

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

HEALTH
& HUMAN
SERVICES



The Arlington Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) consists of the following divisions:

- Health Department
- Council on Aging
- Veterans Services
- Youth Health and Safety Coalition
- Youth Counseling Center
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Department also coordinates the activities of the following boards and commissions:

- Board of Health
- Council on Aging
- Veterans Council
- Board of Youth Services
- Disability Commission
- Human Rights Commission
- Rainbow Commission

The mission of the Department of Health and Human Services is to protect the health of the public and assist residents with accessing services to meet basic human needs. In order to accomplish this, the Department relies on many different sources of funding including Town, state and federal funds, grants, foundation funding and donations. Additionally, hundreds of volunteers assist.

In 2019 the Department of Health and Human Services continued to promote racial equity work within the divisions of the Department. A Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator was hired to coordinate the work of the Human Rights Commission, Disability Commission and Rainbow Commission as well as coordinate the work of the Town related to racial equity.

BOARD OF HEALTH

The mission of the Arlington Board of Health is to protect the public health of the Town of Arlington through enforcement of health codes and regulations while promoting a healthy community. The Board of Health is a statutory board comprised of three community members at large, one of which must be a physician, appointed by the Town Manager for a three year terms. The Board holds public meetings and conducts public hearings as necessary for health code violations. Additionally, the Board adopts regulations that provide protections beyond the minimum standards outlined in Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) and State Sani-

tary Code (codified in the Code of Massachusetts Regulations, C.M.R) and sets town-wide policy related to important health issues. In 2021, the Board met ten times to conduct hearings and discuss the following topics:

- COVID-19 Pandemic
- Flu vaccination clinics
- Amendments to the Regulations Restricting the Sale of Tobacco and Nicotine Delivery Products
- Adult-use Recreational Marijuana regulations
- Keeping-of-hens permit applications
- Housing code violations
- Food code violations
- Food code variance requests



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Health Department is located at 27 Maple Street in the Arlington Senior Center. The Department handles the day-to-day procedural operations and administrative duties associated with the Board of Health. The Department is required by State statutes and regulations to perform many duties relative to the protection of public health and safety, the control of disease, the promotion of safe and sanitary living conditions, and the protection of the environment from damage and pollution. These mandated requirements are fulfilled by environmental health and public health nursing staff within the Health Department. The Department is comprised of a Public Health Director, two Health Compliance Officers, one Office Manager (which is shared with Human Services), a part-time Public Health Nurse, and a part-time Sealer of Weights and Measures.

Calendar year 2020 is hard to put into words, as it was unlike any other year in the field of Public Health. In January the Department began monitoring the global spread of COVID-19 in China. In February the Public Health Nurse started monitoring quarantined residents returning from Wuhan China for symptoms of COVID-19, and shortly thereafter in March Arlington had its first positive case of COVID-19, and Governor Baker declared a State of Emergency in response to the virus. As a result, the Health Department took charge of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in Arlington. The Department worked closely with Town administration, meeting daily, to provide briefings on COVID-19 activity in Town and evaluate public health and safety proto-

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cols in the community. The entire Department shifted its focus from routine work to full-time contact tracing, disease investigation, and enforcement and education as it related to COVID-19. Such duties included the issuance of orders to isolate and/or quarantine, enforcement of COVID-19 safety standards, guidelines, and orders issued by the State, and education to public and private businesses, schools, as well as other entities and organizations on reopening guidance and developing COVID-19 safety plans/protocols. In response to the increased demand on the Department, with COVID-19; two additional Health Compliance Officers were hired over the summer bringing the number of Health Compliance Officers up to four. Due to the pandemic, the number of permits issued and inspections completed by the Department will be significantly less than previous years. Additionally, the total number of communicable disease investigations is significantly higher as a result of COVID-19 cases and other communicable disease were under reported and/or investigated across the State.

Environmental Health Permitting and Inspections

Staff annually permits and regularly inspects restaurants, tobacco retailers, tanning establishments, body art establishments, public and semi-public swimming pools, chicken coops, camps, one medical and recreational marijuana establishment, one BioTech facility, and three bathing beaches. Inspectors from the Department also investigate numerous resident complaints related to any health issue within the community, ranging from trash and dumpster complaints to housing code violations, pest activity, as well as noise and odor concerns. In 2020 the environmental health division was comprised of two full-time inspectors, until two additional inspectors were hired to assist with general environmental health issues and COVID-19 contact tracing. The Department also contracts with two food safety consultants to conduct a portion of mandated food establishment inspections. Highlights from 2020 include:

- Staff has responded to over 1,000 Covid-19 calls since the pandemic began.
- Staff investigated thirteen food complaints
- Seven new food establishments opened or changed ownership and fifteen establishments closed.
- Staff conducted 14 housing inspections and collaborated with the Attorney General's Abandoned Housing Initiative Program on five properties.

