

MCOA News

MCOA 116 Pleasant Street, Room 306, Easthampton MA 01027 tel: 413.527.6425 email: Janiece@mcoaonline.com

Notes from the Executive Director: December 2009

Please Circulate to Your Staff

MCOA's Weather Cancellation Policy: As we 'enjoy' this winter season, MCOA would like to reiterate its weather cancellation policy. In the advent of inclement weather, MCOA may choose to cancel/ reschedule an event. Attendees should call our telephone numbers for a recorded message on the status on any meeting, 24 hours prior to that meeting: 413.527.6425

UpComing Meetings:

Staff Certification Training Dec. 18th Milford COA

This is a mandatory training for those participating in the 2010 Staff Certification Process.

Please join us on Friday, December 18 @ 9:30 AM-11:30 AM

at the Milford Senior Center 60 N. Bow Street, Milford MA

for a Required (Start-Up) Certification Workshop - Coffee and donuts provided!

Please RSVP to Joanne Moore (so that we make sure we have enough printed materials!)

at Joannemoore@duxburycoa.com or call at 781-934-5774 x 102

Enclosed in This Mailing:

- **Important COA Survey on Budget Cuts - Complete & Return immediately *last page***
- **MCOA is Going Paperless January 1st - Understand the Change**
- **Changes to the Ethics Law - It effects YOU!**
- **Legislative Update: Cuts Restored - Outlook Improves *Slightly***
- **Links to follow the National Health Care Debate**
- **MCOA Supports H4225 regarding Property Tax Relief**
- **Regular Columns: Including UpComing Events, Member Request, Personnel Updates, Grant Opportunities, Scam Alerts & Survey Requests**
- **Program Updates from DTA (SNAP Program), SSA COLA, MA RMV Winter Driving Tips, and from the AG's Office on Charitable Giving Tips**
- **MCOA Calendar - Log these dates into your 2010 Planner**
- **Important Flyer for Consumers from the Fire Marshall on Home Oxygen Safety**
This flyer is available to download in both b/w and color from our website at www.mcoaonline.com

The Kiosk Project Goes Online: Good News - Our state web site liaison was able to secure a shorter, friendlier direct URL name for the new *Civic Engagement: Work, Serve and Learn* website.

It is www.mass.gov/elder/civicingagement. This will make it a bit easier for media outreach as well as linking consumers directly to it. Please check out this important website. Your comments are welcome. This winter we will be asking you to provide an on-site link to this website on a public computer at your senior center. This site will eventually provide links and information on employment opportunities, civic engagement, lifelong learning, state and federal benefits, and available transportation. *This is a work in progress.* Instructions on how to create a shortcut will follow shortly. For now enjoy and please thank Mary Kay Browne, Senior Project Director at EOEA for all her hard work. Comments to david@mcoaonline.com and Mary.K.Browne@state.ma.us

Changes to MCOA Publications: Effective Immediately

Have you read the Latest News?

The Latest News: MCOA Briefs, MCOA News, and Focal Points — The latest version of each are posted as links on MCOA’s Home Page at www.mcoaonline.com

Please inform your staff and Board members of the changes listed below.

1. **MCOA Briefs** (our weekly info-sharing blast) is updated and posted by noon on Friday – the first section contains new material with items “*Worth Repeating*” listed after the break. Members will receive a notice by email but now must go to the link to read MCOA Briefs.
2. **MCOA News** (our monthly newsletter) will be posted by the 15th of each month. Legislative Alerts, News, Member Requests, Surveys, UpComing Events, and Personnel Updates are regular columns in this publication. **Unless you previously indicated you wanted to get a hard copy of MCOA News — this will be your last hard copy issue — you must go online to read or download MCOA News starting January 15, 2010.**
3. **Focal Points** (our biannual magazine) will be published in February and September in 2010. Member COAs will still receive 5 hard-copies by mail to distribute to elected officials *within* their community. All other members will receive one hard-copy. Focal Points will also be accessible online by February 15th and September 15th.

These changes will reduce our carbon footprint, save \$\$\$ on copying and postage, and potentially will lead to a wider audience as these documents will now be available to more readers online. Go to www.mcoaonline.com Set us up as one of your “**Favorites**” Pages and check us out at least weekly for the most up-to-date info to help you with the operation of your COA. At our Home Page look for this section which dates the latest publication.

— The Latest News —

MCOA Briefs – December 11

MCOA Newsletter — December 2009

Focal Points Fall 2009

MCOA Briefs: The Listening Tours Continue

Elder Affairs Secretary Ann Hartstein and UnderSecretary Sandy Albright are joined by MCOA Executive Director David P. Stevens in Worthington to listen to concerns from Representatives of the Hilltown Consortium and Southern Hilltown Consortium



MCOA Briefs: Ethics Law

Many of you are asking for assistance on the new Ethics Law. Thanks to new Board Member Donna Popkin and Vice President Barbara Farnsworth for the specific relevant passages from the Ethics Commission website.

In short, all employees and your COA Board (because they are a ‘policy making body’) must take the online test by April 2, 2010 and receive a Certificate of Completion.

Volunteers who work at your COA are not required to take this test. The specific references can be found at:

http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=ethterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Education+and+Training+Resources&L2=Mandatory+Training+Requirements+-+Summaries%2c+Online+Training%2c+and+Implementation+Procedures&sid=Ieth&b=terminalcontent&f=pubed_mandatory_education_training_implementation&csid=Ieth

Or Go to:

1. www.mass.gov
2. left column go to **Government Links** and click on **State Government**
3. click on **Alphabetical List, All Branches**
4. click on **Ethics Commission**
5. In Middle Gray Box (under Education and Training Resources) click on Mandatory Training Requirements (also scroll down and later read Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law for Municipal Employees)
6. Under Mandatory Education and Training Requirements — READ IT ALL CAREFULLY

Relevant Passages

i. Positions for Which Online Training Is Required

- All elected public positions, whether compensated or uncompensated.
- **All compensated, full-time public employee and official positions.**
- **All compensated, part-time public employee and official positions,** (except for temporary or seasonal employee positions in which employees do not have or exercise governmental authority **and** do not participate in or have responsibility for government decision-making, contracting, hiring, investigation or any other discretionary governmental action, as set forth below in subsection ii).
- **Any position, including volunteer positions, whether chosen by election, appointment or otherwise, in which the employee personally serves in or provides services to a public agency, whether paid or unpaid, and participates in or has responsibility for any government decision-making, contracting, hiring, investigation or any other discretionary government action or otherwise has or exercises governmental authority.**

ii. Positions Exempted from the Online Training Requirement

(Note: Employees in these positions must still be given summaries of the law.)

Unpaid volunteer positions in which employees do not have or exercise governmental authority and do not participate in or have responsibility for government decision-making, contracting, hiring, investigation or any other discretionary governmental action.

MCOA Briefs: Ethics Law *continued*

ii. Positions Exempted (*continued*)

Examples:

- library volunteer positions in which employees reshelve books or read books to children during a story hour;
- school volunteer positions in which employees come into the schools a few times a year to help with parties and projects, shelve books in the school library, or chaperone field trips and other school events;
- volunteer positions in which employees pick up litter at parks or beaches, or participate in a town “Clean Up Day”;
- Senior Center or Parks and Recreation volunteer teacher positions;

Additional Specific Directions

1. Read entire page but specifically see Section 2
2. All persons who were state, county, or municipal employees as of September 29, 2009, and continue to be so employed, and all persons who become state, county, or municipal employees between September 29, 2009 and March 3, 2010, must complete the Commission’s online training, and provide certificates of completion to their employers, as defined herein, on or before April 2, 2010.
3. Employees can complete the training on work time and on their work computers. If authorized by their employers, employees can also complete the training on their home computers.
4. Employers can organize group online training sessions. The designated municipal liaison or his or her designee shall supervise municipal group online training sessions. The appointing authority of a state or county agency or his or her designee shall supervise state and county group online training sessions. Group sessions may use the online training program from the Commission’s website, so long as the group format is set up so as to ensure that every employee knows the correct answer to every question by the end of the training. Employers who organize group sessions should print the on-line training completion certificate and distribute it to employees, and collect the filled-out on-line training completion certificates. Alternatively, the municipal liaison or other person supervising the group training can fill out a certificate of completion for all participating employees, and he or she should sign and date the form.
5. Employers need not choose only one of these methods, but can combine methods as they find convenient to reach all employees. The Commission also invites employers to propose other means of achieving compliance; if approved by the Commission, these alternative means will also satisfy the online training requirement.
6. Each employee who completes the on-line training should print out the certificate of completion showing that he or she has done so, and give it to his or her employer, as follows

