Older adults have been especially hit hard during the pandemic, and we are likely just starting to see and hear how difficult the social isolation over the past year has been for this population, as well as how it has affected the physical health, mental health, nutrition and overall well-being for many people. In March of 2020 a State of Emergency was declared in Massachusetts, this resulted in a dramatic shift in daily activities and availability of resources. Many stores closed their doors, grocery stores were open but had limited supplies available, people were asked to stay home and when they did go out, they needed to wear masks. For older adults there was the added fear that the pandemic was especially deadly for those with weakened immune systems, co-morbidity factors or advanced age.

Transportation can be defined as having adequate access to either private or public transportation that is affordable and meets the needs of the consumer. Seven of the sixteen communities in our planning and service area (PSA) do not have access to public transportation because there is no MBTA access in their communities. Many consumers depend on their Council on Aging (COA) or other municipal transportation options, which often are limited and run on a very specific route or schedule. 52% of the 514 survey respondents in our communities depend on friends and relatives to be able to provide transportation to the store or to medical appointments (Minuteman Survey Results), but for many what is missing is the ability to access transportation for social engagements and attendance at faith community services.

During our Needs Assessment activities Minuteman attended an MBTA Public Hearing on Disability Access, which made very clear how the pandemic worsened an already difficult system for those with disabilities. Among some of the concerns were that because of the pandemic, many public busses were forced to close their front passenger entrances and only use the rear ones, which made it increasingly more difficult for those with disabilities including limited sight or mobility issues to access public transit. Some of these issues have been remedied, but much more work needs to continue to be done to allow for easy access to public transit for all passengers. At the public hearing the MBTA announced that moving forward they have plans to increase elevators available at sites where needed and plans for continuous maintenance to keep all working properly. They have also started to pilot new initiatives including better access on busses for those in wheelchairs.

Another identified concern is for people needing to get to medical appointments that are outside of the town they reside in when COA van or volunteer transportation services are limited to local only. Minuteman continues to offer transportation through our home care program for those needing help getting to medical appointments. One program that has recently been launched by a local COA is a pilot program with Uber to help offer financial support to residents who need it and help with setting up transportation for those who may not be able to themselves. As part of our commitment to increasing transportation options Minuteman Senior Services will look to

provide Title III grant funding through the Older Americans Act to help support this identified need.

Through our Needs Assessment activities Minuteman expected to see an increase in respondents saying social isolation was a concern, but we were surprised at just how many people identified this as a need or a contributing factor to their needs. In listening to several focus group conversations over the last six months, social isolation was a concern voiced by many participants. This has also been shown to be an issue of concern before the pandemic, as identified in the 2018 Emerson Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment and the 2019 Lahey Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment. As a direct result of this information, Minuteman has started a pilot program called Social Connections and one of the services that is provided through this program is Friendly Visitors. Minuteman is currently piloting this program with five volunteers who will be matched with Minuteman Home Care consumers. The goal of this program is to provide social interaction to some of our more isolated consumers and help with some essential errands they may have. The volunteer will spend one to two hours a week either on the phone or in person with consumer and may do small errands or grocery shopping runs for consumer.

In the fall of 2020 one of the Needs Assessment activities we participated in was a focus group that was comprised of local Council on Aging (COA) Directors. Many of the local COA Directors voiced concern for residents in their communities who were faced with social isolation as a direct result of the pandemic and how these residents would be able to communicate with loved ones, how would they get groceries, how would they engage with their health care providers and how would they continue to participate in social activities. At this point in time, many COAs had started to provide virtual options for residents such as meeting with the town social worker or continuing exercise, cooking and other types of classes and presentations online; but some were concerned about residents not having access to or understanding how to use technology. Some communities had great support through grants and other funds available, so were able to offer some help to residents who needed it. Minuteman Senior Services had also been having this same conversation at the state level, as this had been an identified need during the pandemic across the state. Minuteman was fortunate to receive grant funds that have enabled us as an agency to also be able to support technology needs for consumers in our communities. Minuteman has also created a resource to be able to support the needs of consumers who may need help in learning how to use technology. Minuteman did this by partnering with the Councils on Aging in our area and creating a resource list of what already is in place in their communities to help with this identified need. For those communities that do not have this resource, Minuteman has provided support through some of our grant funds.

