

Needham Council on Aging and The Center at The Heights

Handbook Policies and Operating Procedures

300 Hillside Avenue Needham, MA 02494 Monday – Friday 9AM to 4PM Limited Evening Hours 781-455-7555

Website: www.needhamma.gov/coa



This handbook contains information that will help you to become familiar with services offered at The Center at The Heights (CATH) as well as general information and policies.

Mission Statement

The mission of
The Center at The Heights, which
stands as the focal point for issues of
aging in our community, is to provide
a welcoming, inclusive, and secure
environment where both individuals
and families benefit from programs,
services, and resources that enhance
their quality of life and provide
opportunities for growth.

"What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."--Nelson Mandela

Welcome to The Center at The Heights!

I want to take a moment to welcome you and thank you for your interest in The Center at The Heights (the Center), which is also known as CATH. I believe this building is a hub and a home for our senior community and their families and this handbook is to be used as an introductory guide.

I hope you take the time to introduce yourself to our loving staff. We are all here to enhance your time at the Center whether it is through events, programs, social services, transportation, food service, and more. Our goal is to continue to grow and flourish and we want you to feel that you are part of that process.

Please let your friends and neighbors know about the Center and that we are eager to meet and work with everyone. We are a team and we are here to support the older adult population, families, and community partners. Please stop by to say "hello" and find out what we offer.

Sincerely, LaTanya Michelle Steele Director of Aging Services

Vision Statement

The Vision of The Center at The Heights is to be the destination of choice for older adults to sustain healthy, meaningful, and self-directed lives through creative programs and comprehensive services all while fostering an environment that is open and accepting.

Composed by The Staff

Table of Contents

Overview and History6
Frequently Asked Questions9
Statement of Goals
Council on Aging Staff, Board of Directors, Friends of The Center at The Heights, Advisory Board14
Programs and Services
Policies
Code of Conduct Standards29
Code of Conduct Violations30
Useful Telephone Numbers32
Notes

The Needham Council on Aging and The Center at The Heights Overview and History

The Center at The Heights (Center) represents over 50 years of the Town of Needham's commitment to the needs of its older citizens and their families. This ongoing dedication began under the auspices of Dr. Dorothea Willgoose. She realized that only through Town efforts could the unmet needs (health, housing, and social) of older adults be met. In 1975 under her leadership, Town Meeting established the Needham Council on Aging (COA), one of the first recognized councils on aging in the Commonwealth. After years of sharing space with other town agencies, the COA moved to the Stephen Palmer Building in 1979 and was named the Stephen Palmer Senior Center.

Dr. Willgoose continued her efforts through attendance at the First White House Conference on Aging in 1961. The COA and staff continue her pioneering efforts by constantly reinvigorating programs and services to remain at the forefront of services to older adults and their families.

By 1999, through the work of both staff and volunteers, the Needham Council on Aging's Senior Center became the first accredited Center in Massachusetts and the 20th in the United States. The Center has been reaccredited two more times, the last in December 2011.

Over the years the mission of the COA has remained constant – provide the programs, services, and resources that individuals and their families need to enhance their lives and opportunities for growth. To that end, the COA provides constantly evolving programming and services throughout the Town. As the needs of Needham's residents change, so do programs and services. Transportation, Medicare information (SHINE), recreation, meals, and counseling for older adults and their families are all part of the daily mix at the Center. Another integral focus of the COA is outreach to the community. At its heart, the staff at the COA is determined to enhance and sustain the lives of Needham's residents.

The Center receives funding from many sources. For example, in addition to Town funds, the COA receives monies through a State Formula Grant, a SHINE grant, and donations. Furthermore, the Friends of The Center at the Heights, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit, (also known as Friends and FTCATH) supports the COA by helping to fund the newsletter, some programs and services, as well as the new handicapped accessible van. They also led fundraising efforts for the Center for enhancements that add to the success of the programs and services that can be offered.

By 2004 the Needham COA reaccreditation process emphasized that a new Center was a must. The townwide Facilities Master Plan of 2006 included a new Senior Center. In 2008, after rejection by Town Meeting of a proposed site, the Town established the Senior Center Exploratory Committee. After two years of work including countless committee meetings, public hearings, and a myriad of work by volunteers and staff, the Town Meeting voted to appropriate funds for a new Senior Center, which would meet the evolving needs of its older population. Today, this is The Center at The Heights.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. When is the Center open?