Registering As A Lobbyist

In addition, MCOA suggests that you also investigate whether you need to register as a lobbyist. The new Ethics Law changed definitions and timelines, so you may be affected. In short, if you have more than 25 hours (cumulative) of ‘contact’ with the legislature, or spend more than \$2500 on ‘lobbying’ within a six-month period, you need to register as a “Legislative Agent”. Also if during a six-month period you have more than 25 hours of ‘contact’ with any staff of state agencies you probably will have to register as an ‘Executive Agent’. More details can be found at the Secretary of State’s web site at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/pre/prelob/lobfaq.htm>

MCOA Legislative Update

Some FY10 Budget Cuts Reversed — Outlook Improves

Message from the Governor via Secretary Hartstein

As many of you know, this afternoon the Governor announced unexpected revenues from a significant tax settlement agreed to this week by DOR (see press release below). Based on this additional revenue, the Governor has instructed the Office of Medicaid to cease implementation of recently announced plans to limit services and increase co-payments in the MassHealth program.

To summarize: the adult dental program, podiatry services, PCA services, and day habilitation services will all remain intact and provided for, without limitations or restructuring of the benefit. Rates will not be reduced for day habilitation programs, adult foster care, group adult foster care, community health centers, and clinical labs. There will be no additional co-payments on office visits, dental services or non-emergency transportation, and co-pays will not be increased on the pharmacy products.

No doubt, we continue to face significant budget challenges, but this unexpected opportunity will afford us some additional breathing room so that we can maintain our current level of services and supports for MassHealth members at this time.

– Ann L. Hartstein, Secretary Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs

<http://www.bluemassgroup.com/frontPage.do>

Surprisingly good news on unemployment: MA doing way better than the rest of the U.S.

by: [David](#)

Thu Nov 19, 2009 at 11:24:46 AM EST

[Wow.](#)

The Massachusetts unemployment rate fell last month for the first time in more than two years, plunging nearly a half-percentage point as employers trimmed payrolls by just 900 jobs, the state Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development reported today. The state jobless rate dropped to 8.9 percent in October from 9.3 percent in September, the first decline since June 2007. The surprising decrease bucked the national trend, which saw the US unemployment rate soar into the double digits for the first time since the early 1980s, hitting 10.2 percent.

The news isn't good across the board, but is perhaps unexpectedly broad — particularly the construction numbers. In Massachusetts, manufacturing, retail, financial services, and other sectors continued to cut jobs, but most of those losses were offset by strong gains in two of the state's key employment sectors: professional and business services, and education and health services. The beleaguered construction industry even added 100 jobs, the first gain since February.

Great news for MA, and of course, great news for Governor Patrick. If these numbers hold up going forward, and MA continues recovering and actually *decreasing* unemployment ahead of the rest of the country, his opponents' easiest argument becomes a whole lot harder to make.

Job Opportunity — Town of West Springfield – Executive Director

The Town of West Springfield (approx. population 28,000) seeks qualified applicants for the position of Executive Director. Reporting to the Mayor, this individual will be responsible for providing social programs and delivery of services by administering and supervising all operations and activities to meet the social and nutritional needs of senior citizens of the community.

Job Opportunity — Town of Belmont – PT Administrative Assistant

This is a 15-hour position that could be combined with the Senior Ctr Coordinator position. Starting at \$18.46.

Job Opportunity — Town of Belmont – PT Senior Center Coordinator

This is a 25-hour position that could be combined with the Administrative position. Starting salary \$22.67.

Go to <http://www.mcoaonline.com/content/jobs/index.php> for further details and prerequisites.

MCOA Legislative Update

STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

STATE CAPITOL BRIEFS – FRIDAY, DEC. 4, 2009 STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

PATRICK: ANOTHER \$42M FOR HOMELESS, FURTHER CUTS NO LONGER NECESSARY

Two weeks after pressuring the Legislature to return to session and deal with unresolved fiscal problems or risk more cuts to state services, the Patrick administration announced plans Friday afternoon to spend \$42 million on homeless shelters and said it won't need to make more emergency budget cuts. Patrick plans to introduce a supplemental spending bill proposing \$42 million in funding for the shelters, funds administration officials say are needed to address rising caseloads and increasing costs associated with provider shelter services. The budget for emergency shelter this year was \$91.6 million. Further information about caseloads and homelessness statistics was not immediately available. Patrick's office says the emergency cuts are not necessary anymore because it plans to plug a \$120 million budget gap with \$82 million from a one-time tax settlement and \$37 million in revenues that have been collected in excess of revised benchmarks so far this fiscal year. "We had some unexpected good news this week, and it gives us some breathing room," Patrick said in a statement. The governor still wants the Legislature to grant him powers to make broader unilateral cuts throughout state government, if necessary, over the last six-plus months of the fiscal year. Patrick aides say the tax settlement was agreed to by the Department of Revenue this week. Fiscal conservatives have advised against basing annual state spending on one-time revenues, a tactic long used by state government budget writers to sustain spending initiatives. The Legislature last month sent Patrick a bill that, when combined with spending cuts and other initiatives he had executed unilaterally, were intended to solve about \$484 million worth of budgetary red ink. State budget managers in October dropped their official estimate of fiscal 2010 revenues by \$600 million. Administration budget aides say the \$42 million in supplemental spending will not throw the budget into the red. Cyndi Roy, spokeswoman for Administration and Finance Jay Gonzalez, said spending "deficiencies," mostly driven by caseload increases, are being carried on the state budget balance sheet. "We expect to manage most of these deficiencies internally through programmatic changes. Others we will have to fund with supplemental appropriations, which we have taken into account. This is one of those," Roy said. A spokesman for the Department of Housing and Community Development said family shelters were at capacity in July when the department began managing the program. There are 3,000 families in shelters, with 2,000 in permanent shelters and another 1,000 in hotels or motels. There are 2,900 individuals in shelter beds, said the spokesman, Phil Hailer. Data on homeless numbers and trend data reflecting rising demand was not readily available Friday afternoon, Hailer said.

ADMINISTRATION RETREATS FROM MEDICAID CUTS

Human services advocates are cheering a move by Gov. Deval Patrick to retreat from the administration's proposal to cut \$100 million from state Medicaid, or MassHealth. "We were obviously relieved that they had reversed their decision on these MassHealth cuts which were absolutely dreadful," said Michael Weekes, president of the Providers Council, which represents thousands of human service workers. Administration officials confirmed the decision late Friday afternoon after placing calls to human services groups informing them that the programs would remain intact thanks to an \$82 million settlement in a tax case in favor of the state. "Based on that revenue, the governor instructed to Office of Medicaid to cease the recently announced plans to limit services and increase co-pays in the MassHealth program," said Jennifer Kritz, spokeswoman for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The same revenue was also cited Friday by Patrick budget aides as enabling the administration to avoid emergency budget cuts due to a \$600 million writedown in expected tax collections. The decision spares adult dental benefits, podiatry programs, personal care attendant services and day habilitation programs, Kritz said. The cuts, administration officials said last month, were intended to partially address a \$307 million gap brought on by heavier than expected utilization of MassHealth programs. It was unclear Friday how the administration intended to address that remainder of gap in the absence of its proposal.

STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

STATE CAPITOL BRIEFS – THURSDAY, DEC. 3, 2009 STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

NOVEMBER REVENUES UP FROM LAST YEAR, BEAT BENCHMARK

Tax collections in November were up 2.7 percent over November 2008 and beat budget estimates by \$12 million, the Department of Revenue reported Thursday. That's good news for Beacon Hill budget managers, who have grown accustomed during the recession to monthly announcements of plummeting revenues and worsening budget problems. Five months into the fiscal year, tax collections are down 5.1 percent from the same period a year ago, but are running \$37 million ahead of budget benchmarks that were dropped by \$600 million on Oct. 15, spurring a wave of new budget fixes, including ongoing layoffs, additional usage of federal stimulus funds, and approval of another amnesty program to collect taxes while allowing scofflaws to pay up without penalties. During November, withholding collections ran \$20 million below benchmarks with up to \$50 million in collections attributed to a calendar-related shift that inflated the month's collections. Sales and use tax collections in November surged 22.3 percent, but would have declined 5.4 percent or \$18 million for the month if not for the summer's sales tax increase and lifting of the sales tax exemption on retail alcohol sales, department officials said. Revenue department officials said baseline meals and motor vehicle sales tax collections ran slightly ahead of a year ago but overall sales tax receipts reflected "continued softness in consumer demand."

DOR NewsRelease

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Revenue

For Release: Thursday, December 3, 2009

Contact: Robert R. Bliss – blissr@dor.state.ma.us

(617) 626-2369

November revenue collections total \$1.290 billion

Collections down \$369 million for first five months of FY10; \$37 million above revised benchmark

Revenue Commissioner Navjeet K. Bal today announced that preliminary revenue collections for November 2009 totaled \$1.290 billion, up \$33 million or 2.7 percent from last November and \$12 million above the monthly benchmark based on the October 15th revision which lowered the FY10 revenue estimate by \$600 million.

FY10 year-to-date tax collections total \$6.827 billion, down \$369 million or 5.1 percent from the same period one year ago and \$37 million above the year-to-date (YTD) benchmark based on the revised Oct. 15th revenue estimate of \$18.279 billion.

The November withholding collection totaled \$785 million, up \$11 million or 1.4 percent from November 2008, but was \$20 million below the revised benchmark. November's 1.4% withholding growth was entirely the result of a calendar-related shift that inflated the month's withholding collections by \$40-\$50 million and was reflected in the monthly benchmark; without that shift, November withholding collections would have declined by about 4.0%, similar to the decline seen in the first four months of FY10 and consistent with the October 15th revenue estimate.

As anticipated and noted in the Department's October revenue release, November's \$20 million below-benchmark result reversed most of October's \$28 million above-benchmark result, reflecting a timing-related shift that was not factored into the applicable monthly benchmarks. Overall income tax collections, factoring in refunds, were \$2 million better than a year ago but \$9 million below the monthly benchmark.

Sales and use tax collections in November totaled \$382 million, up \$70 million or 22.3 percent from a year ago and were \$6 million above benchmark. Factoring out the sales tax rate increase and the elimination of the alcohol exemption, collections would have declined 5.4 percent or \$18 million for the month, reflecting continued softness in consumer demand, although both the baseline meals and motor vehicles sales tax collections ran slightly ahead of a year ago.

November corporate and business tax collections totaled \$18 million, up \$10 million from a year ago and \$10 million above the revised benchmark.

"There are no quarterly estimated payments due for most individuals and corporations, and income and corporate tax refunds are relatively high in November, which, overall, is a small month for collections," said DOR Commissioner Bal.

"As was the case last year, collections in December and especially January, which is a big month for estimated payments, will provide a clearer view of the state's revenue picture going into the second half of FY10," she said.

YTD income tax collections are \$488 million below those of a year ago, sales and use tax collections are up \$156 million (but down 7.5 percent baseline) and corporate and business tax collections are up \$29 million (but down 1.7 percent baseline).

MCOA Legislative Update: Federal Health Care Debate

Compare Versions: Thanks to Al Norman/Mass Home Care, MCOA has posted the current analysis by NCOA and the Kaiser Family Foundation of the House and Senate versions of the Health Care Bill at our website www.mcoaonline.com The situation remains fluid with a final vote on the Senate version due by the Holiday break. Websites that track developments:

www.ncoa.org – see NCOA News

www.AARP.org – see “Latest News”

www.FamiliesUSA.org

www.KFF.org – Kaiser Family Foundation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: AARP Endorsement November 5, 2009

AARP Endorses Affordable Health Care for America Act

- Improves Benefits for People on Medicare - Makes Coverage More Affordable for Americans Age 50-64

BOSTON, MA—Today AARP announced its endorsement of the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962) and the accompanying Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act (H.R. 3961). The association’s support follows nearly two years of work with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to craft a health care reform plan that meets the needs of AARP’s nearly 40 million members and all older Americans. Among those needs are reforms that strictly curb insurance companies’ discrimination against older Americans and Medicare improvements that strengthen benefits while protecting the program for future generations.

“Our goals have always been to make health coverage more affordable for our younger members, those aged 50 to 64, and to protect Medicare for seniors,” says Deborah Banda, AARP Massachusetts state director. “Having reviewed the Affordable Health Care for America Act, we believe it meets these goals by improving benefits for people in Medicare – including closing the Medicare prescription drug coverage gap, the dreaded “doughnut hole” – and making health insurance market reforms to help ensure affordable health coverage for every American.”

Today’s endorsement marks the first time in this legislative battle that AARP has put its full weight behind a comprehensive health care reform package. In the coming days, AARP will be educating its members about the health care reform package through its publications, paid advertising and more than five million calls and e-mails to its grassroots activists.

“AARP members have made their voices heard in the health care debate, and they will continue to do so,” says Banda.

Patricia Liberti, 59, of Salem has attended town hall meetings about health reform, and has shared her personal struggles with the high cost of health care. She believes Congress must close the Medicare Part D doughnut hole. Liberti says, “I have coronary-artery disease and had to go on disability about 10 years ago. As a result, I am on Medicare and have hit the doughnut hole repeatedly. Each time, I dip into my retirement savings to pay for my medicine – which costs about \$1000 a quarter. Sooner or later, there won’t be any savings left.”

The Affordable Health Care for America Act and the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act contain critical components AARP has been fighting for on behalf of its members and all older Americans to improve health care for them and their families. They include:

- Protecting and strengthening Medicare for today’s seniors and future generations of retirees;
- Ensuring seniors can see the doctor of their choice or find a doctor if they need one by improving Medicare’s payments to doctors;
- Lowering drug costs for seniors by closing the Medicare Part D doughnut hole and allowing Medicare to negotiate with drug makers for lower drug prices;
- Taking steps to reduce waste, fraud, abuse and inefficiency in the Medicare program;
- Requiring Medicare and insurance companies to provide for important preventive services like screenings for diabetes, cancer and osteoporosis free of charge;
- Stopping insurance companies from denying you affordable coverage because of your age;
- Preventing insurance companies from denying you coverage if you have a pre-existing condition or dropping your coverage if you get sick;
- Limiting how much your insurance company can make you pay out-of-pocket;
- Providing affordable health insurance options for those who don’t have insurance; and
- Providing benefits to help seniors and people with disabilities live in their own homes and communities by establishing the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) program.

“AARP is proud to endorse the Affordable Health Care for America Act and the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act. We urge members of the House to pass this critical package in the coming days to help fix our broken health care system,” Banda concludes.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 35.5 million readers ; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's nearly 40 million members and Americans 50+; AARP Segunda Juventud, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**MCOA Legislative Alert: Property Tax Task Force
Contact Your Representatives and Senators to support this bill.**



November 9, 2009

Representative Thomas Conroy
Representative, 13th Middlesex District
State House, Room 443
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Representative Conroy:

RE: House Bill 4225

The MCOA Task Force and Coalition strongly supports H4225, and commends you for your initiative in this matter. On June 19, 2009 the membership of the Massachusetts Councils on Aging, in annual meeting, endorsed this bill enthusiastically.

As you know, H4225 corrects a long-standing conflict between two sections of the Massachusetts law: Chapter 62, Section 6k) the CIRCUIT BREAKER program adopted in 1999, and Chapter 59, Section 5, clause 41A, the DEFERRAL program which has been in effect for many years.

