



Dear Members,

We are updating you on the final [Executive Office of Aging & Independence 651 CMR 12.00: CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS FOR ASSISTED LIVING RESIDENCES](#).

The final regulations will be filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth and will take effect upon publication in the Massachusetts Register on **July 31, 2026**. Some sections of the regulations designate later effective dates, including the new requirements for Resident Care Directors, having an on-site staff trained in the use of an AED, and having electronic records in case of emergency, beginning on **January 1, 2027**.

For your convenience, we are also sharing documents showing redline changes:

- [Redline comparing prior regulations to new final regulations](#)
- [Redline comparing proposed regulations to final regulations](#)

The AGE [Quarterly check-in call](#) is on July 15, 2026, at 11:00 am. You may send any questions or topics for Q&A during the meeting to ALRHelp@mass.gov.

Mass-ALA is currently reviewing the final regulations and will provide you with additional analysis in the coming weeks. We will have a training on the new regulations to help you understand the new requirements and their potential operational impacts.

Please see the full press release from the Governor's office below, including a statement from Mass-ALA.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Healey-Driscoll Administration Finalizes Assisted Living Safety Reforms Ahead of Anniversary of Gabriel House Fire

New regulations strengthen fire safety, emergency preparedness and accountability to better protect assisted living residents across Massachusetts

BOSTON – One year after the tragic fire at Gabriel House Assisted Living Residence in Fall River claimed the lives of ten residents and injured dozens more, Governor Maura Healey today announced the finalization of [comprehensive new](#)

[safety regulations](#) that will strengthen protections for older adults living in assisted living residences across Massachusetts.

Finalized by the Executive Office of Aging & Independence (AGE), the amendments are among the most significant changes to the assisted living regulations in oversight in years. They implement key recommendations from the [Assisted Living Residences Commission](#), incorporate extensive public feedback, and establish stronger standards for fire safety, emergency preparedness, resident protections and accountability across the industry.

“The Gabriel House fire was a heartbreaking tragedy that forever changed the lives of so many families and the Fall River community,” said **Governor Maura Healey**. “Over the past year, we’ve worked closely with residents, families, firefighters, first responders, advocates and providers to make sure we learn from that tragedy and take meaningful action. These reforms will strengthen safety, improve emergency preparedness and give families greater confidence that their loved ones are living in safe, well-prepared communities.”

Following the Gabriel House fire, the Healey-Driscoll Administration launched a comprehensive effort to strengthen safety and accountability across the assisted living industry. AGE convened the Assisted Living Residences Commission, engaged residents, families, providers, advocates, firefighters, emergency management officials and other stakeholders, and incorporated months of public testimony and feedback into the final regulations.

“I am incredibly grateful to all of the community members, public safety officials, elected officials and experts who lent their time and knowledge to the Assisted Living Residences Commission. I also deeply appreciate the Aging & Independence staff who commit to collaborating and researching about the best ways to support older adults in our state,” said **Health & Human Services Secretary Kiame Mahaniah, MD, MBA**. “These final regulations exhibit our statewide commitment to the health and safety of residents.”

“The Gabriel House fire was a tragedy that must never be forgotten. These reforms, along with others that have been implemented and proposed, represent a shared commitment to protect our most vulnerable residents in the places they should be safest,” said **Public Safety & Security Secretary Gina K. Kwon**. “I want to recognize the hard work of Secretary Lipson, the Executive Office of Aging & Independence, and our local and state partners in the fire service for their hard work to ensure that ALRs are safe and supportive environments for our loved ones.”

“The public comment period was critical in helping us understand both the opportunities and challenges facing assisted living residences across Massachusetts,” said **Aging & Independence Secretary and ALR Commission Chair Robin Lipson**. “The final regulations reflect a thoughtful balance between strengthening safety and accountability while remaining responsive to operational realities and the needs of residents and families.”

The final regulations include significant new requirements that strengthen safety and oversight at assisted living residences across Massachusetts, including:

- Annual fire inspections conducted by local fire departments.
- Annual fire safety instruction for staff.
- Quarterly fire drills and annual simulated evacuation exercises on every shift.
- Enhanced emergency preparedness plans developed in coordination with local fire departments and state emergency management officials.
- Automated external defibrillators (AEDs), naloxone and epinephrine at every residence, with CPR- and AED-certified staff available at all times.
- Stronger resident protections through overnight safety checks in Special Care Residences, emergency response performance standards, improved incident

tracking and documentation, and clearly posted evacuation procedures throughout each residence.

The regulations also establish a framework for implementing Basic Health Services in assisted living residences, as authorized by Chapter 197 of the Acts of 2024. Residences that choose to offer Basic Health Services will be required to meet new certification standards and maintain licensed nursing coverage on-site for at least 16 hours each day.

Today's action builds on the Healey-Driscoll Administration's broader efforts to strengthen assisted living oversight and improve transparency for residents and families. In addition to the regulatory changes announced today, AGE is developing a standardized disclosure form to help families better compare assisted living residencies and understand the services available at each location. AGE is also posting compliance reports online so families can make more informed decisions when choosing an assisted living residence. These reforms complement the assisted living consumer protection regulations recently issued by Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell.

The final regulations will be filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth and will take effect upon publication in the Massachusetts Register on July 31, 2026.

Statements of Support:

Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell:

"My office recently strengthened consumer protections for assisted living residents and their families through clearer disclosures and greater transparency, and today's reforms complement that work by strengthening safety and accountability. Together, these changes will help families make informed decisions and better protect the health, safety, and dignity of assisted living residents."