Economic Security can be defined as having enough means to cover some of the basics such as food, rent/mortgage, medications, health care and other essentials. 40% of what keeps a person healthy is defined as social and economic factors (MA Department of Public Health COVID-19 Health Equity Advisory Group: Recommendations, DPH Potential Actions and Updated Data Release Report). For many people financial planning for retirement is a scary thought, and with a pandemic which for many meant the loss of a job or income, everything was then magnified. For some this meant the inability to meet their rent or mortgage obligations, possibly leading to

eviction. There have been several programs put in to place to help support people in these situations, but the concern is that these funds cannot sustain people long-term.

As mentioned above, housing is a real concern for many in Minuteman's PSA; for these people it can be defined as lack of affordable housing options, inability to pay rent or mortgage and concern for eviction, especially once the moratorium is over, and for many living in their own homes the inability to pay for needed home repairs. In our PSA Minuteman has several communities that have a higher-than-average annual income, but many residents of those same communities have been living in the same homes for many decades and are what some refer to as "house rich income poor", and often have limited alternative options. Based on 2019 census data the median income for people aged 45-64 who live in our PSA is \$163,739 and the median income for those aged 65 and over is \$70,229. 45% of the 514 survey respondents report living in their own homes, and of those reporting living in their own homes 68% reported needing home repairs.

Additional areas of concern that were reported were the following:

- **Family Caregiver Support:** 50% of the 514 survey respondents reported they are a caregiver for someone else, whether it be a family member residing in their home or someone they are a caregiver for outside of their home. For many caregivers the pandemic enhanced their isolation and limited, in some cases, the services and supports that were available to them to help with respite. Some caregivers may not be aware of community supports and programs that are available, and others may have accessed services and supports but are still seeking additional help to care for loved ones.
- **Long-Term Care Supports:** Our Needs Assessment activities suggest approximately 27% of the 514 survey respondents are interested in learning more about what types of long-term care programs and services exist as they plan for their future or the future of a loved one. Caregivers and consumers may not be aware that there are community supports and programs to help keep people in the environment where they wish to be; this may be in their own home, in a relative's home, subsidized housing or long-term care facilities.
- **Mental Health Services:** Self reporting suggests that many older adults are experiencing feeling anxious and depressed. This may be directly tied to the pandemic, but regardless there continues to be a distinct need for broader access to mental health services, including being able to offer in-home services and crisis intervention services.
- **Personal Security:** Our Needs Assessment activities revealed that there is a continuing need for open and honest conversations about diversity and lack of diversity in many of our program and service options, and for people of any race, color, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and faith to feel welcomed and supported by agencies such as Minuteman and other community partners. According to the Black Lifetimes Matter: How Systemic Racism Shapes the Lives of Older Black Adults, "The accumulation of life-course experiences shaped by inequity result in Black Americans being at higher risk of entering later life with few financial resources, little or no pension income and poorer health" (UMASS Boston, The

Gerontology Institute, McCormick Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies, Black Lifetimes Matter: How Systemic Racism Shapes the Lives of Older Black Adults).

- ***Support to Underserved Populations: LGBTQ+ Older Adults:*** During one of Minuteman’s Needs Assessment activities, which was attending an event called “LGBTQ Pride Across Generations”, it was made clear that the stories and lived experiences of the LGBTQ+ community are important to share with younger generations, as well as stories from other marginalized populations such as the Black LGBTQ+ community. Minuteman will continue to help provide events and programs that support the LGBTQ+ community; examples of ways we have been doing this and will continue to do this are through our partnerships with local Councils on Aging and Faith Communities that have active LGBTQ+ membership, as well as supporting events such as “Coming Out Across the Generations”, which is an ongoing event that allows people to tell their coming out stories and how the generation that they belong to and the historical events during that time helped to shape their coming out story. In 2020 Minuteman also hired an LGBTQ+ Initiative Coordinator (this was a time limited grant funded position from the Foundation for Metrowest) to help us continue our outreach efforts and to help us provide education to staff and volunteers around being a welcoming agency. Minuteman will continue this work going forward with plans partner with other agencies to bring an LGBTQ+ meal site to our area and provide support to LGBTQ+ caregivers through support groups and Healthy Living Programming.