Permits Issued	2017	2018	2019	2020
Food	349	324	368	198
Tobacco	19	19	19	19
Waste Hauler	19	20	21	16
Funeral Director	7	7	7	7
Tanning Establishment	1	1	1	1
Public Pool	8	8	8	4
Public Beach	3	3	3	2
Ice Rink	1	1	1	0
Keeping of Hens	12	13	14	17
Camps	6	6	6	4
Body Art Establishment	1	1	1	1
Body Art Practitioner	2	2	2	2
Total	428	405	448	271

Inspection Type	2017	2018	2019	2020
Food Establishment & Temporary Food Event*	459	503	484	254
Tobacco Compliance Check	38	12	20	0
Housing	160	172	138	14
Demolition Inspection	26	21	16	7
Nuisance Inspection	417	405	408	124
Keeping of Hens	11	3	10	4
Bodywork Establishment	0	3	0	1
Total	1,105	1,119	1,076	404

*Temporary food event inspections include: Farmer's Market, Feast of the East, Town Day, and other various public health events throughout the year.

Type of Food Permits Issued	2017	2018	2019	2020
Food Establishment Permits	193	191	193	175
Mobile Food Permits	3	1	3	0
Residential Kitchen Permits	11	12	11	9
Farmers Market Permits	13	9	12	7
Temporary Event Food Permit	126	132	149	7
Total	346	345	366	198

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Public Health Nursing

The primary responsibility of the Public Health Nurse is to prevent the spread of disease in our community. The roles and responsibilities of this position include health promotion and education, communicable disease surveillance and investigation, and emergency preparedness planning.

Health Promotion

Each year the Health Department plans and holds flu vaccination clinics for our residents. However, in 2020, the State of Massachusetts mandated that all school age children be vaccinated for influenza. As a result, the Department partnered with the Arlington Public Schools and focused its efforts on holding flu vaccination clinics for school age children. Clinic locations included the Thompson, Stratton, Ottoson and Bishop Schools, public housing buildings, other Town departments, and the Arlington Senior Center. This year we relied on over twenty Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers to help run our clinics. While the majority of school age children were vaccinated at Doctor's office and pharmacies, the Department was able to vaccinate almost 600 residents. This is a much smaller number than previous years when we conduct vaccination clinics for the general public. In 2020, COVID-19 precautions and regulations impacted typical flu clinic operations. In addition to immunizations, our Public Health Nurse lead the charge on COVID-19 disease investigation, contact tracing, and vaccination planning efforts.

Vaccination Clinics	2017	2018	2019	2020
Vaccinated Residents	1,478	2,064	1,564	594



Scenes from vaccination clinics.

Communicable Disease Surveillance

Below is a list of communicable diseases that have been investigated and monitored by the public health nurse over the years.

Communicable Disease	2018	2019	2020
Babesiosis	--	3	--
Calicivirus/norovirus	--	3	1
Campylobacter Enteritis	10	9	4
Cryptosporidiosis	2	2	--
Cyclosporiasis	--	4	--
COVID-19	--	--	1,051
Dengue Fever	--	1	--
Giardia	5	4	--
Group A strep	2	2	--
Group B Strep	1	2	3
Haemophilus influenza	--	1	--
Hepatitis A	1	2	--
Hepatitis B	18	9	--
Hepatitis C	12	10	5
Hepatitis D	--	1	--
Hepatitis E	--	--	--
Human Granulocytic Anaplasmosis	2	2	--
Influenza	170	130	127
Invasive Bacterial Infection	1	--	--
Legionellosis	2	1	1
Lyme Disease	52	45	--
Malaria	1	1	--
Mumps	--	--	1
Pertussis	1	--	1
Q fever	--	--	--
Salmonella	7	2	--
Shigatoxin	1	1	--
Shigellosis	1	1	--
Strep pneumonia -invasive	3	3	--
Tickborne	--	4	--
Tuberculosis <i>contact, and suspected cases in addition to probable and confirmed cases</i>	42	64	--
Varicella	4	3	--
Vibrio	--	--	--
West Nile Virus	--	--	--
Yersiniosis	--	1	1
Zika	--	--	--
Total	338	311	1,196

-- Denotes disease not tracked/present in those years

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Emergency Preparedness

In 2018 the Arlington Health Department became the host agency for the 4B Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), now known as the Metro East MRC. The Metro East MRC is one of the four federally recognized MRC's in the region and consists of 18 communities, including Arlington. The MRC is comprised of local health professionals and non-medical laypersons that contribute their skills and expertise during times of public health emergency and non-emergency community events. They assist existing community emergency medical response systems, as well as provide a group of readily trained and available resources to help a community deal with pressing public health needs and improvements.