This conflict did not seem significant until the Commonwealth recently passed legislation enabling cities and towns to modernize the deferral program. A number of municipalities have taken advantage of this opportunity to offer our most needy seniors a benefit: age limits, income limits, and interest charges have all been liberalized in a number of towns.

As a result, more and more seniors are taking advantage of the CIRCUIT BREAKER (63,496 in 2007), and many of these would like to also take advantage of the offer to pay property taxes by taking a loan from the town. Unfortunately, borrowing from the town makes them ineligible for the circuit-breaker, while borrowing from a bank (at a much higher rate) does qualify them for the circuit-breaker.

H4225 corrects this inequity, and we urge you to continue your efforts on its behalf.

Sincerely,

Norma Simons Fitzgerald, MSW
Executive Director, Sharon Council on Aging
Co-chair, MCOA Property Tax Relief Task Force

Patricia Carty-Larkin, MA
Executive Director, Westwood Council on Aging
Co-chair, MCOA Property Tax Relief Task Force

MCOABriefs: Personnel Update

Departure: “Lauren Arms Ledwith/DTA is a recent casualty of budget cutbacks. Her years of service to low-income people, through many Administrations and many ups and downs, is impressive. Lauren was the state's architect of so many incredible initiatives that put Massachusetts Food SNAP participation growth at the top of the nation - including Bay State CAP, elimination of the FS asset test (cat el), the H-EAT initiative, and much, much more. She was also the consistent, compassionate DTA liaison to the Coalition. I am so grateful we had the opportunity to formally and publically honor her work at the Coalition this past September. She will be sorely missed. Lauren, we all salute you.” – Pat Baker/Mass Law Reform Institute

Retirement: “Hi Dave, I would like to inform you that I am retiring from my position with the City of Lawrence, effective January 8th, 2010. I have been the Executive Director for the Lawrence Council on Aging for 22 years and have enjoyed every minute of it. Since I began in 1988, we have created one of the most successful and innovative senior centers in the state. From expansion to integration to initiating many new programs and services to meet the needs of our diverse senior population, we have had the honor of receiving many awards and commendations. I have given this agency my best over the years and I am very proud of my accomplishments. It is time for me to retire, however, because it is an opportune time for someone else to lead this agency to even greater heights. While I look forward to the opportunities retirement will bring me, I will miss the many personal and professional relationships that I have developed while here, and throughout the elder network. Thank you for your cooperation and support for so many years. I wish you good fortune and good health.” Sincerely, **Barney Reilly**.

Other Retirements: Several other Directors have announced their retirements. Dorothy Hooper/Wilbraham COA left October 28th. Judy White/ Monson COA, George Heeley/ Paxton COA, Beth Kaltner/Ware COA have all indicated that they plan to retire before the end of this calendar year

Breaking News: Gail Freeman/West Springfield COA has just announced her retirement.

Welcome: New Contact in Charlemont is Camille White/COA chair camcoal@verizon.net

In Memoriam: Pat Kerrins, a dedicated, compassionate leader within our Commonwealth's Eldercare Network recently succumbed to cancer. Pat was the former Executive Director of Franklin County Home, an advocate for small and rural COAs and a frequent outside reviewer for our Staff Certification Program. Pat will be missed: “She Walked thru many lives.”

In Memoriam: Joanne Collins' mother Anne recently passed away. Joanne is the COA Director in Woburn. The Obituary is at <http://www.lynch-cantillon.com/Obituary?id=2032>.

MCOABriefs: Member Request:

Licensing fee for playing music. Does anyone know anything about licensing fees for playing music (apparently at Senior Centers, parks, I would assume schools ... any public place)? We have been getting calls from a man from BMI, saying the town is not in compliance, and we need to pay this fee. If we have to do it, I assume every other town is in the same position. It sounds similar to the video policy, but for singing or playing most ANY song that was written by someone else. They claim the royalties go back to the artists. If this is true, it must be something new. Any info you could give me would be appreciated.

Missy Dziczek/Director of the Medway COA mdziczek@townofmedway.org (508)533-3210

Property Tax Work-off Questionnaire – More responses requested – go to
<http://www.mcoaonline.com/content/consumer/property-tax.php> and reply ASAP

MCOABriefs: Member Request - Surveys

Hopkinton Salary Survey: Our new Town Manager has asked us for staffing and salary schedules of senior centers with comparable usage in the area. He is especially interested in director compensation. Ours is a medium-size center with a 14,000 sq. ft. building, town senior population of approximately 1,500 and weekly program participation (excluding volunteers) of about 200. Since we moved into our new facility 3 years ago from the basement of Town Hall, our part-time Director has not had a raise and staffing levels were only increased by the addition of one 19 hr. administrative assistant. I am sure I don't need to tell you that isn't enough! If your senior center might compare in any way, we would appreciate your response to the following questions.

Annual salary number of hours weekly
Director:

Other staff:

Approx. # of volunteers: Amount raised by fundraising:

How often do you serve lunch? Who prepares your lunch?

Budget for transportation:

Any information you can provide will help us to battle for our share of the available funds and especially to see that our director is fairly compensated. Thanks

Return info to:

Sally Almy, Assistant Director, (508) 497-9730 x 13 (508)497-3641 fax e-mail: sallya@Hopkinton.org

Veterans Survey: ELD has received an inquiry as a follow-up to a topic raised at the MCOA conference regarding the working relationships between Veterans Services Officers and COAs. We would appreciate your taking a few moments to discuss the working relationship between you as a COA and your Veterans Services Officer (VSO).

--->>> **NAME OF CITY/TOWN:** _____

#1) Do you, as COA director/coordinator, also serve as the town's VSO? () NO () YES

#1A) If **YES (optional)** please estimate the % of your time devoted to Veterans issues/concerns: _____

#2) Does anyone on your staff (e.g., outreach worker/coordinator), also serve as the town's VSO?
() NO () YES

#2A) If **YES (optional)** please estimate the % of that person's time devoted to Veterans issues/concerns:

#3) Is your **COA** an administrative part of a/the "Department of Human Services?" () NO () YES

#4) Is your **VSO** an administrative part of a/the "Department of Human Services?" () NO () YES

If you have any suggestions or comments regarding the nature/quality of working relationships between the VSO and the COA -- with or without a human services administrative structure -- please feel free to offer same. Thank you! Kindly return this email to: Moira Munns at mmunns@natickma.org and please also forward a copy to me, *Emmett H. Schmarsow* Program Manager for Councils on Aging and Senior Centers EOE, 1 Ashburton Place, 5th Fl., Boston, MA 02108 (800) 698-9723 (617) 222-7471 (617) 727-9368 (fax) emmett.schmarsow@state.ma.us

MCOABriefs: General Request

Press Request – Boston Post Cane Program: I am trying to find towns that still possess and use the Boston Post Cane, which was originally minted and distributed by the now defunct Boston Post newspaper. I'm actually working on this story for next week, most likely, so I am not sure what we will find if a query is sent out today, but you never know. I will be talking with some historical societies etc. to see what they can tell me. From your perspective, which spans all of the COAs in the state, I would be very interested in finding out if there are any other unusual or touching traditions that have arisen to recognize the oldest citizens in communities across the state. Also, why is it important to formalize some recognition for these folks – with a cane or a chair or whatever? Have you heard back from past recipients of these sorts of recognitions about what it meant to them? Thanks Kathleen "Seymour" Moore, Globe West (413) 348 8515 kathleen@moorestories.com

* * * * *

MCOABriefs: Candidate(s) Sought for Statewide Commission-PCA

Personal Care Attendant Quality Home Care Workforce Council

This is an MCOA Slot – Candidate to be recommended by us

The Council is looking for a new member. The Council, a nine-member body, meets every other month in Boston and is charged with stabilizing and improving the Personal Care Attendant workforce. Current Council projects include bargaining with the union representing PCAs and operating a web-based directory to make locating possible PCAs easier. **The new member must be a consumer of MassHealth PCA services.** If you are interested, please call David Stevens of the Massachusetts Councils on Aging at (413) 527-6425. For more information on the Council, go to www.mass.gov/pca or call Jack Boesen at 617-210-5083.

