Acton Nursing Services Task Force (ANSTF)

Report to the Acton Board of Selectmen
October 5th, 2015

This progress report will briefly review ANSTF objective and goals, its findings to date, and its recommendations for the future

ANSTF Charter - Objective

To optimize the scope, financial performance and residents' awareness of ANS services while preserving high quality care.

ANSTF Charter - Goals

- Create a Network Development plan to increase referrals and reimbursement.
- Create a marketing and communication plan to increase exposure and awareness.
- Propose a structure for a standing committee.

Acton Nursing Services Task Force

- Started work in February 2015
- Established basic, verified facts about ANS (Q&A)
- Reviewed prior marketing efforts
- Increased the understanding of the ANS financial and operational procedures and responsibilities
- Focused on ANSTF objectives
- Researched demographics, national trends, costs and other details relevant to ANS marketing plans

Acton Nursing Services

ANS – a brief background :

- Established 1923
- Medicare certified home care agency since 1966
- Has earned top ratings for the quality of its services and above-average outcomes
- As part of Acton Health Department ANS works closely with other Acton municipal services
- On call 365/24/7.

ANS services

- Nursing
- Physical, Occupational, and Speech Therapy
- Home Health Aides
- Medical Social Worker
- Public Health Services

- Wellness Visits
- Vaccinations
- Wellness Discussions
- Blood Pressure Clinics
- Flu Clinic Registration
- Podiatry Clinic

Acton Nursing Services website

www.actonnursingservices.com

www.actonnursingservices.com

Marketing Assessment

ANS and ANSTF Activities to Date

- Reviewed and accepted previous Marketing Assessment
- Created and published "ANS Q & A" document
- Improved ANS visibility on the Town website
- Selected advertising, sponsorships in community outlets
- Ongoing work by Friends of Acton Nursing Services
- Meetings with local service and commercial organizations (Rotary and realtors)
- Initiated work on 4-phase Direct Mail campaign (Mail Date: 4th Qtr), targeted toward Acton residents age 60 and older and their families or caregivers

Marketing Assessment (contd.)

Priorities

- Increase awareness of ANS among Acton residents and families, and emphasize patient choice of home care agency upon discharge
- Increase awareness among doctors, hospitals and discharge planners of Acton Nursing Services' established record of top quality care and high ratings which benefit the referrers as well as the patients
- A separate effort is underway to research entities that can refer patients

Messaging

- Leverage the high quality of ANS services - highest Elite rankings, above national and state averages for Medicare-certified agencies
- Emphasize to potential patients and referrers that ANS long-term stability and availability is assured by its inclusion as a Town department

ANS finances

ANSTF has made progress in its efforts to understand and resolve the available information about ANS finances :

- **Expenses** are closely tracked and timely
- **Revenues** lag the services provided, sometimes by many months, and are only recorded by the Town Accountant as payments are received
- **Privacy restrictions** (HIPAA) require ANS to do the billing and limit access to financial information which makes detailed analysis difficult
- ANS is now implementing **new billing software** which is expected to allow a more detailed analysis by ANSTF without violating the privacy restrictions.
- Town and ANS analyses conclude that (apart from separately funded charitable cases) **all admissions generate revenues that exceed their direct operating costs**, and make a contribution to fixed costs

New ANS Software

- Cheaper and better
- Important component in managing and understanding the business aspects of ANS

Old Software	New Software
Did not have a report suite	Allows for button push reports on claim performance
Cost $1,600 per month	Costs $800 per month
Required outsourcing billing	Allows for in house billing
Was not clinically robust	Allows for improved documentation
Did not capture quality metrics	Captures quality metrics vital to ACA reimbursement opportunities.

Ongoing support of ANS by Friends of Acton Nursing Services (FANS)

PO Box 541, Acton MA 01720-0541

FANS has provided, and continues to provide to ANS :