In 2020 the Metro East MRC welcomed an additional 310 new volunteers to the unit. This is largely in response to the pandemic. Although the MRC was unable to hold in person trainings, they managed to provide a multitude of virtual training opportunities such as Emerging and Infections Disease and Workplace Safety, Overdose Prevention, Narcan & Hands only CPR, Pet First Aid, Emergency Dispensing Sites 101, Preparedness for Seniors, Family Preparedness, and COVID-19 Facts and Myths. Additionally, Metro East MRC volunteers were called upon to assist in the COVID-19 response through backfilling positions at long term care facilities, providing assistance at COVID-19 testing sites, staffing state and local call centers, providing translation services, delivering food and medications to residents in need, and assisting at various flu clinics. In 2020 the Metro East MRC volunteers provided over 6,000 hours of volunteer service which translates to an economic impact value of \$189,617.65.

Weights and Measures

To ensure compliance with the Consumer and Merchant Protection Act, the Sealer of Weights and Measures conducts inspections of scales, scanners, and dispensing equipment. This includes retail stores, gas stations, oil trucks, taxi cabs, and food establishments. The Sealer responds to all consumer complaints to ensure fairness and accuracy.

As merchants are inspected annually, compliance with standards and accuracy of merchant measuring devices has increased steadily. The Sealer of Weights and Measures determines the amount of savings by computing the amount of fuel pumped each year from a particular measuring device, such as a gas pump.

As a result of the pandemic and employee injury the Department was only able to conduct 2 vehicle tank meter (heating oil truck) inspections.

COUNCIL ON AGING

The Council on Aging, a division of the Department of Health and Human Services, is a community based social services organization that supports residents age 60 and over in Arlington. 2020 was a year that the COA adapted and grew in order to support older adults in Arlington through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The year began under the direction of a new Executive Director, Kristine Shah, who was previously the COA Supervisor of Volunteers and Transportation. Plans were well underway for the highly anticipated \$8M renovation of the Senior Center at 27 Maple Street, which will transform the building in to the Arlington Community Center. A capital campaign continued through 2020 to raise additional funds to furnish the center and make it a more accessible and modern space.

By January 2019, the COA had created an extensive plan to continue all programs and activities off site, due to the impending construction at 27 Maple Street. This plan was implemented seamlessly and until the pandemic impacted us in March, older adults were adapting well to the temporary, off-site locations for all COA programs, activities and services. On March 16, the COA shifted extensively and began offering all programs and services virtually, remotely or in a socially distant manor, in an effort to keep our older adults safe. COA activities expanded exponentially since March and grew to include emergency efforts such as distributing over 4,000 donated masks to Arlington residents, assisting as the hotline for the Arlington EATS grocery delivery program, launching our Telephone Call Reassurance Program to keep track of our most isolated residents and founding our Technology Loan Library, providing seniors with devices and internet access so they can connect with the new virtual world that we all live in.



Among this shift, construction began at 27 Maple Street in the spring and is making significant progress. COA offices have temporarily relocated to the 2nd floor of the building until construction is complete.

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An age-friendly space connecting seniors with their neighbors

2020 Highlights

Established a weekly Telephone Call Reassurance Program to connect qualified volunteers with our most vulnerable and isolated residents through a weekly check in call.

Received new \$15,000 CDBG Grant to establish a Technology Loan Library, allowing us to distribute 60+ Chromebooks, hot spots and other devices to older adults in Arlington.

Served as the Arlington EATS grocery delivery hotline, assisting in over 9,000 food deliveries in Arlington through the program.

Conducted over 140 instructor-led virtual exercise, yoga, stretching and other fitness classes on Zoom, free of charge to older adults in Arlington.



Conducted over 60 additional virtual programs including weekly art therapy classes, summer concerts, weekly LGBTQ & Friends support groups, Scam Awareness Events, UCLA Memory Training, Intergenerational book club, Shakespeare discussion groups, low-vision support group, movie nights and COVID related informational sessions.

Partnered in a new way with ACMi, to provide content of fitness classes and educational programming for Arlington Residents who do not have internet access, but do have access to cable television.

The robust COA Transportation program continued throughout the pandemic under new guidelines and completed over 4,700 rides. There was no charge for transportation services from April – June.

Distributed \$14,500 through the Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief Fund, \$25,500 through the Senior Property Tax Work off program and \$3,000 through the Harry Barber program.

Connected over 100 residents with volunteer SHINE Councilors for Medicare enrollment assistance

and over 50 residents with our volunteer attorney for legal assistance.

Continued as a SNAP outreach provider, assisting 67 residents with enrollment.

Continued providing assistance to residents applying for LYHEAP Fuel Assistance with both new applications and renewals, in a socially distanced manner.