The Center is open from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM Monday through Friday and limited evening hours.

2. When is the Center closed or opening late due to weather conditions?

- a. If the Needham Schools are closed, the Center is closed.
- b. If the Schools have a TWO-HOUR opening DELAY, the Center will open at 10:30 AM. All activities scheduled before 10:30 AM are cancelled.
- c. If there is a weather event during school vacations, call 781-455-7555 for further information.

3. I do not live in Needham. May I attend programs and utilize services provided by the Council on Aging?

Yes. You do not have to live in Needham to come to the center.

4. Can I just drop in at the Center to obtain information or do I need to make an appointment with a staff member to have my questions answered?

We encourage everyone to drop in at the Center during our regular hours (9:00 AM to 4:00 PM) to obtain information. However, making an appointment with a staff member will ensure someone will be available to speak with you.

5. Do I have to be a certain age to have access to programs and services?

As a division of Needham's Human Services
Department, the Council on Aging focuses on the 60+
population and their families. This includes the
diverse aspects of aging, service requests, concerns,
and needs. However, no matter an individual's age the
COA does not turn anyone away from accessing
information and services. Please note that preference
for services will be given to those 60+ and their
families.

6. Is there a membership fee to attend programs or receive services at the Center?

There is no membership fee. However, there may be applicable fees charged for programs, activities and or trips.

- 7. How do I find out about scheduled programs and services available through the Council on Aging?
 - a. Information is posted on the Town website.
 - b. Program highlights and schedules are printed in the Needham newspapers.
 - c. Through the generosity of the Friends of the Center at The Heights, the Compass newsletter is available by mail as well as on the town website and social media. It includes a calendar of the month's activities as well as highlights of programs and services.

8. I need help with transportation. Who can help me? Call our Transportation Coordinator or Social Services staff at 781-455-7555. There is also information on our website.

9. Are there programs to help me with my food shopping?

Yes. Please reach out to the social work department to discuss options.

10. What services do Social Workers provide?

The Social Services Department at the Center is available to work with older adults and their families on a variety of issues, including but not limited to: information and referral for housing, transportation, health insurance, mental health and substance abuse, caregiver support, family counseling, care planning, grief and loss, homecare resources, health and wellness, and more. Please free to contact the Social Services Department with any questions.

11. I don't understand Medicare, Medicare D (prescriptions), and/or supplemental insurance. Who can help me?

The Needham Council on Aging has highly trained SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) volunteers available to assist you. Call the Center to set up an appointment.

12. Where do I park at the center?

There are parking spaces to the left and back of the building, as well as street parking in the front on Hillside Avenue. There is a drop-off area in front of the main door and one on Hillside Avenue as well as three handicap spaces on the left as you enter our parking area. Parking for all staff, participants, and visitors is on a first-come, first-served basis. Limited handicap parking spaces are available on a first-come first-served basis for the person whose name appears on the required permit.

13. What is the difference between the Council on Aging and the Center at The Heights?

Councils on Aging (COA) are agencies that link older adults with resources and services they (or their family members) need and includes community education and advocacy. The Center at The Heights, also called "CATH," "the Center," and "The Senior Center," is the facility that houses the Council on Aging and the place where programs and services are provided. These terms are often used interchangeably. Whatever you or others call it, we are here to serve you.

Statement of Goals

Based on its Mission, the Needham Council on Aging has established these goals:

- To serve as a focal point for community affirmation of the dignity, experience, diversity, and independentmindedness of older adults.
- To serve as an advocate for issues of concern to older adults.
- To anticipate, identify, and assist older adults who, with their families and friends, need service and information to promote optimal well-being and autonomy in decision making.
- To provide challenging and stimulating outlets which provide older adults with opportunities to utilize their strengths and be involved in meaningful activities.