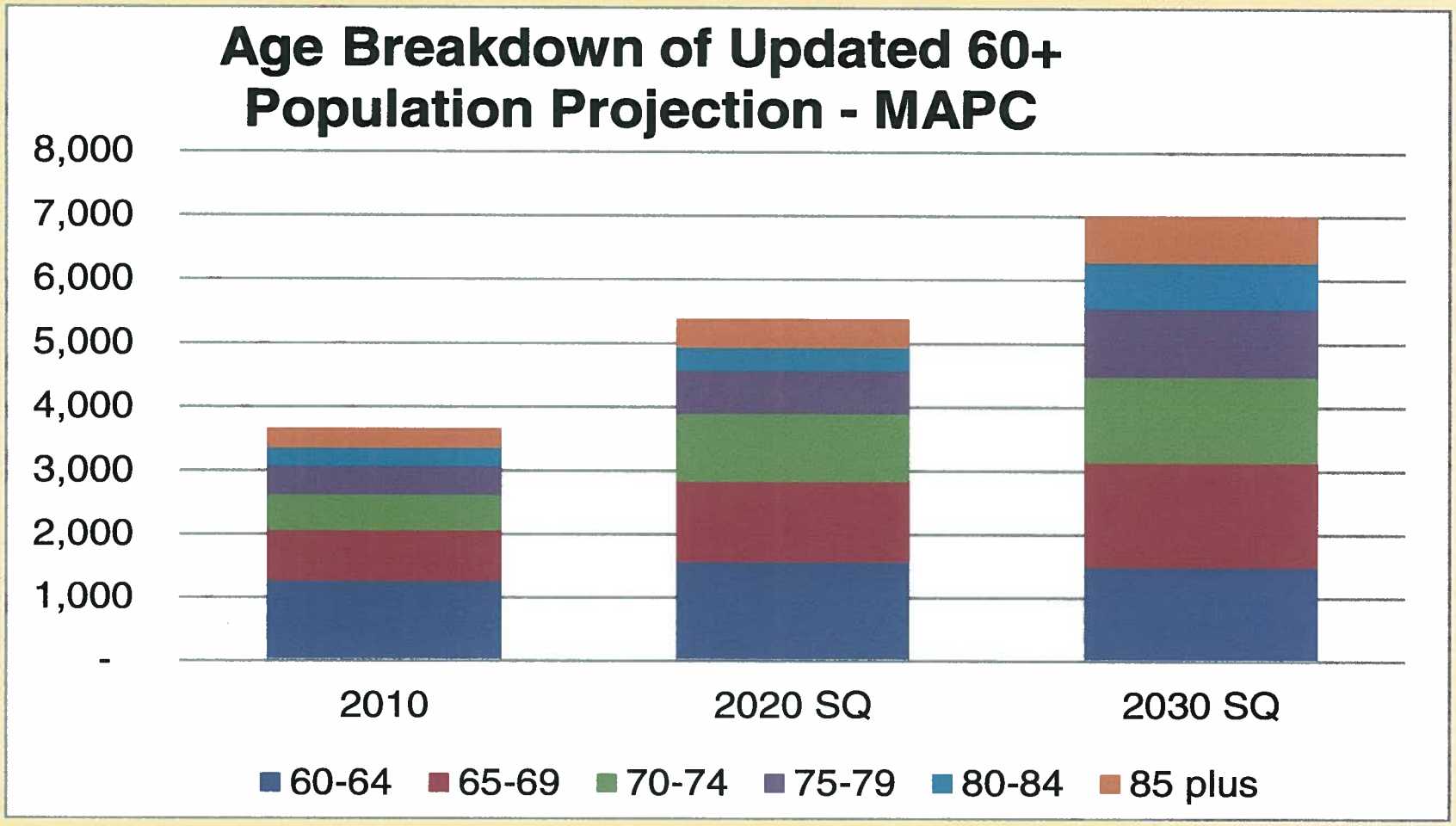
- **Equipment and materials,** including:
  - telehealth equipment, nursing manuals, medical library books for AML, blood pressure equipment for nurses, test equipment, etc.
- **Volunteers**, including:
  - For flu clinics, podiatry clinics, wellness university, etc.
  - To distribute brochures, FANS newsletter, provide representation for ANS at public events
- **Funds,** including:
  - For ANS promotional items
  - For medical services for residents unable to pay (supplies, respite care, medications, nutritional supplements)

FANS can be contacted through ANS or by writing to the above address

ANS and Acton demographics

- ANSTF has determined that the demographics of Acton residents represents **a good potential to increase ANS admissions** by promoting ANS services, quality and long-term stability as a Town department with demonstrated support by Acton taxpayers
- Although ANS services are available to all residents, **the age of the majority of its patients is 60 and up**, as it is nationally.
- The 60 and up Acton population is **large and increasing**.
- Of the population over 60, ANS is most likely to be of assistance to those **living alone** in homes or apartments (other than developments like Robbins Brook or Windsor Green where there is some measure of oversight and support) and households where both partners are older and may need assistance in caring for themselves or each other.

Source : Peter Ashton's Demographic Analysis for the Senior Center Building Committee, April 13, 2015



ANS and health care trends

ANS is well positioned to provide home care in the current health care environment

- The Affordable Care Act shifts focus to providing wellness and prevention services
- ANS provides a full range of services to the community
- ANS has a proven record of delivering quality outcomes.
- The availability of ANS services helps with the Town's goal of encouraging "empty nesters" to remain in Acton
- ANS has the support of Acton residents
- Overall health care environment trends appear to favor agencies such as ANS that focus on quality of service and integration into broader set of wellness services, especially for older citizens

Summary

- ANS provides valuable, high-quality services but many Acton residents do not know that ANS exists
- The immediate need is to increase the number of admissions
- The segment of Acton population most likely to need home care are residents 60 years and older; this segment is large and increasing
- Marketing directed at the 60 and older population is now under way
- Privacy restrictions have hindered ANSTF efforts to obtain better financial information for its objective to optimize the scope of ANS service and its financial performance
- New ANS software has the capability to provide better information without violating privacy laws

ANS is well positioned to meet the growing demand for its services generated by Acton demographics and by the increased emphasis on home care in the current health care environment.

Recommendations

In the next few months ANSTF will focus on

- the implementation of the Direct Mail campaign
- further updates of the information in the ANS Q & A document
- analysis of the financial information from the new software

ANSTF can continue to be effective in its present form, we are not ready to propose a structure for a standing committee.

ANSTF plans to complete its objective and goals and issue a final report before the next Annual Town Meeting.