

# SENIOR CONNECTION

Information for Seniors & Caregivers

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## UNDERSTANDING AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CONSORTIUM



By Robert P. Dwyer, Ph.D.,  
Executive Director

In 2006, the most recent reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, one of the amendments that was added was entitled "Choices for Independence."

This amendment included

the Aging and Disability Resource Center program (ADRC), a collaborative effort of AoA and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). An ADRC is designed to streamline access to long-term care by providing states with an opportunity to effectively integrate the full range of long-term supports and services into a single, coordinated system. By simplifying access to long-term care systems, ADRCs and other single point of entry (SEP) systems are serving as the cornerstone for long-term care reform in many states.

AoA and CMS envision ADRCs as highly visible and trusted places available in every community across the country where people of all ages, incomes and disabilities go to get information on the full range of long-term support options.

Nationally, ADRC programs have taken important steps towards meeting AoA and CMS's vision by:

- creating a person-centered, community-based environment that promotes independence and dignity for individuals;
- providing easy access to information to assist consumers in exploring a full range of long-term support options; and
- providing resources and services that support the range of needs for family caregivers.

ADRCs target services to the elderly and at least one additional population of people with disabilities, including individuals with physical disabilities, serious mental illness, and/or developmental/intellectual disabilities. The ultimate goal of the ADRCs is to serve all individuals with long-term care needs regardless of their age or disability.

ADRC programs provide information and assistance to individuals needing either public or private resources, to professionals seeking assistance on behalf of their clients and to individuals planning for their future long-term care needs. ADRC programs also serve as the entry point to publicly administered long-term supports including those funded under Medicaid, the Older Americans Act and state revenue programs.

Here in Massachusetts, we are just now seeing the growth of the ADRC's. In fact, within the Commonwealth, we have altered the vision just slightly, coining the term "Aging and Disability Resource Consortium." With this, we are seeing Area Agencies on Aging and Aging Services Access Points collabo-

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rating with Independent Living Centers to do the work described above; that is, provide a “one stop shop” for a client or family member to get help. In our region of Central Mass, CMAA is working with Tri Valley, Montachusett Home Care, Elder Services of Worcester, and the Center for Living and Working to bring about the desired coordination for any disabled adult who needs information about community based services. Additionally, the ADRC of Central Massachusetts will seek to identify individuals entering or already living in residential long term care settings who would seek to return to a community based setting. The ADRC partners will work to be sure that any person who can live on their own with appropriate support will have that opportunity!

In the end, a consumer or family member can call any of the above organizations and get the best possible information, or best possible referral, for their needs. While much work needs to yet be accomplished, the collaborating agencies are committed to the work of providing help and information seamlessly to all who need it.

### **CMAA Survey**

In late September 2009 Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging will be conducting a random sample survey of elders throughout the region. This will be similar to the studies on elder needs we conducted in 1993, 1997, 2001 and 2005.

The purpose of the survey is to gather information on issues where elders may need assistance. The results will be used to help determine how and where federal funds for elder services are utilized in Central Massachusetts.

It is therefore important that those elders who receive questionnaires in the mail return them in the return envelope enclosed with the survey form as soon as possible.

If you have any questions on the project please call John Belding or Nicole Jimino at the CMAA office (508-852-5539). Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.



Nicole Jimino  
Assistant Planner at Central  
Massachusetts Agency on Aging

Nicole Jimino has joined the staff of Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging as the Assistant Planner. She recently received a degree in Sociology from Assumption College with a concentration in Gerontology. She also minored in both Human Services and Rehabilitative Studies and Community Service Learning. She interned with Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging in the spring of 2008 working with Information and Referral, and again in the spring of 2009 working with John Belding, Director of Planning. She also interned at Elder Service of Worcester Area during the spring of 2009. Nicole is a native of Portland, Maine and currently resides in Worcester.



We wish to thank all of you who contributed to our “Tasty Way to Raise Dough” at the Uno’s Restaurant in Bellingham. We appreciate your support and we hope you enjoyed your meal.