The Center at The Heights Programs and Services

Introduction: The Center is the focal point for aging service issues in our community. It is the gateway to information and resources that support and enable older adults (ages ranging from 60 to over 100) to maintain health, independence, and optimal levels of functioning in many aspects of life. We fulfill this role by offering relevant curriculum and assistance for residents wherever they may reside- in their own homes. congregate housing, assisted living facilities, and longterm facilities. Some of the services and programs provided to meet the goals of the Council on Aging include but are not limited to outreach and counseling advocacy, transportation, daily information and referral, health benefits counseling, volunteer opportunities, health and wellness information and screening, creative and social classes, educational programs, special events and trips, independent activities and learning, and opportunities for socialization.

Computer and On-Line Internet Access and Lessons: Computers with word processing capability, email, and internet access are available for seniors to use at the Center. For more information, call the Center.

File of Life: The File of Life is available free of charge at the Center. It is a handy condensed synopsis of an adult's personal emergency health information.

When signing up for programs we strongly recommend that participants complete this information in case of emergency.

Instructions for using FILE OF LIFE:

- Fill out in pencil and be sure it is accurate and easy to read.
- Date the card each time you update it.
- Place on your fridge when completed and take with you to each doctor's appointment.
- Update the card whenever you have a change in medications or any change in medical information.

We urge you to keep an additional copy with **you at all times**.

Friendly Visitor Program: One of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to commit to a shared activity. Our Friendly Visitor Program matches volunteers with seniors to share a cup of tea, watch a Red Sox game on television or take a short walk. This program offers volunteers a unique opportunity to make a powerful and rewarding difference. Call Social Services for more information.

Friends of The Center at The Heights: a 501 © (3), (also known as FTCATH or Friends) is a private nonprofit organization whose mission is to support the Needham Council on Aging. It is responsible for the funding of our

monthly newsletter, The Compass, and other expenses not possible through other funding sources.

If you are a member, we thank you. If you would like to join, you can be a member for a \$25.00 donation. Ask at the front desk for a donation form. Checks can be made out to FTCATH.

Hours: The Center is open Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM with limited evening hours.

Holidays on Which the Center is Closed:

New Year's Day

Labor Day Martin Luther

King Day

Columbus Day Presidents

Day Veterans Day Patriots Day Thanksgiving

Memorial Day Christmas Eve at noon

Independence Day Christmas

Sunday holidays are observed on the following Monday. Saturday holidays are observed on the preceding Friday.

Keep Well Clinics: These clinics are held twice a month at the Center. At this individualized health screening offered by the VNA Care Network Inc., weight and blood pressure are taken and health concerns can be discussed.

Legal Services: MetroWest Legal Services provides free legal consultation at the Center quarterly. For more information or to make an appointment, call The Center.

Library Books and Newspapers: The Center library has regular size and large print books which can be read at The Center or borrowed.

Meals: A noontime meal is served at the Center on Mondays through Fridays. Reservations for weekday meals must be made by 11:45 a.m. of the previous day. To make a reservation, call 781-455-7555 ext. 203 and leave a message. This service is provided by Springwell, Inc., a Regional Area Agency on Aging.

Monthly Newsletter: *The Compass*, our monthly newsletter, is the "who, what, when, and why" of events scheduled at the Center, and other items that are of interest. The newsletter is printed and mailed by the Friends of The Center at The Heights. You may also view it on our website at www.needhamma.gov/coa.

Outreach and Counseling: The Council on Aging Social Service staff is available to elders and their families for support, counseling, and information.

Programs: The Center continues its ongoing commitment to provide programs emphasizing education, wellness, and recreation. Recreation programs have been wide ranging and continue to expand. Programming continually changes at the Center as interests and best practices evolve.

Project B.A.G.S. (Bringing Assistance for Grocery Shopping): A grocery shopping service for those who may need assistance is available through our social service department. In-store shopping assistance may be

provided through a volunteer who will ride with you on the Council on Aging van or meet you at the store to offer help. For seniors unable to physically get to the store, arrangements can be made to have groceries delivered. For information, call the Center.

SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone): SHINE is a volunteer network of health benefits counselors, who provide current information on prescription drug coverage, Medicare, Medicaid, Medigap insurance, HMOs, long term care and other health insurance issues. The Executive Office of Elder Affairs trains SHINE counselor volunteers. Call the Center to schedule a personal appointment.