Funding Priorities for FFY2022-2025

Minuteman Senior Services has set forth the following funding priorities for Title III funds for FFY2022-2025 based on the results of the Needs Assessment.

Title IIIB – Supportive Services:

- Invest additional funding to increase transportation and legal services grants.
- Increase additional staffing for Information and Referral Specialists to be able to provide timely and up to date resources to callers and support efforts around outreach and emergency preparedness planning.
- Fund pilot housing search and assistance support with community partners as a proactive measure to support planning for housing transitions.
- Fund pilot mental health program(s) with community partners to expand access of services to residents through partnerships with local mental health providers.
- Redesign agency website and marketing materials to expand awareness and access to aging and disability resources, including ensuring translation of key vital documents and information into multiple languages.

Title IIIC – Nutrition Services:

- *Home Delivered Meals* -
 - Continue to strengthen our Change of Condition Program which provides timely information to staff regarding consumer well-being.
 - Enhance options for Home Delivered Meals that include more diverse ethnic offerings.
 - Enhance program infrastructure to support program growth and daily operations through the hiring of a Site Supervisor and additional paid drivers.
- *Congregate Meal Program* - Work with other community partners to create an LGBTQ+ meal site to support the needs of our diverse community.
- *Nutrition* - Look at ways Minuteman can partner with Councils on Aging and other entities to deliver nutrition and wellness events, such as cooking demonstrations.

Title IIIE – Caregiver Support Program:

- Provide scholarship funds to help support needs of caregivers. This can include, but is not limited to, respite services, equipment, transportation, educational programming and technology access.

FFY2022-2025 Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Expand our Reach and Service Delivery to Underserved Populations, Including Persons Under Age 60; Disabled; Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOC) Communities and the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBTQ+) Community.

- Establish key performance indicators to measure program utilization by diverse communities and develop interventions to expand outreach and awareness to diverse populations.
- Build on the work and efforts made by our LGBTQ+ Initiative Coordinator by collaborating with other LGBTQ+ programs in our area to better support ongoing programming such as virtual support groups.
- Develop a plan to establish an LGBTQ+ meal site in our service area.
- Advocate for better transportation options and help fund non-medical transportation for vulnerable consumers.
- Establish an ongoing agency-wide plan that addresses mandatory adherence to offering interpreter services and establishes a plan for materials to be translated and identify other meaningful ways to improve access and engagement of services.
- Strengthen representation of Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOC) on our Board of Directors, Advisory Council, and amongst our employees to align with the diverse population of our communities.

Goal #2: Measure the Effectiveness, Quality Outcomes and Value of Older American's Act (OAA) Core Programs and How They Impact Population Health Management.

- Leverage utilization data sources, such as Patient Ping, to understand program interventions and inform the development of quality outcome measures.
- Adopt evidence-based population health goals and objectives, health indicators, and measurements of social determinants of health (SDOH) to analyze the effectiveness of Older Americans Act (OAA) core programs in comparison to state and national data sources.
- Redesign program to measure consumer satisfaction with different survey modalities to better enhance consumer experience with OAA core programs and with Minuteman as an agency.

Goal #3: Emergency Preparedness; Be Able to Adapt, Respond and Support Consumers During a Pandemic or Other Extended State of Emergency.

- Learn from what has happened over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and how Minuteman can better align our policies, procedures and disaster plan to better address needs of the consumers we serve.
- Establish ways in which Minuteman as an Area Agency on Aging can play an important part in information distribution and/or vaccine distribution.
- Enhance our existing partnerships with community responders such as Councils on Aging to ensure Minuteman has good lines of communication and protocols in place to support all consumers in our area in an emergency.

Goal #4: Support Programming and New Initiatives That Address Social Determinants of Health.

- Build on the work being done in Nutrition around Change of Condition to establish best practices and see how Minuteman can use these in other programs.
- Provide additional supports around housing tenancy through housing search resources and additional funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to provide free legal services to address increase in public housing and low-income housing evictions cases and also implement new program with several housing authorities to address services for those at-risk losing housing.
- Build on existing Social Connections program to increase friendly visiting options and explore other ways to reduce social isolation for those at risk in our communities, including providing tool kits that can be delivered by friendly visitors to help combat isolation. Also look at ways Minuteman can help provide access to technology including devices and training to help connect consumers with friends, loved ones and medical resources.