

From: [Stow Laboratories Inc](#)
To: [Board of Selectmen](#)
Cc: [Manager Department](#); [Acton Nursing Service Task Force](#)
Subject: Acton Nursing Services Task Force, Final Report to the BoS
Date: Friday, September 09, 2016 4:23:58 PM
Attachments: [ANSTF Final Report, as sent to BoS 9-9-16.pdf](#)
[ANS Handout for April 2015 ATM 4-2-15 final A.pdf](#)
[ANS Postcard no 2 1-15-16.pdf](#)
[ANS Postcard no 3 1-15-16.pdf](#)
[ANS Postcard no 4 1-15-16.pdf](#)
[ANS Poster 1-26-16 CK Rev A.pdf](#)
[ANS Referral Letter Draft 121515.pdf](#)

To the Acton Board of Selectmen,

the Acton Nursing Services Task Force (ANSTF) hereby submits its Final Report. This completes our work, we will end our activities once you, the Board of Selectmen, have accepted this report.

ANSTF is on the agenda to present this report at your 9-26-2016 meeting. Please let me know if there is any change.

Members of ANSTF appreciate the opportunity to work with Acton's (almost) unique Nursing Services for the last 18 months. As we will discuss at your 9-26-2016 meeting, we feel that the effort was productive and beneficial to ANS and the town.

Regards,

Charlie Kadlec
ANSTF Chair

Acton Nursing Services Task Force (ANSTF)

Final Report to the Acton Board of Selectmen

ANSTF was created by the Board of Selectmen in February 2015 in response to the discussion and votes at the November 12, 2014 Special Town Meeting. ANSTF is a seven person board with staff support. This report covers the goals and objectives given to the ANSTF by the Selectmen as well as other work done by the ANSTF :

1. Network Development Plan
2. Increasing awareness of ANS and of its high ratings
3. Marketing and Communications
4. ANS finances
5. Axxess, new ANS software
6. Admissions and home visits
7. The future of home care in Acton
8. Miscellaneous
9. ANSTF recommendations to the Board of Selectmen

Please note :

Due to privacy laws and its role as, at best, an advisory group ANSTF was not able to take an active part in the other stated objectives -- optimizing ANS scope and financial performance while preserving high quality care. The day-to-day operational decisions which determine these factors are made by the ANS Director. ANS continues to receive high ratings and its financial performance has improved compared to FY2015, however ANSTF does not claim any credit for these positive developments.

As of 2012, all Public Health services provided by ANS operate under a separate budget and are not covered or enumerated in this report.

1 -- Network Development Plan

A Network Development Plan (NDP) is similar to a business development plan, but, does not include financial components. A NDP for Acton Nursing Services (ANS) would identify goals, high potential target market segments, strategies, tactics, and resource requirements to meet the objectives of ANS. The NDP could be used as a “roadmap” for increasing awareness and use of the services of ANS.

The ANSTF focused on raising citizen, community, and physician awareness of ANS. This is one component of a NDP. A more structured approach is called for to reach the various target market segments. There are three target segments with separate goals that require separate messages and tactics. The target segments are: Potential Consumers, Medical Practices, and Referring Institutions/Organizations. As shown below in the Marketing Communications Activity chart, the majority of effort was spent on the consumer segment.

Next steps in creating a NDP would include: Analysis of existing ANS clients and usage, identification of high potential Referral Institutions/Organizations, development of targeted “pitch” presentations, identification of resources to do prospecting meetings, and drafting the Proposals and Recommendations for presentation to Town Management for funding and approval.

2 -- Increasing citizens awareness of ANS

ANSTF was able to contribute to increasing citizens awareness of the existence and capabilities of the ANS by

- working with the Friends of Acton Nursing Services (FANS) to develop and distribute information at Town Meetings
- publishing a comprehensive “Q & A” document about ANS on the Town website
- providing information about ANS to Acton real estate agencies
- distributing posters about ANS for display by local businesses
- creating an insert about ANS for the quarterly tax bill mailing
- encouraging word-of-mouth referrals to ANS among various groups in town

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Acton residents are still unaware of the existence, capabilities, and high ratings of the ANS. Much still remains to be done.