# Do You Know When to Stop?

By Lindsay Coughlin

As a senior citizen was driving down the freeway, his car phone rang. Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, "Herman, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on 280. Please be careful!"

"Hell," said Herman, "It's not just one car. It's hundreds of them!"

This joke is becoming less humorous as the media covers more and more fatal car accidents involving elderly drivers. As a caregiver, you might have three generations of drivers to be concerned about: your children, yourself, and now your elders. You feel the heavy burden of trying to keep everyone safe. Telling your elder that they cannot drive may be even more difficult than telling your children that they can.

Rather than gaining freedom, as in the case with new drivers, losing a license would be taking that same freedom away. Driving may be the means by which elders go shopping, visit friends and family, attend medical appointments, or go to a show. If you take away their license, they have to rely on others in order to continue with their usual schedule. If you don't take away their license, they may be putting themselves and others in danger, possibly without knowing that they are doing so.

The issue of elderly driving is controversial. While some people claim that driving skills vary from one elder to another, just as with any other age group, there are deficits in aging that very much affect the way someone is capable of driving. Aging Parents and Elder Care cites that there can be a slowing of response time, hearing and/or vision loss, muscle strength and flexibility loss, and drowsiness as a side effect of medication or a lower tolerance to alcohol.

The National Motor Association "does not support frequent re-testing or age-based restrictions" based on their reasoning "neither has been found to be effective in identifying and preventing problem drivers, in any age segment of the population" (NMA). Another article presents the opinion that "this isn't about statistics. This is about common sense. The idea that, after an initial road test, the only thing the state of Massachusetts tests drivers for is their eyesight is patently ludicrous. Massachusetts is one of only three states that has no additional requirements or road tests as drivers' age" (Cullen, 2009).

One option is being put into action in Iowa. They have introduced a requirement that drivers age 70 and older renew their licenses in person. If a DMV official suspects a problem, drivers may be asked to take a road test. They may then choose between taking the standard test or a newly devised "local" test. If they opt for the latter, an examiner will evaluate them on their usual route—to the store, to church, to the doctor and so on. Those who pass the local test are licensed only on that route and may also be restricted to lower speeds and daylight-only driving (Russo, F., 2005).

Resources for this article posted on our website at [www.media.seniorconnection.org](http://www.media.seniorconnection.org), Four Corners Articles.

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**Lindsay Coughlin** is a summer intern for the Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging for the summer of 2009 through the Summer Internship Program at the College of the Holy Cross. Both the Summer Internship Program and the Lilly Foundation Grant will allow Lindsay to be with the agency for ten weeks this summer as she assists in researching and writing articles for its Senior Connection website while learning about the services available for the elderly. Lindsay will be a senior Psychology major at Holy Cross this Fall and will continue working with the elderly through the Student Programs for Urban Development (S.P.U.D) volunteer program at Holy Cross.



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## Take the Next Exit: Help your Elder off the Road

by Lindsay Coughlin

For whatever reason, you have had worries about your elder being on the road. For one man, it was the increasing number of dents on his mother's car and for one woman it was an increase in the frequency of calls from her father being lost on a drive. Consider these suggestions when evaluating the driving of your elder and expressing your concerns to them.

### **EVALUATING THE DRIVING OF YOUR ELDER** (*Aging Parents and Elder Care, 2009*).

- The driver might be responding more slowly to signs and other drivers which would not allow them for the quick stop necessary when a pedestrian is in the road.
- Check if the driver is ignoring, disobeying, or misinterpreting street signs and traffic lights.
- Judging distances may become an issue which becomes obvious when an elder cannot judge distances between cars correctly
- Your elder may have difficulty with glare from oncoming headlights, streetlights, or other bright or shiny objects, especially at dawn, dusk, and at night.
- There may be physical limitations as well that prevent an elder from driving safely like having difficulty turning their head, neck, shoulders or body while driving or parking.
- They may not have enough strength to turn the wheel quickly enough in an emergency.
- Lastly, if your elder is getting lost repeatedly and this is a new occurrence, you may need to look further into their driving.