Support Groups: A variety of support groups are available. Please call the Social Work office at the Center for information about current groups.

Tax Preparation: In cooperation with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), federal and state income tax preparation assistance is provided by appointment with trained volunteers during the tax season. Call the Center to schedule.

Transportation: The Needham Council on Aging wheelchair accessible van provides trips to and from the Center five days a week. Food shopping opportunities are also available. Contact the Transportation Coordination at the Center for more information on eligibility and options. Passengers must be able to safely enter and exit the vehicle unassisted.

Volunteer Opportunities: Volunteering strengthens your ties to the community and broadens your support network, exposing you to people with common interests, neighborhood resources, and fun and fulfilling activities.

Volunteers fill a variety of positions at the Center. They lead groups, visit homebound elders, provide office support (data entry, photocopying, collating and answering the phones), offer hospitality, prepare the monthly newsletter mailing, help in the Cafe, and are trained as SHINE counselors, and serve on various committees. For more information on volunteer opportunities, call the Volunteer Program Coordinator at the Center.

Wellness and Fitness Programs: Many exercise classes take place at the Center and at offsite locations. Classes may include strength training, low impact aerobics, better balance, tai chi, ballroom dancing, line dancing and an outdoor walking club. Throughout the year, informative lectures on wellness topics take place.

The Center at the Heights Policies/Procedures

The Needham Council on Aging (COA) welcomes you to The Center at the Heights (the Center). We are committed to making everyone feel accepted and part of our community. We expect that everyone at the Center-visitors, volunteers, and staff - will be conscious of the rights of others and will act in a courteous, considerate, and socially appropriate manner. We expect all to show respect for others, their possessions, the building, and our equipment.

Privacy - Confidentiality regarding the status of our staff, volunteers, and participants is very important to us. All staff and volunteers sign a confidentiality agreement.

Accident/Incident Policy: All accidents, falls, and other incidents should be reported to the Center staff immediately.

Alcohol and Other Drugs of Abuse: At all times, people must be sober and not under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or any illegal substance. Illegal substances are not permitted on the premises.

Animals/Pets: Only service animals and animals associated with programs are permitted at the Center.

Audio Equipment: Use of all audio visual equipment must be authorized and accessed through a staff member. Personal use of radios, CD players, and similar electronic devices may be used when individual headphones are in place.

Center Trips: Recreational trips are offered to those 50 years of age and older and disabled residents. Those sponsored by the Friends at The Center at The Heights are covered by the Friends' policy. Needham residents are given preference for trips for the first two weeks after the trip is advertised. Payment for trips is due upon sign up at the Center. Center trips are reasonably priced and space must be reserved and paid for in advance. Seventy-two hours' notice (3 business days) is required to receive a full refund for day trips.

Trip participants are required to provide emergency contact information including: Name, address, and phone number of a local emergency contact who can be contacted in the event of any urgent or emergency medical occurrence. Riders are also required to sign a waiver releasing the Town of Needham from liability. Riders must be able to participate without special assistance from staff or other riders.

Computer Use: The Center provides some computers for public use in various locations throughout the building. We ask that users limit their use to 30 minutes per session to allow computer access to other participants. The Center also provides free WiFi and

members may bring their own laptops and tablet devices to use. Computers, whether those owned by the Center or owned by a member, may not be used for any illegal activity and may not be used to view pornographic or other unacceptable material in the Center. Intentional damage to any electronic device owned by the Center or another person is prohibited, and any such activity will subject the offending party to disciplinary action. Food and beverages are prohibited in the Computer Room.

Confidentiality Policy: The Center at the Heights has very strict procedures to protect your privacy in accordance with State laws. All records are confidential and maintained accordingly. The Center at The Heights will never release information about you to anyone without your prior written consent.

Dress Code: Appropriate street dress and footwear (shirt and shoes) must be worn at all times. Please be aware that some people are very sensitive to colognes and perfumes such that care should be taken in the use of these items. Participants must maintain a level of personal hygiene that is generally consistent with standards of health and safety.