3a -- Marketing and Communication

| Communication | Audience | Key Messages | Date |
|--|---|--|---|
| Town Meeting Handout | Attendees at Town Meeting | Awareness of ANS Testimonials from ANS Users | April 2015 |
| Frequently Asked Questions | Acton Town Website Visitors | Education and Awareness of ANS | Summer 2015 |
| ANS Information Brochure | Patient Prospects + Families | Acton's Resource for Home Care | Summer 2015 |
| ANS Banner on Route 27 | Drivers on Route 27 | ANS is here since 1923; award winner | Various |
| Postcard Mailings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents age 60+ • Residents age 55+ • Residents age 60+ • Residents age 60+ • Residents age 50-59 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acton's Best Kept Secret • Right to Choose • Award-Winning Local Service • Your Best Choice • Various Messages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nov. 12, 2015 • Jan. 20, 2016 • Feb. 22, 2016 • Mar, 21, 2016 • June 2016 |
| ANS Posters and Brochures | Visitors to Acton Library and Pharmacies; Residents at Senior Housing, Real Estate Brokers, Etc. | Education and Awareness of ANS | Various |
| FANS Premium-filled bags with first aid kit, tick remover, ID cards with emergency contact, pads, etc. | Attendees at Town Meetings and Polling Places | ANS Awareness and Health Reminders | April 5 & 6, 2016 |
| Patient Welcome Kit Insert | ANS Patients and Families | Request Response to Medicare Patient Satisfaction Surveys | May 2016 |
| Referral Letters and Referral Fact Sheet | Referring Physicians | Re-introduction and Awareness of ANS Ratings and Service Quality Information | May 2016 |
| FANS Newsletters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acton Boxboro Seniors • Special Interest Contacts | Wide range of timely topics to raise awareness of ANS; Useful health information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter 2016 • Spring 2016 |
| Municipal Quarterly Insert | Acton Taxpayers | Education and Awareness of ANS | Late June 2016 |

3b -- Marketing and Communications

Since its creation the task force has put a lot of time and effort into supporting ANS with its marketing. Because ANS is a small organization overwhelmingly focused on serving Acton and with a limited promotional budget, it is challenged in competing with larger well-funded home health care agencies. Many of these competitors are closely linked with hospitals, insurers and other medical services. Marketing is thus an important tool in making sure that consumers (patients, potential patients and their families), providers (hospitals, clinics, doctors and other health-related professional practices) and insurers are well-informed about the existence of -- and the quality of services provided by -- ANS.

Over the past year the task force has worked to develop accurate, agreed facts about ANS (e.g. the Q&A) and to identify audiences who should hear about ANS. ANS audiences include Acton residents in specific age groups; local civic organizations; named doctors, medical practices and hospital discharge coordinators serving Acton residents, and other referring institutions.

Communications tailored to these audiences include postcards, tax bill inserts, letters to providers and referrers, brochures, web site information and selected face-to-face presentations (examples listed in the accompanying chart). This has been a substantial effort which, anecdotally, appears to have started to pay off in terms of increasing awareness of ANS's role in our community and possibly some increase in admissions.

These audiences change constantly, and therefore we believe that continued marketing efforts are required to build on this early work and to ensure that all Acton residents and their medical and care providers are aware of the high quality of services available from their in-town VNA. We believe that a standing board or committee could provide worthwhile assistance to ANS. Although a priority should be to maintain accurate information on ANS and its performance, the main effort should be to continue identifying target audiences (which, as noted above, change constantly) and developing both the messages they should hear and the means of communicating those messages. In some instances this would involve repeated mailings or face-to-face presentations written by task force members but mostly delivered by ANS staff; in others it may be researching and writing "white papers" on specific topics that would help patients and their families make an informed choice of home health care agency (e.g. the federally-mandated right to choose for Medicare recipients). This non-clinical researching, writing and targeting can be done effectively by volunteers, leaving final approval and implementation to the Director of ANS.

4 -- ANS finances

The task force had hoped that it would be able to deliver on the financial and operational aspects of the charter given to it by the Board of Selectmen. However, over the past year and a half it has become apparent that the routine financial reporting systems available to the Town do not provide sufficient granularity, specificity or timeliness of accounting information about the nursing service that would have enabled us to do so. Consequently, the task force does not believe a town board or committee can play a role in developing a better understanding of the nursing services' financial operations. Similarly, in the area of patient-related operations, such as the cost and revenue profiles of specific types of medical condition or patient cohort (age, insurer, gender, etc.), we were unable to develop an approach that comply with HIPAA requirements for patient confidentiality (without formally making all ANSTF members "insiders" for HIPAA purposes). As is the case for all but the largest home care providers caring for thousands it is not possible to disguise or aggregate ANS patient records in any way that would not risk breaching confidentiality but allow us – as outsiders -- to do the analysis needed to prepare financial/operation reports.