Served 50 residents monthly through the Greater Boston Food Bank CSFP program, moving to a delivery only model due to the pandemic.

Received funding from Lahey Hospital and Medical Center to provide 60 residents with local and organic produce weekly for 20 weeks in the summer months.

Over 1,000 one on-one direct social work services were provided by COA Social Workers via home visits, office appointments or phone consultation.

Our COA Nurse completed over 120 at home flu shots in 2019 which allowed these residents to stay in their homes and not risk exposure to COVID. We also partnered with Walgreens pharmacy to provide an outdoor flu clinic as a safer alternative for older adults in Arlington who were limiting indoor exposure.

COA Volunteers assisted with over 500 requests for groceries and pharmacy related errands for high risk individuals.

65 volunteers delivered 140 turkey dinners to isolated older adults on Thanksgiving Day.

75 holiday gift bags were distributed by volunteers to homebound older adults through our 3rd annual Warm Wishes program.

The Arlington for All Ages 5K Race took place virtually in September, raising over \$3,000 toward the Capital Campaign.

Conducted 3 socially distanced, outdoor podiatry clinics in order to meet the need for this service despite the pandemic.

Held various “grab and go” drive through events including ice cream socials, pumpkin patch pick up and holiday gift bag distribution in the Maple Street driveway, allowing us to see our older residents in person, at a distance, and bring a smile to their day.



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VETERANS' SERVICES

Veterans' Services is a Division of Health and Human Services. The Director of Veterans' Services works with Veterans living in Arlington to assist with accessing basic needs. Through Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 115, direct financial assistance is provided to veterans who qualify. Additionally, the Director assists veterans with accessing federal VA benefits.

2020 Veteran Services' Highlights

- The Director serves as the Chairman of the Veterans Council along with six other members. The Council focuses on addressing current issues related to veteran memorials, the review and development of policies pertaining to Arlington veterans, and new projects to promote Arlington and veterans. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Director and members of the council conducted public meetings regarding the development of a new Veteran Memorial Park. These meetings will continue once current restrictions are removed.
- Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the annual Memorial Day ceremony was broadcast live by ACMi without public participation. The ceremony focused on the meaning and history of Gold Star families along with recognizing the 75th anniversary of World War II. The Veterans Day ceremony was broadcast by ACMi, highlighting various locations in Arlington.
- The Director coordinated efforts to collect and distribute personal protective equipment and supplies needed by our first responders to protect them from COVID-19. Arlington residents generously donated masks, gowns, face shields, gloves, and disinfectant products.
- The Director assists local veterans and families in applying for, and receiving, federal VA benefits. Arlington veterans and/or dependents receive nearly \$344,167.00 per month in tax-free veteran benefits from the VA.
- The monument honoring Lt. Richard Buzzell was unveiled. In addition to the new memorial a new flag pole and two benches were installed. These improvements greatly enhance the memorial and allow residents an opportunity to enjoy this new location. An official re-dedication ceremony will be planned in the future.
- Arlington suffered the loss of two military veterans this year. Mary Foley, an Air Force vet-

eran and long-time Arlington resident, was a Korean and Vietnam era veteran who passed away in April with no living family members. While adhering to COVID-19 guidelines residents lined Mass Ave to honor Mary and her service to our nation. In November CWO2 Marwan Gahbour was killed while serving on active duty overseas. The Director worked closely with state and local agencies to coordinate a fitting tribute, honoring the service of CWO2 Marwan Gahbour and his family.

FY2022 Veteran Services' Goals

- The re-dedication of the new memorial honoring Lt. Richard Buzzell.
- The Director will continue to engage local residents, in public meetings, regarding the development of a new Veteran Memorial park.
- The Director will continue to engage the community on benefits and services available to our veterans and families. The focus will include increasing public participation in our Memorial Day and Veteran Day ceremonies.
- The Director will continue to work with other agencies and companies in the area to promote benefits and services provided on the local, state, and federal level.



ARLINGTON YOUTH COUNSELING CENTER

The Arlington Youth Counseling Center (AYCC) is a community-based mental health center licensed by the Department of Public Health and serving Arlington youth (ages 3-21) and their families. AYCC is the leading provider of outpatient and school-based child and adolescent mental health services in Arlington, offering individual, group, and family counseling, psychiatric evaluation, and medication management. AYCC is committed to ensuring that all community youth and families have access to culturally sensitive and high quality care. To this end, AYCC strives to identify and address systemic inequities that create barriers to care, including financial barriers. AYCC is one of the only providers in the area that accepts youth with public health insurance and provides thousands of dollars of free and reduced-fee care to families who are uninsured, under-insured, or who otherwise cannot afford the cost of deductibles and copays. In addition to mental health services, AYCC

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oversees First Step- a support group for victims and survivors of domestic violence, and offers community resource support and case management services to Arlington residents experiencing homelessness, economic instability, and other basic resource needs.