Eligibility: Any Needham Resident 60 and over is eligible to participate in Senior Center activities, programs, and trips. Our policy requires that those persons be physically and or mentally able to participate independently or be accompanied by a companion to assist them. The Director of Aging Services, in consultation with Health and Human Services Director

and staff members, reserves the right to assess the ability of potential participants to safely and appropriately use the Center. This is done to ensure the health and wellbeing of all participants.

Emergencies/Contacts: An emergency contact is required for anyone participating in programs and services and/or utilizing transportation services. Please inform someone working at the front desk of any change of contact information. Contact information will be reviewed for accuracy annually.

Emergency Procedures: In case of emergency, participants should notify the nearest staff person immediately or dial 911 on one of the phones located in all program areas. If the Center must be evacuated, a staff member will assist you. Exit plans and diagrams are posted. Fire drills will be conducted periodically. All occupants of the building are required to participate. In the event of an emergency, all occupants may be required to vacate the building until it is deemed safe to re-enter.

Exercise Equipment: All participants who wish to use the Center's exercise equipment will be required to submit appropriate forms and receive necessary training as specified before use.

Food Consumption: Eating is permitted in designated areas.

Lost and Found: The Center will maintain a Lost and Found area. If you lose something, please speak to a staff member. Items will be disposed of after a reasonable period of time and, where appropriate, donated to a charitable agency.

Non-Discrimination Practices Policy: It is the policy of the Center to provide services to all Needham residents age 60 and older and to anyone seeking service on behalf of a Needham resident age 60 and older. The Center complies with all State and Federal antidiscrimination laws, including but not limited to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Participants with complaints of unlawful discrimination, and questions and comments can be directed to the Aging Services Director.

Parking: Parking at The Center is available. Additional parking is permitted on the street where it is legal. There is a drop-off area in front of the main door of the Center. If you park at the MBTA lot, please be aware that a payment is required; failure to pay could result in a ticket for the price of the space plus a fee assessed by the MBTA.

Participant's Level of Independence: While at the Center, participants are responsible for their own personal health and medical care to include: taking of medications and monitoring special diets, as well as personal care, ambulation, and toileting. Individuals must function independently and are responsible for planning

and maintaining their own activities to include, but not limited to, lunch and transportation reservations. As appropriate, a personal companion may accompany a participant.

Political Neutrality Policy: It is the policy of the Center to remain neutral on any political topic and candidate. Political forums are permitted when facilitated as a Center program.

Sign In: It is required that all visitors to the Center sign in at the Reception Desk upon entering the building.

Smoking: The Center is totally smoke-free at all times. This includes tobacco and marijuana smoke as well as ecigarettes. Smoking is not permitted inside or within a 20-foot perimeter around the entire building.

Solicitations: The Center maintains a no-solicitation policy except for donations related directly to the operation of the Center. This extends to include political campaigning by way of distribution of printed materials and campaign visits to the Center. The Center sponsors regular forums where political figures may provide updates and information on current issues.

Storage: The Center does not have adequate secured storage space for seniors to store their personal belongings. All personal items must be taken home at the end of each day. Storage of private property and personal belongings, including food and beverage, is not permitted.

Theft: The theft of items from the Center, such as games, supplies, food, and equipment, by any person in the Center will not be tolerated. If a theft occurs, the police will be notified. The Center is not responsible for lost or stolen personal items. Please make sure to keep your belongings with you and take them home at the end of the day.

Transportation: The Council on Aging offers transportation from a resident's home to the Center, with a return trip if necessary. Scheduling and cancellation of rides must be done through the Transportation Coordinator. The same rules and policies that apply in the Center apply to all transport vehicles to include but not limited to conduct and attire.

Thank you for your cooperation with these policies.

Center at the Heights Code of Conduct Standards

The Center at the Heights (the Center) recognizes that in order to flourish, an active Senior Center needs to maintain an environment that is supportive, inviting, and secure for its staff, participants and guests.

The Center has established a Code of Conduct Policy to ensure that participants are able to partake in agency-sponsored events and services in a welcoming and safe environment. Participants are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner at all times. If it is determined that an individual is exhibiting behaviors that are disruptive, threatening, offensive and/or interfering with the safety and wellness of participants, staff and/or volunteers, steps to ensure a safe environment will be taken immediately.

Individuals in violation of the Code of Conduct will be subject to disciplinary action and potential suspension and or expulsion from the Center when deemed appropriate.

