

## ASAPs and the Home Care Program

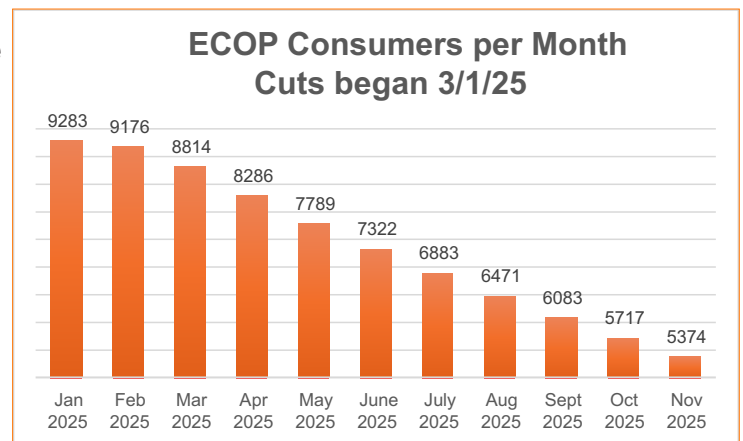
Aging Services Access Points, or “ASAPs”, are the state-contracted nonprofit agencies providing home and community-based services to older adults and people with disabilities **in every city and town** across Massachusetts. Within the Home Care Program, services include Homemaking, Personal Care, Home Health Aide, Companion, Home Delivered Meals, Respite Care, Medication Assistance, Complex Care Oversight by a nurse, and much more. These vital services enable consumers to successfully age in place and avoid or delay moving to a nursing home or other long-term care facility.

## The ECOP Program: Maximum Enrollment Caps

The Enhanced Community Options Program (ECOP) is one of the components of the Home Care Program, specifically designed to support older adults who meet the **clinical eligibility for nursing home care** and who require services at least twice that of a general Home Care Program consumer. This higher level of services enables high-risk consumers to remain living independently in their homes and communities, rather than moving to more costly nursing homes.

On March 1, 2025, the Executive Office of Aging & Independence (“AGE”) implemented maximum enrollment caps for ECOP which **reduced the number of consumers allowed to be enrolled in this program by 41%** between February and November of 2025, with the November cap currently expected to remain in place at least through the remainder of FY26. While framed as “caps” on enrollment, these are essentially “cuts” to services for new consumers and financial “cuts” to the ASAPs who are already operating on razor-thin margins.

**ASAPs are still providing existing ECOP consumers with the high level of services required by their care plans, but they are not being paid for the full care plan cost** when the number of consumers in the ECOP program exceeds a particular ASAP’s enrollment cap for that month.



Under the current rates (101 CMR 417.00), the annual cost to the state for services provided to an ECOP consumer is \$16,400. In comparison, even a conservative estimate of \$80,000 per year for a MassHealth consumer receiving long-term care in a skilled nursing facility highlights the **clear savings of ensuring timely access to the ECOP program for those who qualify**.

### What is Managed Intake?

On July 1, 2025, AGE instituted Managed Intake for the first time since 2016. Managed Intake prohibits ASAPs from enrolling consumers in the Home Care Program who are Priority Level 4 except under limited circumstances. Priority Level 4 consumers are defined as “individuals with limited formal/informal supports and a critical unmet need of Meal Preparation”. In addition to meal preparation, these individuals may also have additional “non-critical” needs such as housework, laundry, non-medical transportation, or socialization. While AGE encourages referrals to other nutrition support programs such as food banks, many of these resources are also facing funding cuts and may be unable to address an increased demand. If Managed Intake continues, we project that more than 1,000 consumers could be on the wait list by the end of the fiscal year, based on July and August 2025 trends and the number of consumers already waiting.

Essentially, **Managed Intake creates wait lists, meaning that your constituents may face longer waits to receive needed support**, which also creates an **additional burden for any formal or informal caregivers** on whom they rely.

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### What Does All of This Mean for You & Your Constituents?

Your office may receive phone calls or emails from constituents with complaints about not being able to access services due to these new ECOP caps and Managed Intake. Consumers in your district may find themselves on wait lists for home and community-based services and caregivers may be frustrated by a lack of needed support. The ECOP cap also creates challenges for consumers being discharged from a nursing facility or hospital who are not on MassHealth, as they may not be able to access the services needed to maintain the required level of care in the community after discharge.

**ASAPs have prided themselves on supporting older adults and people with disabilities in communities across the Commonwealth for more than 50 years, yet these wait lists now limit their ability to provide necessary services to every qualified consumer.** We recognize that these are challenging times for the state budget, but we urge you to ensure that consistent and adequate funding for the State Home Care Program is a priority of the Commonwealth, to allow ASAPs to support older adults and people with disabilities in your district throughout FY26 and beyond.

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