* * * * *

Discover the MCOA Bulletin Board

http://www.mcoaonline.com/members_only/mcoabb/

(Right-Click on the open Bulletin Board to save an icon to your Desktop.)

MCOA Briefs: UpComing Training Events continued

Mass. Law Reform Institute and Mass. Continuing Legal Education present the 2010 BASIC PUBLIC BENEFITS ADVOCACY TRAINING SERIES

A series of 11 trainings at MCLE in Boston for legal, social and health services, and community advocates who assist low- and moderate-income individuals and families.

Go to the [MCLE website](#) (below) for complete details and registration information.

Registration must be done through MCLE (not MLRI).

- **Cash Assistance for MA Families & Individuals: TAFDC, EAEDC & Veterans' Benefits!**
Thursday, January 14, 2010, 9:30 am to 4:00 pm
- **Food Stamps/SNAP** Tuesday, February 2, 2010, 9:30 am to 12:15 pm
- **Supports for Working Poor Families: How to Maximize Income & Reduce Expenses**
Tuesday, February 2, 2010, 1:15 pm to 4:00 pm
- **Elder Benefits Programs** Thursday, February 25, 2010, 9:30 am to 4:00 pm
- **Health Care Access Programs** Tuesday, March 16, 2010, 9:30 am to 4:00 pm
- **Immigrants & Public Benefits** Wednesday, April 7, 2010, 9:30 am to 1:00 pm www.mcle.org , then click on Featured Program box

Webinars on Depression Management

Monthly Webinar Dates: <http://www.mcoaonline.com/content/wellness/index.php>

MCOABriefs: Flu Resources

- Use the Website below from October to April to find public flu clinics in Massachusetts:
www.flu.masspro.org
- **Differences among Cold, Flu, H1N1** go to
<http://www.mcoaonline.com/content/pdf/Cold-Flu-H1N1-chart.pdf>
- **Additional resources for flu, pneumococcal, and other adult vaccinations:** Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) www.mass.gov/dph/flu
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) www.cdc.gov/flu
- **Specific to H1N1 and Seniors** – http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/vaccination/vaccine_seniors.htm

MCOA Briefs: Program Updates

Mass Eye & Ear – Safety Tips

At the MCOA Convention we were asked to provide some tips for visually and hearing impaired seniors — especially with regard to designing senior centers. Beth Grande in the Marketing Department developed the attached with the help of Lynn Bushee (Vision Rehab), Ellen O'Neil (Audiology) and Pat Carleton (Social Work). <http://www.mcoaonline.com/content/wellness/index.php>

Update on Circuit Breaker Tax

The updated Circuit Breaker and the exemptions guidelines - a generic form useful for any town have been posted at www.mcoaonline.com . We just ask that you check with the town assessor to find out what YOUR town/city has chosen for income, age, etc. where there are options on these. Feel free to download and tailor to your town's needs. Thanks to Pat Costello for her assistance. MCOA Property Tax Task Force CoChair- Norma Simons Fitzgerald, MSW, LICSW, Executive Director, Sharon Council on Aging, office: 1-781-784-8000, fax: 1-781-784-6126

MCOA Briefs: Program Updates

Update on DTA Guidelines for SNAP

TO: Food SNAP Improvement Coalition FR: Pat Baker MLRI

DTA issued guidance on Friday implementing two very important USDA approved waivers! A very big thanks to DTA for pursuing these two waivers, to USDA for approving them, and to members of our Congressional Delegation and all of the community and statewide organizations that weighed in support of these two waivers. Congratulations!

In summary:

1. Fewer face-to-face interviews at FS/SNAP application and recertification: USDA has agreed to allow Massachusetts to use phone interviews (vs. face-face interviews) for virtually all households, and to allow DTA to do so without having to document a hardship reason in the case record. This means that a household need NOT attend an interview at the local DTA office unless the household wishes to be interviewed in person, or unless there is a really good reason for DTA to schedule one in person (for ex, if the information on the application is questionable and cannot be resolved by phone, if the household does not have a phone or if there are security concerns due to domestic violence).

DTA has also clarified for staff that an in person interview cannot be required if the client is limited English proficient or has communication difficulties or disabilities. FS/SNAP workers are advised to use language lines for three-way calling, to use TTY lines, allow for an authorized rep to assist or make other accommodations if the household prefers to have a phone interview. On the other hand, if a household does want a face-face interview, that is always an option!

Field Ops Memo 2009-63 implementing this new policy is posted on the home page of MCOA at www.mcoaonline.com . Congrats to the Coalition for advocating for this initiative!

2. NO interview required for certain elder and disabled households at FS/SNAP recertification: As Coalition members know, every 12 or 24 months, most FS/SNAP households must have their benefits recertified (reviewed) by DTA to ensure they are still eligible, including a mandatory interview either by phone or in person. This USDA approved waiver is ground breaking! Massachusetts has been granted the first in the nation waiver to totally eliminate the interview at recertification of the FS/SNAP benefits for elder/disabled households who do not have earnings.

Under the terms of the waiver, there will be no interview if the recertification form is received timely, includes required proofs and the household appears eligible to continue getting FS/SNAP benefits. (If the household appears ineligible, an interview will be scheduled to provide an opportunity to clarify information that could lead to eligibility - for example, a household could report high income that in fact turns out to be a one-time lump sum payment). At its submission of the waiver, DTA estimated that roughly 42,000 FS/SNAP elder/disabled households could benefit from this policy change.

Field Ops Memo 2009-64 implementing this new policy with a handy flow chart showing how the recertification and interview process will work is posted at www.mcoaonline.com . Kudos to the Coalition for proposing and supporting this initiative!! Patricia Baker, Mass Law Reform Institute, 99 Chauncy Street, Boston, MA 02111 617/357-0700 x 328 email: pbaker@mlri.org

MCOA Briefs: Grant Opportunity

USDA Grants

Community Programs provides grants to assist in the development of essential community facilities in rural areas and towns of up to 20,000 in population. Grants are authorized on a graduated scale. Applicants located in small communities with low populations and low incomes will receive a higher percentage of grants. —

http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/cf/brief_cp_grant.htm

MCOA Briefs: Program Updates- Prescription Advantage

2010 Prescription Advantage Letters

These letters explain the Prescription Advantage benefits for 2010. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact: Kathy Campbell, Outreach Coordinator, Prescription Advantage Program, Executive Office of Elder Affairs, One Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108 — Phone: 617-222-7529 — Fax: 617-727-9368 E-Mail: Kathy.Campbell@state.ma.us

2010 Prescription Advantage Benefit Change

Important Note: Your Medicare drug plan will be sending you a premium bill each month. It is very important that you pay the bill or you could lose your Medicare prescription drug benefits!

See: <http://www.mcoaonline.com/content/wellness/prescription.php>

Prescription Advantage 2010

Prescription Advantage Final Update 17 November 2009

<http://www.mcoaonline.com/content/wellness/prescription.php>

Prescription Advantage

Information on Prescription Advantage is now available in 20 languages

To order contact

Prescription Advantage P. O. Box 15153

Worcester, MA 01615-0153 Fax: 508-793-1133

MCOA Briefs: Scam Alerts

Consumer Affairs

December 2009 Newsletter from the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation has been posted at www.mcoaonline.com. It contains many valuable tips germane to Holiday Shopping and Scam Alerts

Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Scams

NEVER provide data such as social security numbers, Medicare or other health insurance numbers, dates of birth, bank account information, and similar information to anyone unless you are absolutely certain of who is making the request. Be wary about responding to someone seeking identifying information IF YOU DID NOT INITIATE the telephone call, e-mail, written correspondence or conversation. Check previously received written materials to confirm whether the contact information seems legitimate. Please see information provided by the Attorney general about Medicare prescription drugs plans. Go to:

<http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=cagotopic&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Consumer+Protection&L2=Scams+and+Identity+Theft&sid=Cago>

If you have been victimized, contact your local police department as well as the Attorney General's Office of Public Inquiry & Assistance Center Hotline, call (617) 727-8400.