The Center reserves the right to remove participants from the building, programs, and services via a disciplinary process as determined by designated department staff representatives.

The Center adheres to a strict **zero tolerance policy** of harassment and violence in all public buildings. If any individual does not abide by this policy, the individual will be asked to leave the premises immediately.

Code of Conduct Violations

In accordance with the Center at The Heights (the Center) Policies and Code of Conduct, the following are considered unacceptable behaviors:

- Being present at the Center or attending agency sponsored activities under the influence and/or in possession of alcohol and/or drugs.
- The use of threatening language to include, but not limited to: making physical threats; emotional abuse; bullying; intimidation; use of obscenities and inappropriate language, including that related to an individual or a group's sexual identity, race, ethnicity, gender, age, physical/cognitive ability, and/or religious identity.
- The use of inappropriate language or behaviors that is deemed disturbing or harmful to participants, staff and volunteers.
- Behaving in a physically violent, abusive, aggressive and or threatening manner.
- Committing any criminal offense that is in violation of federal, state, county or town laws and ordinances,
- Possession of weapons and harmful substances.
- Interference with staff's ability to provide services in a safe and secure environment.
- Inappropriate use of Center computers and internet to engage in activity that may cause harm to others or violate the law; this includes viewing, transmitting or downloading sexually explicit pornographic material.
- Misuse and or destruction of the Center's materials, equipment or grounds.
- Infractions against the Center's policy on solicitation, canvasing and/or political activities.
- Violation of smoking ordinances both inside and outside of the building.
- Knowingly entering non-public spaces within the Center.

Disciplinary Action May Include:

Suspension from facility for a specified amount of time which will be determined by staff, as deemed appropriate for the behavior. This may include but is not limited to being under the influence or in possession of alcohol and/or drugs; use of threatening language such as bullying, intimidation, use of obscenities, and inappropriate language; interference with staff's abilities to provide services in a safe and secure environment; misuse or destruction of the Center's materials, equipment and/or grounds; violation of smoking ordinances; and knowingly entering non-public spaces within the Center.

Law Enforcement will be called for any illegal or threatening behavior that may place patrons or the Center in imminent danger. This may include but is not limited to behaving in a physically violent, abusive, aggressive, or threatening manner and committing any criminal offense including possession of weapons, harmful substances, and destruction of property.

Permanent expulsion will be determined if the behavior is severe enough and warrants long-term action. Staff at the Center will take every step necessary to provide a safe and secure environment for their patrons and the facility.

Appeal Process

Participants may appeal temporary or permanent suspension in writing to the Director of Aging Services.

Individuals who have addressed a concern with the Director of Aging Services without satisfactory resolution may submit the concern in writing to the Health and Human Services Director

The Director of Health and Human Services will respond to the appeal within one week of receiving a written notice.

Useful Telephone Numbers

EMERGENCY	
FIRE DEPARTMENT	
POLICE DEPARTMENT	
Attorney General	
BI-Deaconess Hospital-Needham	781-453-3000
Executive Office of Elder Affairs (Massachusetts)	Information &
Referrals	
Elder Abuse Hot Line	
Nursing Home Ombudsman	617-558-1278
Legislature (Massachusetts)	
Rep. Denise C Garlick	617-722-2810
Senator Richard J. Ross	617-722-1555
Precincts A,B,C,I,J	
Senator Michael F. Rush	617-722-1348
Precincts D,E,F,G,H	
Needham Community Council	781-444-2415
Needham Council on Aging	781-455-7555
Needham Housing Authority	
Needham Times	781-433-6700
Needham Town Offices:	
Main Number	
Assessor's Office	
Public Health	
Park & Recreation	
Public Library	
Recycling & Disposal	
Town Clerk's Office	
Traveling Meals (Board of Health)	781-455-7523
Treasurer/Tax Collector	
Veteran's Services	781-455-7532
Youth Commission	
RIDE, The (for reservations)	617-222-3200
SHINE Program	781-455-7555
Springwell,Inc	617-926-4100



300 Hillside Ave. Needham, MA 02494 781-455-7555 781-455-7556

Website: www.needhamma.gov/coa