The following list captures some of AYCC's highlights from 2020:

Provided mental health services to 367 children, teens, and adult caregivers, including 107 new AYCC clients in 2020. Conducted a total of 7,750 sessions (including psychotherapy, psychiatric evaluation, and medication treatment).

Provided an additional 600 hours of clinical consultation and care coordination to AYCC clients and families.

Implemented telehealth services in March to ensure continued access to care for existing and prospective AYCC clients during the pandemic. In total, AYCC conducted over 6,000 telehealth sessions with clients and their families.

Between January and March of 2020, provided 436 school-based counseling sessions to 69 students in the Arlington Public School through the Project Success program. During the pandemic, AYCC clinicians continued to offer counseling services to 75 Project Success clients via telehealth.

Provided weekly therapeutic support to students in the Workplace via a combination of in-person and virtual activities.

Conducted a nine-week Parenting Support Group for parents and caregivers of elementary-aged children in Arlington.

Provided over \$30,000 in free and reduced fee care to 23 families in need of financial assistance.

Facilitated weekly therapeutic groups for victims and survivors of domestic violence. Support groups were suspended in March due to the pandemic, but group leaders provided ongoing support to individual group members remotely.

Collaborated with Arlington Public Schools to address the impact of racism on the mental health of

students, and helped coordinate anti-racist and implicit bias trainings for school personnel and administrators.

Provided community resource support and case management to 76 Arlington residents experiencing economic instability, homelessness, housing instability, food insecurity, barriers to healthcare, and other basic resource needs.

- Partnered with the Arlington Health and Human Services Corporation to establish the Arlington COVID19 Relief Fund. To date, the fund has raised over \$200,000 in community donations, sponsorships, and grants to support the essential needs of community members impacted by the pandemic.
- Administered over \$100,000 in emergency financial assistance from the Arlington COVID19 Relief Fund to 60 community members in need.
- Collaborated with the Board of Youth Services and Arlington Public Schools to offer a Virtual Forum "Holding Strong During Tough Times: Managing Anxiety and Promoting Resiliency in the Family." The presentation featured Dr. Nadja Reilly, and was attended by over 60 parents and other members of the community.



- Collaborated with the Board of Youth Services to organize AYCC's "50for50" Fundraising Campaign. The campaign sought to raise \$50,000 in honor of AYCC's 50th Anniversary. Thanks to the generous outpouring of support from the community, AYCC far exceeded its goal, raising nearly \$60,000 to help fund future mental health programs and services at AYCC.



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

In 2019 the Department of Health and Human Services hired a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Coordinator to serve as the ADA Coordinator, to manage and support the work, initiatives and goals of the Disability Commission, Human Rights Commission and LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission, and lead the racial equity work for the Town. In late 2020 the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Division was established and is made up of a DEI Director and an Administrative Assistant. The DEI Division collaborates and partners with a number of departments, boards and commissions across the Town, in addition to external organizations, to advance equity goals. The DEI Division is heavily involved in the planning and executing of many of the programs and events put on by the three commissions under the division. The following activities and programs are some of the highlights that took place during 2020:

Training & Education

- Arlington joined the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE), membership includes participation in monthly meetings with jurisdictions across the country working on various aspects of racial equity, additional discussions and topic tailored workshops are attended.
- The Town started the Race And Equity Leadership (REAL) Training Program facilitated by the National League of Cities, in which approximately 65 Town leaders are participating in a multi-level racial equity training, expanding knowledge and skills in how to operationalize and properly use racial equity toolkits in our work.
- A Core Equity Team made up of Town employees, representing most departments, has been established to work more closely with DEI Director to advance initiatives.
- The Town contracted with racial equity consultancy Powerful Pathways to facilitate community dialogues around race, social justice, and equity, and to help foster a stronger relationship to build trust within the community.
- DEI Director is an active member of bi-weekly Racial Equity Learning Community offered through the CHNA 17, and an active member on both the Reparations and the Education Committees with the NAACP Mystic Valley Branch.