Fall River Mayor Paul Coogan:

"I want to thank Governor Healey and her administration for these important amendments to the regulations governing Assisted Living facilities within the Commonwealth. These new fire safety, emergency preparedness and resident safety regulations are paramount to ensuring the safety of the residents in these facilities. We never want to see another tragic event like the Gabriel House fire."

Senator Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

"These reform measures, prompted by the tragedy at the Gabriel House in Fall River, will incorporate critical safety and oversight recommendations for Assisted Living Residence's (ALR) all across the Commonwealth. I've worked closely with the Healey-Driscoll administration, the Executive Office of Aging & Independence (AGE), and other stakeholders to provide the \$500,00 in state budget funding to help support implementing ALR oversight and safety standards. These newly established and comprehensive safety standards will go a long way towards making ALR's the safe environment that our seniors deserve.

Senator Patricia Jehlen, ALR Commission member:

"Assisted living residences can be wonderful options for people wanting to age in community. These new regulations provide residents and potential residents with better fire safety and emergency preparedness measures, and more transparency and oversight. I hope the regulations will give more ALRs confidence to start offering basic health services so residents can thrive."

Senator Mark Montigny, ALR Commission member:

"My work on this topic is born out of a deeply held concern that we must do much more to ensure the protection and dignity of the vulnerable residents of ALRs. The tragedy of the Gabriel House fire exposed fatal flaws in the requirements for ALRs

and these regulations make important steps to ensure that the tragedy is not repeated. I look forward to further action by AGE to fully implement the recommendations of the ALR commission."

Representative Thomas Stanley, ALR Commission member:

"With these final regulations, the Commonwealth takes another critical step towards strengthening our continuum of care for older adults. I'm pleased to see many of the ALR Commission's recommendations included, along with basic health services authorized under the landmark 2024 Long-Term Care Reform Law. These policies not only affirm the Legislature's and Administration's ongoing commitment to the health and safety of assisted living residents but also demonstrate that meaningful change is possible when you combine stakeholder collaboration with robust public engagement."

Representative Carole Fiola:

"I would like to thank the Healey-Driscoll Administration and Secretary Lipson and the Executive Office of Aging & Independence for their quick work on implementing regulatory recommendations from the Assisted Living Residences Commission Final Report released earlier this year. These regulatory changes will address a wide range of issues impacting assisted living residences including the provision of basic health services, strengthening and clarifying staffing requirements and qualifications, enhancing safety, disaster and emergency preparedness requirements, and clarifying regulatory authority related to findings of non-compliance. For Fall River, these recommendations are especially personal. The Gabriel House Fire exposed real gaps in how we oversee assisted living residences and the need for stronger emergency preparedness rules, clearer staffing standards and real accountability for non-compliance. This announcement represents the type of action Fall River and the Commonwealth need to make our assisted living residences safer."

Representative Alan Silvia:

"I'm pleased that these new regulations will add important layers of safety designed to help prevent future tragedies. We owe it to the victims, their families, and our communities to learn from the past and continue strengthening the safeguards that protect everyone."

Jennifer Benson, State Director, AARP Massachusetts & ALR Commission member:

"These new regulations represent meaningful progress for older adults and their families. Residents deserve strong consumer protections, clear information, and confidence that assisted living residences will be held accountable. While no policy can erase the pain caused by the Fall River tragedy, these rules help strengthen protections for residents across the Commonwealth."

Brian Doherty, President and CEO, Massachusetts Assisted Living Association & ALR Commission member:

"The safety and well-being of residents is at the heart of everything our members do. Mass-ALA welcomes these important new standards for assisted living in Massachusetts and commends Governor Healey, Secretary Lipson, and the Executive Office of Aging & Independence for the care that went into developing them. Assisted living is built on dignity, choice, and independence. These regulations make permanent an option that Mass-ALA has long supported: allowing providers that choose to offer Basic Health Services to do so with appropriate oversight and safeguards, helping residents access additional support while remaining in the place they call home. The legislation that established those services helped lay the groundwork for the reforms announced today. Our members contributed their frontline experience to a thoughtful, collaborative process, and we

are fully committed to partnering with the state to help our members comply with the updated regulations.”

Elissa Sherman, President, LeadingAge Massachusetts & ALR Commission member:

“The final assisted living regulations being issued by the Executive Office of Aging & Independence follow a thoughtful process that included engagement with providers, consumers, advocates, and other stakeholders. The regulations strike an important balance, strengthening resident safety and promoting greater transparency for consumers and families, while at the same time, recognizing the importance of affordability for consumers and maintaining the flexibility that allows providers to continue to develop innovative, person-centered approaches. This is essential to ensuring that assisted living continues to meet the preferences, needs, and expectations of today's older adults while supporting independence, dignity, and choice. LeadingAge Massachusetts was pleased to participate as a member of the Assisted Living Commission, whose final report included numerous recommendations reflected in the final regulations. The Commission's deliberations reflected a shared commitment to strengthening consumer protections while preserving the qualities that have made assisted living an important and successful option for older adults. LeadingAge Massachusetts and our not-for-profit members look forward to working with the Executive Office of Aging & Independence as these regulations are implemented. Together, we can ensure that Massachusetts continues to offer high-quality, safe, affordable, and innovative assisted living communities that meet the evolving needs of older adults and their families.”

If you have any questions, please contact us at Mass-ALA@mass-ala.org.

This update is solely for general informational purposes. It is not intended to replace a full review of the cited regulations or guidance.

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