Further Information on Scams: <http://www.mcoaonline.com/content/consumer/scams.php>

CDC Phishing Scam Alert

For further information, go directly to the CDC website: http://www.cdc.gov/hoaxes_rumors.html

FedEx Scam:

There has been an e-mail going around using FedEx and an undeliverable package as the subject — I took it with a grain of salt — well, almost. I, in fact, received this e-mail 2x/day for 3 days and luckily my system spammed it. I have been expecting a deliver of a new computer so I did open one part way — when I opened it there was an attractive message "Win a new Dell computer".....that was the giveaway — today I talked with FedEx and they have nothing in their system for me.....SO BEWARE — this e-mail scam is true!!! Luckily I used my head — for a change! (Thanks to) Sandy Epperly, Worthington

MCOA Briefs: News You Can Use

A Message to COA Directors from the Office of the Attorney General

As you may know, during the holiday season the number of requests for charitable donations increases dramatically. Especially during these challenging economic times, charitable organizations need our support more than ever. The Attorney General's Office is urging residents to give, but to give wisely. Toward that end, the AGO developed materials designed to provide Massachusetts elders with information that will help them make wise decisions when donating to charities.

Our findings in the 2008 Annual Telemarketer Report revealed that of every dollar a professional solicitor raised for a charity in 2008, only 41 cents went to the charity. Our overriding theme for this project is that seniors should educate themselves before donating. They should know who the charity is, what it does, who is doing the fundraising and what portion of their donation will actually end up supporting the charity. Seniors should also know that often they can best maximize their donation's value by giving directly to the charities they wish to support.

We have supplied the material to be published in the newsletters in the form of an attachment. We will only ask for your assistance in formatting the articles to fit your newsletters' stylistic needs and would like to request to see the final formatted content before it is distributed, if possible. We would like to thank you in advance for your assistance in getting this important information out to those who will find it particularly useful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your time and consideration.

I did leave you a phone message this morning but fully understand that the weather has likely disrupted normal operations. I can be reached at 617-963-2110 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,
David Spackman, Chief
Non-Profit Organizations/Public Charities Division, Office of the Attorney General

The Attorney General's Office Encourages You to Give, but Give Wisely

Please Give

During a time when there are fewer resources to go around, our charities need support more than ever. Charitable organizations provide a large and diverse array of services which benefit our communities. All of them rely, to a varying degree, on the generosity of donors. Massachusetts residents are historically generous. The Massachusetts Attorney General's Office encourages you to give, but to give wisely.

Give Wisely

In these challenging economic times, it's more important than ever to manage your money wisely. This includes making an informed decision when giving a donation to a charitable organization. Charitable donations are important to the economy and society because they provide funding for important causes and community services. However, consumers should always do a little homework before donating to charity. One of the most important considerations is to determine how much of your donation is actually going to the service or cause you care about.

One strategy utilized to raise money is telemarketing. While telemarketers are sometimes volunteers or employees of the charity, they can also be professional solicitors that are paid by the charities to raise funds on their behalf. The Attorney General's Office encourages residents to ask the telephone solicitor how much of every dollar will go directly back to the charity.

MCOA Briefs: News You Can Use

The Attorney General's Office Encourages You to Give, But Give Wisely (continued)

The Truth about Professional Solicitation

There are no laws regulating the percentage professional fundraisers have to give back to the charity and often there is little oversight over professional solicitors. On average, less than half the money raised through paid solicitors is actually given to the charity. **Of every dollar that a professional solicitor raised for a charity in 2008, only 41 cents went to the charity.**

It's Still a Business

Professional solicitation is an industry and its function is that of any other business – to make money. Professional solicitors are hired to raise money for charities; they are not employees of the charities or volunteers. Often they are trained to use opaque language that may confuse or even deceive potential donors in order to solicit donations.

Empower Yourself

In order to maximize the value of your donation, it is generally better to avoid donating money via telemarketing solicitations altogether. Never feel obligated to donate money to anyone who calls you. You should select the charities you would like to donate to – do not allow them to select you.

Hang Up the Phone, or Ask for a Written Request

If a person calls you on the phone soliciting on behalf of a charity, it is entirely reasonable for you to ask for written materials and you should never be afraid to simply say “no thank you.” You should never feel miserly for refusing to donate through a professional solicitor. It is generally more beneficial for the charity if you donate directly to them because a larger percentage of your money goes directly to the charity and its cause.

The Path to Informed Giving

If you are passionate about a certain cause, or would like to donate to a specific charity, there are ways to do so that will maximize the value of your contribution.

Do some research to find charities that support the cause important to you. Look online for local chapters of charities and contact them directly to determine the best way to contribute so that the largest percentage of your donation goes directly to the cause.

If you are unsure whether a charity is deserving of your support, contact the AGO's Non-Profit Organizations/Public Charities Division at (617) 727-2200, ext. 2101, to find out if the charity and its fundraiser are registered to operate in the Commonwealth.

The public can also access the financial reports of charities on our website. The Public Charities Annual Filing Document Search can be found at www.mass.gov/ago/charitiesreports.

The Attorney General Office also posts online the names, locations, and contact persons of charitable organizations that consistently fail to register or file reports with the office as required by law. The website postings of those delinquent charities can be found at www.mass.gov/ago/noncompliant_charities.

MCOA Briefs: News You Can Use

Thanks to Dawn Folopoulos, Reading COA



VolunteerMatch Announces 2010 Nonprofit Training Calendar

Dear Dawn,

Did you know that VolunteerMatch offers a variety of FREE online training sessions for volunteer program managers? It's true!

Need help using VolunteerMatch?

[VolunteerMatch 101](#) provides everything you need to know about accessing and using your account. Go to

http://www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/learningcenter/#vm101?utm_source=emma&utm_medium=vm101&utm_campaign=calen (cut & paste)

New to volunteer management?

Attend one of our introductory trainings on topics like [The New Volunteer Manager's Toolkit](#) and learn the basics of volunteer recruitment and placement. Go to

http://www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/learningcenter/#toolkit?utm_source=emma&utm_medium=toolkit&utm_campaign=calen (cut & paste)

Ready to learn more?

Advanced topics like [Managing Difficult Volunteer Transitions](#) help you take your volunteer program to the next level. Go to

http://www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/learningcenter/#vt?utm_source=emma&utm_medium=voltrans&utm_campaign=calen (cut & paste)

All trainings are conducted live by experienced teachers and volunteer managers, and are held in an open format so attendees can ask questions and get the answers they need.

It's easy to participate. All you need to attend is a computer with speakers and an internet connection.

Plus, it's absolutely free.

Get Started

To check out the full 2010 schedule of topics and register for trainings, visit the [VolunteerMatch Learning Center](#). Go to <http://www.volunteermatch.org/>

Start the Year Off Right

If you sign up for one or more of our January 2010 trainings before the end of 2009 you'll be entered into a drawing for a free year of [Community Leader](#), our premium service for nonprofits.

Share the Knowledge

Forward this email along to other volunteer managers, share it with your DOVIA, or post it to your social networks.

WINTER DRIVING TIPS

Driving in winter is probably the most difficult and hazardous situation for both new and experienced drivers. You should practice driving in winter conditions, because motor vehicles handle much differently on ice and snow than they do on warm, dry pavement.

- * Reduce your speed according to road conditions. Drive cautiously and accelerate gently.
- * Never lock your brakes on icy roads. You will lose steering control. If you do skid, remember to turn into the direction of the skid.
- * Increase the space between your vehicle and others. You need more distance to stop safely on slippery surfaces.
- * Because the earth does not insulate them, bridges and highway overpasses tend to freeze before the rest of the road and can be very slippery.
- * If it is snowing, start slowly. Test your brakes by tapping them gently to see how much traction your tires have.
- * Make sure your windshield wipers and defroster are in good condition.
- * Before driving, remove ice and snow from your vehicle. Clear all windows, windshield wipers, headlights, and brake lights. Clear ice and snow from your vehicle's roof so they do not blow off while you're driving and create hazards for drivers behind you.
- * Keep your fuel tank at least half full to prevent the fuel line from freezing.
- * Make sure you fill your windshield washer reservoir with a cleaning solution that will not freeze.
- * Keep a blanket, flashlight, and a small shovel in your trunk.

Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles

Post Office Box 55889
(617) 351-4500

Boston MA 02205-5889
www.mass.gov/rmv

Healthy Eating for Successful Living in Older Adults™ Rural Lay Leader Training



Healthy Eating for Successful Living in Older Adults™ is an evidence-based nutrition program designed to both educate seniors and help them make behavior changes to promote a healthier lifestyle. The program meets once weekly for six weeks and is led by two trained lay leaders. Participants who successfully complete the two-day Lay Leader Training will be certified to offer the Healthy Eating program to community seniors.

**Wednesday, December 16th and Thursday December 17th
8:30 am – 4:00 pm**

Trainees must attend both dates

**DPH Central Regional Health Office
180 Beaman Street, West Boylston, MA 01583**

Registration fees are waived for trainees who commit to offering two (2) Healthy Eating™ within 12 months of training

For more info and to register:

Molly.Butler@state.ma.us

413 586-7525 x1148

Preference will be given to organizations serving rural communities.





Fact Sheet

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Local Bulletin

Social Security Administration

70 Bond Street, Springfield, MA 01104 (866) 964-0198 X 27564

CONTACT: DAN MORASKI

NOVEMBER 2009

Law Does Not Provide for a Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustment for 2010

With consumer prices down over the past year, monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits for more than 57 million Americans will not automatically increase in 2010. This will be the first year without an automatic Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) since they went into effect in 1975.

“Social Security is doing its job helping Americans maintain their standard of living,” Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security said. “Last year when consumer prices spiked, largely as a result of higher gas prices, beneficiaries received a 5.8 percent COLA, the largest increase since 1982. This year, in light of the human need, we need to support President Obama’s call for us to make another \$250 recovery payment for 57 million Americans.”

The Social Security Act provides that Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits increase automatically each year if there is an increase in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers* (CPI-W) from the third quarter of the last year to the third quarter of the current year. This year there was no increase in the CPI-W from the third quarter of 2008 to the third quarter of 2009. In addition, because there was no increase in the CPI-W this year, under the law the starting point for determinations regarding a possible 2011 COLA will remain the third quarter of 2008.

Some other changes that would normally take effect in January 2010 based on the increase in average wages also will not take effect, even though average wages did increase. Since there is no COLA, the statute prohibits an increase in the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax as well as the retirement earnings test exempt amounts. These amounts will remain unchanged in 2010. The attached fact sheet provides more information on 2010 Social Security changes.

SSA Local Bulletin continued

Medicare Premium and Deductible Rates For 2010

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced increases in the Medicare premium, deductible and coinsurance amounts for 2010.

For Medicare Part A, which pays for hospital, skilled nursing, hospice care and certain home health care, the beneficiary deductible will increase to \$1,100 up from \$1,068, in 2009.

The standard Medicare Part B monthly premium will be \$110.50 in 2010, up from \$96.40, in 2009.

While the monthly Part B base premium will rise from \$96.40 to \$110.50 in 2010, most Social Security beneficiaries will not be affected by this increase. The “hold harmless” or Variable Supplemental Medical Insurance (V-SMI) protection will apply. Beneficiaries who currently have the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) withhold their Part B premium will not have an increase in their Part B premium for 2010 unless income-related monthly adjustment amount (IRMAA) applies. Higher income beneficiaries pay \$110.50 plus an additional amount, based on the income-related monthly adjustment amount (IRMAA).

If IRMAA does not apply, these beneficiaries will continue to pay the same \$96.40 Part B premium amount in 2010.

Beneficiaries who do not currently have the Part B premium withheld from their Social Security benefit and RRB benefit will pay \$110.50 in 2010.

The Medicare statute requires that the deductibles and premium be updated annually in accordance with statutory formulas.

The Part A deductible is a beneficiary's only cost for up to 60 days of Medicare-covered inpatient hospital care. However, for extended Medicare-covered hospital stays, beneficiaries must pay an additional \$275 per day for days 61 through 90 and \$550 per day for hospital stays beyond the 90th day in a benefit period - up from \$267 per day and \$534 per day, respectively. For beneficiaries in skilled nursing facilities, the daily coinsurance for days 21 through 100 will be \$137.50, up from \$133.50 in 2009.

In 2010, the Part B deductible will be \$155, up from \$135.00, in 2009.

Most of Medicare's beneficiaries choose the optional Part B coverage, which helps pay for physician services, hospital outpatient care, durable medical equipment and other services, including certain home health care.

The Part A premium, paid by only a small percentage of beneficiaries, also is increasing in 2010. For beneficiaries who pay a premium for Medicare Part A coverage, the premium will be \$461. This amount is paid by seniors with less than 30 quarters of Medicare-covered employment (and by certain people with disabilities who are under age 65, have lost disability benefits because of work and earnings and have less than 30 quarters of Medicare-covered employment). Seniors with 30 to 39 quarters of Medicare-covered employment (and certain people with disabilities who are under age 65, have lost disability benefits because of work and earnings, and have at least 30 quarters of Medicare-covered employment) are entitled to a reduced monthly premium, which will be \$254.

Information about Medicare changes for 2010 can be found at www.Medicare.gov.

Speaker Availability

If you would like a speaker from Social Security to address your group on any and all Social Security issues, contact Dan Moraski at the telephone number above or by email at: daniel.moraski@ssa.gov

Speaking engagement requests pick up around this time of the year, due to the announcement of the annual cost-of-living increase, so contact us soon for best availability. As always, there is NO CHARGE to have a speaker from the Social Security Administration.

SSA Fact Sheet

Thanks to Daniel Moraski *Public Affairs Specialist*, SSA
2010 SOCIAL SECURITY CHANGES

o **Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA):**

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits will not automatically increase in 2010 as there was no increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W) from the third quarter of 2008 to the third quarter of 2009. Other important 2010 Social Security information is as follows:

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
o <u>Maximum Taxable Earnings:</u>		
Social Security (OASDI only)	\$106,800	\$106,800*
Medicare (HI only)	No Limit	
o <u>Quarter of Coverage:</u>	\$1,090	\$1,120
o <u>Retirement Earnings Test Exempt Amounts:</u>		
Under full retirement age	\$14,160/yr. (\$1,180/mo.)	\$14,160/yr.* (\$1,180/mo.)

NOTE: One dollar in benefits will be withheld for every \$2 in earnings above the limit.

The year an individual reaches full	\$37,680/yr.	\$37,680/yr.*
retirement age	(\$3,140/mo.)	(\$3,140/mo.)

NOTE: Applies only to earnings for months prior to attaining full retirement age. One dollar in benefits will be withheld for every \$3 in earnings above the limit.

There is no limit on earnings beginning the month an individual attains full retirement age.

o **Social Security Disability Thresholds:**

Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)

Non-Blind	\$ 980/mo.	\$ 1,000/mo.
Blind	\$1,640/mo.	\$1,640/mo.*
Trial Work Period (TWP)	\$ 700/mo.	\$ 720/mo.

o **SSI Federal Payment Standard:**

Individual	\$674/mo.	\$674/mo.*
Couple	\$1,011/mo.	\$1,011/mo.*

o **SSI Student Exclusion:**

Monthly limit	\$1,640	\$1,640*
Annual limit	\$6,600	\$6,600*

* Because there is no COLA, by statute these amounts remain unchanged in 2010.

What you and your family should know:

Using home oxygen increases the risk of fires and burns.

When oxygen is used in the home, the amount of oxygen in the air, furniture, clothing and hair goes up, making it easier for a fire to start and spread.

When more oxygen is in the air, fires will burn hotter and faster.

When using home oxygen, learn how to handle it safely—especially if you smoke.

It is important to keep home oxygen and tubing 10 feet away from heat sources.

For doctors, nurses and therapists:

Smoking while using home oxygen is not just a personal health hazard but a public safety danger. It puts everyone in the building at risk.

Encourage and help patients to quit smoking.

Help patients to understand the fire dangers of home oxygen use.