Programs and Projects

- Established a Business Task Working group, with members of the Disability, Rainbow, and Human Rights Commissions to focus on how to engage with businesses to promote and support an anti-discriminatory and unbiased set of best practices.
- Set up a recurring chairs/co-chairs meeting, for the leaders to come together to share ideas and work through group challenges.
- Hosted Community Conversations-series of race talks in collaboration with the AHRC, APD, APS, VISIONS, INC, ACMi and other participants; topics included
 - Session 1: A Time of Reflection & Action
 - Session 2: Racism and Housing
 - Session 3: Arlington Public Schools Talk about School Discipline
 - Session 4: Elevating Suppressed Voices
 - Session 5: VISIONS, Inc. Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Climate Assessment of APD
 - Session 6: Arlington Public Schools Listens to Suppressed Voices
 - Session 7: Town Session with Richard Pedrini: Apology and Acknowledgement
- Co-sponsored Black Lives Matter Vigil and Juneteenth Celebration.
- Co-facilitated with Powerful Pathways to provide the Community Racial Justice Teach-Ins; a five-session pilot program for community members to participate in workshop style discussions on racial justice topics over the course of three months in early 2021.
- Coordinated commission involvement in Fair Housing Action Plan, in collaboration with the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD).
- Pride Banner campaign with Rainbow Commission to create Pride banners for the center of town to celebrate and spread awareness of Pride Month.
- Co-Hosted with the Disability Commission a public information session on the ADA Self-Evaluation Transition and Implementation Plan, presented by the Institute for Human Centered Design and DPCD.
- In partnership with DPCD and DPW successfully awarded CDBG funding to continue the curb cut ramps program.
- Established the Elevating Arlington's Voices of Color (EAVoC) Archive Project, in partnership with the Robbins Library and Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture (ACAC) in early 2021.

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Future Goals

Establish Municipal Equality Index (MEI) Working Group to address areas in need of change to improve the Town's laws, policies, and services affecting the LGBTQIA+ community.

Continue to craft an Equity Action Plan that will provide the beginning stages of a roadmap for advancing equity across all facets of the Town, that will be a living document to be added to, and changed as seen fit.

Continue to provide, improve, and build up educational programming and opportunities, for employees and the community at large.

Sustain and expand the EAVoC project and supplemental programming throughout the 2021 year

COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

The Arlington Disability Commission (ADC) continued to provide information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to Arlington officials, residents, public and private agencies, and others to ensure that people with physical, sensory, cognitive, mental illness, and other disabilities have equal access to Town facilities, services, and programs. The ADC thanks our new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Director, Jillian Harvey, who was a tremendous support during a difficult year.

The ADC publicly applauds the work of the Department of Public Works for the sidewalk replacement project in the center of town. Residents' access to Town buildings, shops, and events was vastly improved. With an expanded budget, ADC was able to contribute assistance funds to other projects around Town, including renovating flooring in the Town Hall vestibule, and using CDBG (Community Development Block Grants) funds to continue the curb cut ramps program.

The ADC continued to meet with Town Officials to discuss the rights of people with disabilities in order to work towards full community inclusion within the Town of Arlington. Therefore, the ADC welcomed presentations and dialogues with Special Education Director Alison Elmer, Police Chief Julie Flaherty, Department of Public Works Director Michael Rademacher, Town Counsel Douglas Heim, and several members of the Planning and Community Development Department.

Commissioners continue to volunteer and participate on various Town committees and projects to share our unique lived experiences. For example, the ADC was actively involved with the Arlington High School Building Committee, including funding an Institute for Human-Centered Design review of the plans. In 2020, ADC members were also particularly active on the Election Modernization Committee, the Sustainable Transportation Advisory Plan Committee, and Arlington Re-development Board meetings.

Communication is crucial to improving accessibility in Arlington.

In 2020 the ADC:

- Debuted a Facebook page.
- Voted to assist funding the Town's website ADA-Redesign project.
- Consulted with Town staff to ensure captioning for Virtual Town Meeting.

The ADA Self-Evaluation Transition and Implementation Plan, which examined twenty-seven municipal buildings, was presented to the public during 2020. Going forward, this detailed assessment will help prioritize necessary improvements to infrastructure throughout the Town. Further, the ADC was able to use this plan to apply for a Massachusetts Office of Disability Municipal Improvement Grant.

In March the ADC attended the Town-sponsored Volunteer Fair. Dedicated volunteers with disabilities are making a difference here in Arlington. The ADC notes with sadness the passing of long-time Commission member Beverly Bevilacqua, whose kindness was legendary as a long-time volunteer with the ADC and the Council on Aging.

The ADC will continue to advocate for and ensure the rights of Arlington residents living with disabilities. All interested residents are encouraged to attend the monthly public meetings, on the third Wednesday of each month at 4:00 p.m.



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Arlington Human Rights Commission (AHRC) was created by Town Meeting in 1993 to advance issues related to the fair and equal treatment of individuals and to create a mechanism for addressing complaints arising out of these issues. The mission of the AHRC is to work individually and collaboratively with other groups in our community to celebrate the ever-changing tapestry of our town, and to emphasize, through educational outreach, the danger of intolerance at every level. The Town Manager, School Committee, Select Board, and the Town Moderator have appointing authority for thirteen members of the Commission.

The AHRC met monthly throughout the year. The current co-chairs, Sharon Grossman and Kristen Bauer, were elected in August 2019. In January 2021, new co-chairs will be elected.

