# Resources to Support Older Adults

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<th>RESOURCE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Special Precautions During COVID-19</strong></td>
<td>As Massachusetts has begun the process of reopening, the Department of Public Health has a <a href="#">Safer-at-Home Advisory</a> that urges people over the age of 65 to continue to stay at home except for essential errands. The <a href="#">AARP</a> is hosting regular <strong>Tele-Town Halls about how to protect yourself during the COVID-19 pandemic</strong>. Videos of past town halls and information about joining future events is posted on their webpage. Events are public and you do not have to be an AARP member to participate. <a href="#">MA Healthy Aging Collaborative</a> has a list of resources for older adults grouped by age- and dementia friendly theme. The <a href="#">CDC</a> hosts a <a href="#">webpage specifically for older adults and people with disabilities</a> on the risks associated with COVID-19, developing a care plan, and protecting one’s mental health. The CDC also recommends creating a <a href="#">household plan of action</a> designed to protect the health of other family members if someone in your household gets sick. Alliance for Aging Research and the <a href="#">National Foundation for Infectious Diseases</a> have compiled <a href="#">Common Questions and Answers about COVID-19 for Older Adults</a>. The <a href="#">Diverse Elders Coalition</a> has compiled culturally sensitive resources in multiple languages, including hotlines, daily living supports, hate crime response, and fraud prevention. The <a href="#">National Asian Pacific Center on Aging</a> also offers information on COVID-19 for older adults in eight languages.</td>
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| **Avoiding Social Isolation** | The **“What If?” Campaign** encourages people to reach out and check-in with friends and loved ones and provides resources to help people stay connected. The [Hummingbird Project](#) provides activity ideas to help you stay connected while staying at home. The [Massachusetts Councils on Aging](#) has compiled a list of virtual programs and entertainment including programming from the MA Library System, speaker series, and educational programs on arts/culture/travel, history, and zoos/animals. WRAP has created a free [Wellness Guide to Overcoming Isolation During COVID-19](#) to offer support for those struggling with isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Suicide Prevention Center provides tips for [Reducing Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Older Adults](#). |
### Help with Telemedicine Visits

Many providers are using phone or video services to provide care during the COVID-19. AARP has put together this [step-by-step guide to help prepare you for your first telemedicine visit](https://www.aarp.org/health/telehealth/info-2020/first-telehealth-visit.html).

If you have questions about using telephone or video to start or continue therapy, William James INTERFACE has put together this helpful [Client Guide to Teletetherapy](https://www.williamjames.org/services/teletetherapy).

### Exercise and Staying Fit

Ageility Fitness has a free Living Room Fitness video series to help older adults stay physically fit while at home.

This [New York Times article](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/08/health/older-adults-exercise.html) also includes exercise tips and resources for older adults while staying at home.

The Massachusetts Councils on Aging have [compiled this list of pre-recorded, online exercise videos](https://www.massaging.org/olderadult/online-exercise-videos/).

### Nutrition Programs

The Massachusetts Council on Aging has put together [this page with updates on nutrition programs](https://www.massaging.org/olderadult/nutrition/) throughout the state.

### Support for Veterans

The [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](https://www.va.gov/) offers information to veterans about how to maintain and enhance mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

### Support for People with Dementia, Alzheimer’s, and their Caregivers

The [Dementia Society of America](https://www.dementia.org/) offers virtual memory cafes. The [Alzheimer’s Association](https://www.alz.org/) offers virtual support groups and programs for individuals and their caregivers. The Alzheimer’s Association Helpline is also available 24/7 at [1-800-272-3900](https://www.alz.org/help-helpline) to help anyone needing assistance during this difficult time. They have also put together [tips for caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer’s and other types of dementia](https://www.alz.org/help-helpline/tips-for-caregivers).
# Older Adult Supports and Services

## For Help with Substance Use

Use of alcohol and other substances has increased during the COVID-19 outbreak. If you need support while practicing physical distancing, there are many professionally led treatment and mutual-support group options available to you.

*Virtual recovery meetings* are available at all times and days of the week, and many other options are listed on our substance use resource page.

If you are in need of immediate support, please call the **MA Substance Use Helpline at 800-327-5050 (8am - 10pm Mon-Fri; 8am - 6pm weekends)**

## If You Have Concerns about the Quality of Your Nursing or Rest Home

Long Term Care Ombudsmen are available to resolve residents’ concerns about their quality of life and care within nursing and rest homes. To speak to a local Long Term Care Ombudsman, contact the Executive Office of Elder Affairs at **617-727-7750**, or **call the agency listed on this chart** next to the location of your facility.