Common heat sources are:

- » **Matches**
- » **Lighters**
- » **Cigarettes**
- » **Candles**
- » **Gas stoves**
- » **Appliances**
- » **Electric razors**
- » **Hair dryers**
- » **Heaters**

Don't use flammable products such as:

- » **Oils**
- » **Grease**
- » **Petroleum products**
- » **Oil based lip balms or lotions**

More information for health care providers on smoking cessation is available at www.trytostop.org.



Smoking Issues

No one should smoke in your home. The fire danger is too great.

You should not smoke.

Your family and friends should not smoke around you.

Quitting is the best thing you can do for your health and safety.

If you must smoke:

- Disconnect the oxygen.
- Wait 10 minutes.
- Go outside to smoke.

This gives the oxygen time to come off your hair and clothes into the open air.

This is not a safe way to smoke but is less risky than smoking indoors.

Home Fire Safety

Your family should help make sure your home has working smoke alarms.

You and your family should make and practice a home escape plan.

There's FREE help for you!

The Massachusetts Smokers' Helpline at 1-800-Try-To-Stop (1-800-8-Déjalo) can help you quit. The helpline offers free telephone counseling, information and referral services for Massachusetts residents who want to stop smoking. It is open:

Mon.-Thurs. 9:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Fri. 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Call **1-800-879-8678 (English),**
1-800-833-5256 (Español),
1-800-833-1477 (TDD)

or online at **www.trytostop.org**

American Cancer Society

1-800-227-2345

www.cancer.org

American Lung Association

www.lungusa.org

Resources for
Massachusetts elders:
1-800-AGE-INFO
(1-800-243-4636)
Executive Office
of Elder Affairs



REMEMBER

Oxygen + Smoking
is Dangerous

Oxygen + Fire
is Deadly!

“Smoking in homes where people use oxygen starts many fires each year that cause deaths and injuries to patients, family members, neighbors and pets.

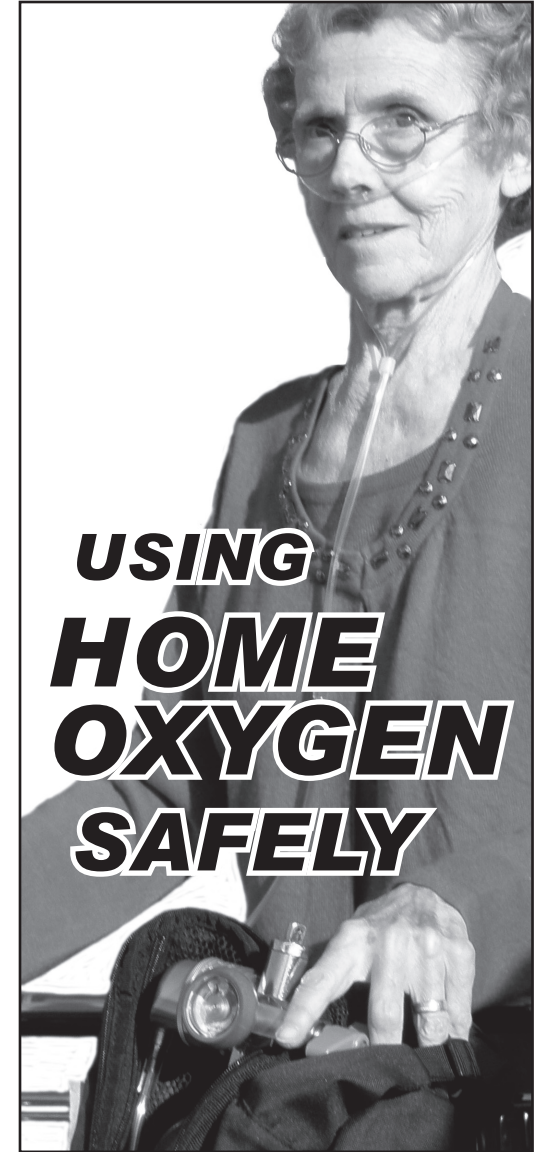
These fires force whole families and other building tenants out of their homes, destroy a lifetime's possessions and cause hundreds of thousands of dollars in property damage.”

Stephen D. Coan
STATE FIRE MARSHAL



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Fire Services
P.O. Box 1025
Stow, Massachusetts 01775-1025
978-567-3380
www.mass.gov/dfs

DFS, May '09



**USING
HOME
OXYGEN
SAFELY**

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR
**PATIENTS | FAMILIES
DOCTORS | NURSES
THERAPISTS
FIRST RESPONDERS**

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE SERVICES
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Book these events in your calendar now-

Send additional dates to david@mcoaonline.com

MCOA 2009 Planning Calendar

UPCOMING Events: - Circulate to Your Staff

2009

December 18 Staff Certification Training, Milford COA 9:30am

2010

Jan 15 MCOA Board, Worcester COA

Feb 19 Membership Milford COA

March 12 Advisory Milford COA

April 16 MCOA Board, Worcester COA

May 18 MPHA/WMACA/MCOA WMASS Spring Conference, Mass Mutual Center Springfield

May 21 Advisory Milford COA

June 8 MA DPH Aging and Dignity Conference, Holy Cross

June 18 Membership Milford COA

July 15 (Thurs) Advisory Milford COA

Aug 26 (Thurs) MCOA Board, Worcester COA

Sept 17 Membership Milford COA

Oct 6-8 MCOA Fall Conference Sea Crest Resort

Oct 21 Mass Home Care Annual Conference

Nov 19 Advisory Milford COA

Dec 3 Membership Milford COA

2011

Oct 5-7 MCOA Fall Conference Sturbridge Host (tentative)

TBA = Date or Location to be announced

Regional Meetings:

WMACA represents the four western MA counties, meets quarterly. Jodi Ahern, Ludlow (413)583-3564

CEMACA represents Central MA, meets 4/year. Betsy Connell/ Worcester EOE (508)799-8030

CIRCA represents SE MA and Cape Cod and the Islands, meets quarterly. Bob Cammarata/ Taunton (508)821-1420

NSACA represents greater North Shore area meets quarterly. Contact Diane Bertolino/ Rockport (978)546-2573

DUN/MetroWest Consortium meets regularly. Contact Mary Parcher/ Framingham (508)6204819

Minuteman Consortium meets regularly. Terri Marciello/ Wilmington (978)657-7595

Merrimack Valley Consortium meets regularly. Lynne Stanton/ Groveland COA (978)372-1101 or Colleen Fiorello (Georgetown: (978)352-5726

HESSCO Area Consortium meets regularly. Contact Barbara Coghlan/ Walpole (508)668-3330 or Janet Angelico/ Wrentham (508)384-5425 or Pat Carty Larkin/ Westwood (781)329-8799

Greater Boston Unaffiliated COAs in Boston, Chelsea, Revere, Winthrop, Somerville, & Cambridge

LOHSC Meets the 2nd Friday of each month at MMA/Boston. Contact Bob Cammarata/ Taunton (508)821-1425

UpComing National Conferences:

March 16-20, 2010, Joint Conference of NCOA and the American Society on Aging, Chicago, IL

April 26-30, 2011, Joint Conference of NCOA and the American Society on Aging, San Francisco, CA

March 28-April 1, 2012, Joint Conference of NCOA and the American Society on Aging, Washington DC

March 19-23, 2013, Joint Conference of NCOA and the American Society on Aging, Chicago, IL

Revised: December 1, 2009

Check out www.mcoaonline.com for the most updated version

MCOA Municipal COA Funding Survey

FY10 July 1, 2009—June 30, 2010



Town

Person Completing this form

1. Did you experience any municipal cuts to your budget in FY10 (as of December 1st 2009)
(circle) YES NO

2. How did these cuts affect staff, programming, services, operations and/or hours?

3. Were you able to utilize other resources such as “friends,” donation account, Title III or other to offset these cuts? (circle) YES NO How Much? _____ What Source?

4. Feel free to share any other details or comments.

5. Please Complete

	FY10 (as of December 1 st 2009)	FY09 Final	FY08 Final
Municipal Budget			
CDBG Funding			
Other			

Return to:
MCOA 116 Pleasant Street, Room 306, Easthampton, MA 01027
Or Fax 413.527.7138