During 2020 there was continued discussion within the Town about diversity, racial equity, and inclusion.

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The Black Lives Matter movement encouraged deeper reflection and examination of systemic racism within our town. Continuing incidents of racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and others demonstrated the continued need for us all to address these issues. The AHRC took many concrete steps to address individual incidents of human rights violations, promote discussion and debate about critical human rights issues in town, and foster activities to make Arlington a more welcoming and inclusive community.

During 2020 the Communications, Schools and Education, Events, and Outreach Working Groups continued to engage community members to partner with Commissioners, expand the Commission's work and reach, and enable us to develop more programming. Working Groups meet monthly and report back to the full Commission at regular meetings.

Education, Training, and Institution Building

- Drafted a Commissioner role description, adopted a protocol governing police participation in AHRC meetings, and amended rules and regulations governing the work of the AHRC to reflect current conditions.
- Trained Commission members on biases with True Story Theatre.
- Held two retreats for AHRC Commissioners to address our governing rules and regulations, community engagement and top goals for the year ahead.

Community Outreach

- Continued to offer a citizen's forum during each monthly meeting to give residents the opportunity to address the Commission on matters relating to equality and fairness. This year, at least several dozen citizens took advantage of this opportunity. Citizens attended most Commission meetings.
- Continued monthly agenda item to enable Commissioners to discuss issues raised by community members at the previous month's meeting.
- Continued monthly Commissioners' Coffee Chats to enable members of the community to informally meet and share ideas on human rights issues with two Commissioners each month.
- Regularly received information about and participated in Massachusetts Association of Human Rights Commission (MAHRC) meetings.
- Continued co-sponsorship of the Town's Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration and began working collaboratively to support its efforts.

- Celebrated Black History Month in February 2020 by sponsoring a series of events including hanging banners along Massachusetts Avenue highlighting Black Massachusetts citizens and a film series, one of which attended by 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment Reenactors.
- Co-Sponsored a series of Community Conversations in 2020 related to racial equity, education, housing, and policing.
- Sponsored virtual Black Lives Matter Vigil and Juneteenth Celebration.
- Issued statements on the following:
 - Protecting Human Rights During the COVID-19 Pandemic
 - Standing Against Police Brutality and Racial Violence
 - Vandalism of the Black Lives Matter Banner at Arlington High School
 - Social Media Misuse
 - Black Lives Matter Sign Vandalism
 - Ongoing Repression of the Muslim Community in India
 - Back the Blue Rally
 - Upcoming Town Meeting Articles
 - Encouraging voter participation
- Proposed a proclamation in support of Black Lives Matter that included the hanging of a Black Lives Matter banner at Town Hall, which the Select Board adopted.
- Hosted a forum on Native Imagery and encouraged celebration of Indigenous People's Day, cosponsored a Native American Heritage Day social media takeover, and drafted a proposed proclamation and warrant article for adoption in 2021.
- Joined the Town's effort to encourage businesses to be inclusive and welcoming.
- Hosted panel discussions on COVID-19 in Community, Equity and Affordable Housing, and Beyond Banners: From Symbolism to Substance as the keynote for BLM Day.
- Started a regular e-newsletter that reaches over 700 subscribers.
- Posted 180 times on Facebook, with some posts reaching nearly 3,000 people.
- Started a Twitter account which currently has 500 followers. Made 110 tweets, which were seen by approximately 52,000 people.
- Started an Instagram account, that currently has 148 followers, and a YouTube page where all of the recorded events are available for viewing.
- Continued the internship program with Arlington High School that included four AHS students.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

- Cooperated with, co-sponsored events with, or publicized events with a wide range of community groups and government entities.
- Reached out to the Arlington School Committee to express concerns related to equity and disproportionality of discipline issues within the Arlington Public Schools in hopes of working together.
- Began monthly meetings with a land acknowledgement statement: "We acknowledge that the Town of Arlington is located on the ancestral lands of the Massachusetts Tribe, the tribe of Indigenous peoples from whom the Colony, Province, and Commonwealth have taken their names. We pay our respects to the ancestral bloodline of the Massachusetts Tribe and their descendants who still inhabit historic Massachusetts territories today".
- Sent a letter to the Arlington School Committee related to the recent superintendent search process.
- Adopted the following tagline, which is now being used by many Town Departments on email and other correspondence: *Arlington values equity, diversity, and inclusion. We are committed to building a community where everyone is heard, respected, and protected.*

Incidents and Complaint Response

- Hate incidents continued, with increasing complaints related to BLM signs and protests.
- Collected information regarding hate incidents occurring in Arlington from residents, schools, and the APD, as follows: 48 Cases, 8 of which involved the APS and 29 of which were also referred from or handled by the APD.
- Continued to work closely with the APD and APS to learn of, track and, where necessary, address incidents impacting human and civil rights.
- Continued to work under a Memorandum of Agreement that included the APS, AHRC, and APD that set forward Guidelines for Responding to Hate Incidents in the Arlington Public Schools.