## Resources for Family Members and Caregivers

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<td><strong>If You Have a Loved One in a Nursing Facility, Rest Home, or Assisted Living Residence</strong></td>
<td>The state has set up a <strong>Nursing Home Family Resource Line</strong> to provide information and answer questions about nursing home or rest home care during the COVID-19 outbreak. The resource line is available Monday – Friday 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM at <strong>617-660-5399</strong>. If you are considering moving a loved one from a nursing home or assisted living facility, this <strong>fact sheet</strong>, promoted by Massachusetts Councils on Aging and the Massachusetts Medical Society, may be very helpful. The <strong>Life Care Advocates website</strong> also provides guidance to help you and your family make this decision.</td>
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<td><strong>Caregiver Help Desk</strong></td>
<td>The <strong>Caregiver Action Network</strong> provides tips and free help desk support to assist caregivers in navigating the complex challenges caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. The help desk is available Monday through Friday 8:00 AM-7:00 PM at <strong>855-227-3640</strong> or <strong>online chat</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Massachusetts Family Caregiver Support Program</strong></td>
<td>The <strong>Massachusetts Family Caregiver Support Program</strong> is a great local resource providing free support to people caring for a loved one aged 60 or older or an individual living with dementia. The program is also available to adults aged 55 or older who are caring for a child younger than 18 or an individual with a disability. You can find out more by calling <strong>1-844-422-6277</strong> or <strong>visiting the program’s website</strong>.</td>
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How do I know if my or my loved one’s facility has any COVID-19 infections?

Guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that nursing facilities and senior care communities notify residents and their families of known COVID-19 cases at the facility, whether found in other residents or staff. The Department of Public Health (DPH) releases a Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report, which includes a list of all the long-term care facilities in the state and the number of positive COVID-19 cases among residents and staff, as well as the number of deaths. The report also includes the same data for assisted living residences.

What protections should be in place if someone in my or my loved one’s facility is sick with COVID-19 symptoms?

EOHHS has issued a Nursing Facility Infection Control Competency Checklist. The checklist includes the following:

- All facilities should be separating residents who have confirmed or suspected cases from residents who are not infected. Residents who are ill should be kept separate from other residents, in a separate wing or unit if possible, and cared for in a single-person room.
- If a COVID-19 case has been found in the facility, all staff should be wearing appropriate PPE, such as masks, gowns, and gloves, when caring for residents.
- Residents should wear face masks whenever they are outside their rooms and whenever staff enters their rooms.
- All congregate or communal spaces should be closed and group activities involving individuals close together suspended.
- Communal dining should be suspended.
- Residents and their families should be informed daily of the number of COVID-19 cases identified among other residents and staff at the facility.

DPH conducted a series of clinical audits of nursing facilities and examined each facility’s compliance with the 28-point infection control checklist. The results of these audits can be found in the Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report with facilities listed alphabetically. On July 19, 2020, DPH completed four rounds of clinical audits, with all nursing facilities subject to at least two audits, and by the end 94% of nursing facilities were found to be in adherence with the Infection Control Checklist.

What are the COVID-19 testing requirements at nursing facilities?

The state currently requires all nursing facilities, rest homes, and assisted living residences to participate in surveillance testing of staff. The CDC recommends that nursing facilities daily take the temperature of each resident and inquire about symptoms such as chills, cough, or shortness of breath. If a clinician determines that a resident has signs or symptoms of COVID-19, then that resident should be tested.

If a new case of COVID-19 is detected in any staff, the nursing facility must test all staff on a weekly basis until such testing reveals no new cases of COVID-19 in the staff for 14 days, at which point nursing facilities are expected to test 50% of their staff on a bi-weekly basis. A resident without symptoms should be tested if they have been exposed or had a suspected exposure. The state has provided an interactive testing map to assist nursing facilities in locating testing sites.

Can nursing facility residents receive visitors?

DPH issued new guidelines regarding limitations on visitors in long-term care facilities that went into effect on September 25th. While nursing facilities are encouraged to help residents stay in touch with loved ones using
electronic methods for communication (such as Skype and FaceTime), facilities may allow in-person visitation in designated outdoor and indoor spaces if they meet the safety considerations laid out in the guidelines. Residents who are confirmed or suspected COVID-19 positive may not receive visitors.

Visitors must wear a mask or face covering for the entire visit and stay 6 feet apart from the residents. Residents must be accompanied by a trained staff member for the duration of the visit. For compassionate care situations, visitors must be restricted to a specific room with the resident. All visitors are subject to screening for COVID-19 symptoms.

Who do I contact if I am concerned about myself or my loved one and how the facility is handling COVID-19?

Residents of nursing facilities and assisted living residents have the right to access the DPH Ombudsman program, as well as to consult with their legal counsel. Families and residents can also call the DPH Nursing Home Family Resource Line at 617-660-5399, open from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday - Friday.