AHRC Year and Goals Moving Forward

Our Commission has one new member this year, increasingly reflecting the growing diversity of our town. Our entire Commission is energized to work together with the community to address the challenging human rights issues facing those who live, work, pass through, and visit Arlington.

As we move forward, we are ever mindful of the damage to our community that has yet to be repaired. Regrettably, our town has experienced incidents of hate, intolerance, and inflammatory language stemming from racism, anti-Semitism, anti-immigrant sentiment, homophobia and systemic discrimination. Hateful incidents like these have caused widespread fear. *Arlington can and must do better.*

We recognize that every person in Arlington deserves to be valued, respected, and protected. Thus, even through the COVID-19 pandemic when we needed to pivot to virtual meetings and gatherings, we continue to increase opportunities to be heard through hosting, sponsoring, and partnering with community programs and events to welcome and celebrate diversity and participating in town programs. These include community activities, discussions with police, and outreach to community groups to foster respect, and facilitate training, education and incident reporting with the police, the town and our schools to increase protection for all in Arlington.

Arlington values equity, diversity, and inclusion. We are committed to building a community where everyone is heard, respected, and protected

LGBTQIA+ RAINBOW COMMISSION

Established by Town Meeting in 2017, the LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission is a volunteer group of Arlington residents, appointed by the Town government, who promote the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals and groups through affirming policies and programs, resources, advocacy, and community-building with the vision that the Town of Arlington will fully include the LGBTQIA+ community in all aspects of Town life.

During 2020 the Commission focused efforts in these main areas:

Community-engagement activities hosted by the Rainbow Commission

- Community Outreach events to bring the community together virtually as the pandemic lockdown continued - April & May
- Virtual Pride gathering, attended by representative Dave Rogers
- Created a form for community members to submit their needs for support and interest in volunteering to help those in need.

Community events cosponsored by the Rainbow Commission

- Virtual Drag Prom - Robbins Library
- LGBTQ Seniors and Friends Karaoke & Cocoa + weekly virtual meetings
- Listening to Black Voices - LexPride

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

- Transgender Day of Remembrance – LexPride
- Intergenerational SAGE Table – Council on Aging
- ABCs of LGBTQIA+ on ACMI
- Queer Book Group (monthly) – Robbins Library
- Reel Queer films (bimonthly) – Council on Aging and Robbins Library
- Collaborations with Town Government and Staff
- We welcomed Jillian Harvey, the Town’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Director, as a key liaison and support resource, who helped keep us on track with Town leadership and policies, and provided invaluable counsel and guidance throughout the year.
- Provided feedback on Arlington Police Department’s Policy for interacting with Transgender Citizens.
- Pride Banners - Raised over \$3500 to fund 10+ banners, which were hung in early September and plan to reuse for June 2021 during pride month.
- Recruited new commissioners to further grow the commission.
- Worked with Town Manager and Health & Human Services to implement changes to maintain a Municipal Equality Index Score of 100 for Arlington for the first time.
- Attended meetings of the Human Rights Commission, LexPride, and Select Board.
- Participated in Town Commission chair meetings, with the Human Rights Commission and Disability Commission.
- Attended APS Superintendent Candidate interviews and provided feedback.
- Invited journalist to our monthly meeting to hear about APS/RC engagement, resulting in coverage in yourArlington.com.

Advocacy & Social Justice

- Black Lives Matter - promoted support for local BLM demonstrations/ activities being held in Arlington with our members and social media followers, including making a public statement.
- Coordinated with Jill Harvey to support and amplify her efforts for town programming
- Helped draft the annual Pride Proclamation from the Select Board, highlighting the continued challenges of LGBTQIA+ people of color.
- Posted a statement on verbal attack and use of a homophobic slur against a town resident.

- ACMI interview with commissioner Lisa Krinsky on the LGBTQIA+ community’s reaction to #BlackLivesMatter

Communications

- Maintained Facebook page (335 followers - up from 275 in 2019), Twitter (234 followers - up from 170), email list (245 contacts - up from 195) and website (5473 views - up from 2,400, 3,982 visitors - up from 1350) to update the community on Commission activities, other area events and issues of interest or importance to the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Responded to countless emails from individuals seeking resources and advice regarding LGBTQIA+ issues.
- Posted about events, engaged in community discussions and shared resources in various Arlington Facebook groups.

The Commission generally meets on the third Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom during the pandemic. All meetings are open to the public and we encourage community members and representatives from other Town committees and commissions to attend. For more information, see <https://rainbowarlington.org/> or email rainbow@town.arlington.ma.us.



Pride Banners on Mass Ave.