Despite the task force's inability to deliver on these aspects of its charter, we strongly believe that financial and operational management and performance tracking are of the utmost importance and look forward to seeing this effort redoubled within the Town's management and accounting structures.

5 – Axxess, new ANS software

At the start of FY16 ANS purchased new Electronic Medical Record software called **Axxess**. ANS previous software was cumbersome and reports were difficult to extract. Axxess is a comprehensive Home Health program that provides point of care documentation of clinical visits, revenue cycle management, and data analysis for performance and outcomes benchmarking. The ANS Director and staff have found Axxess to be streamlined and user friendly. All aspects of care, billing and outcomes are easy to monitor. Reporting is complete and allows a full review of revenue, outcomes, and patient information. Axxess enables staff to verify documentation prior to billing and is directly connected to the Medicare billing system, FISS. Accounts Receivable can be watched in real time and any issue that may hold up billing identified. Problems can be resolved immediately, making Accounts Receivable cash flow more consistent and eliminating possible loss of revenue. Medicare Electronic Fund Transfers are easily posted to patient accounts, ANS does not have to wait for the paper remittance to come in the mail.

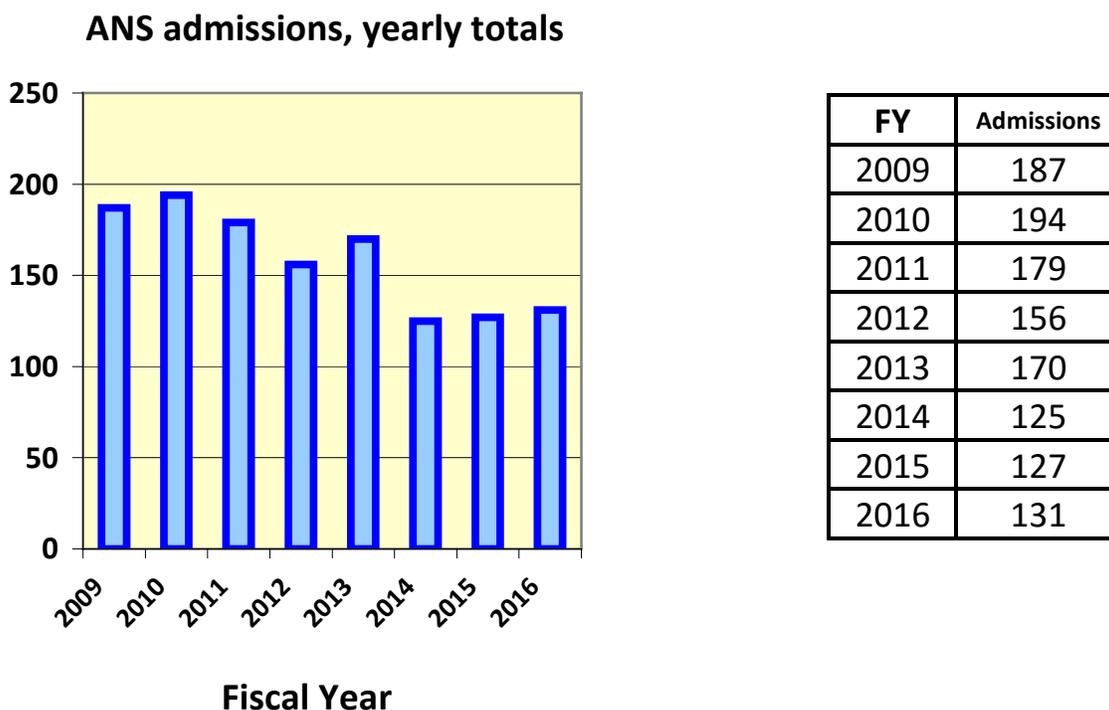
By changing software programs we are saving over \$5,000 per year in the Town Budget.

6 -- Admissions and home visits

As mentioned earlier, privacy laws do not allow ANS to provide the Task Force with information about its clients, and therefore a detailed financial analysis is not possible. ANS does compile, and can provide, the number of admissions and the number of visits by type of service.

6a -- Admissions

As a result of several meetings with ANS Director Heather York, Steve Barrett and other members of the Acton Finance Department ANSTF was assured that the ***number of admissions is a valid indicator of financial performance*** since each admission contributes to the “fixed costs” of ANS. The admissions for FY2009 through FY2016 are shown in the following table and graph.

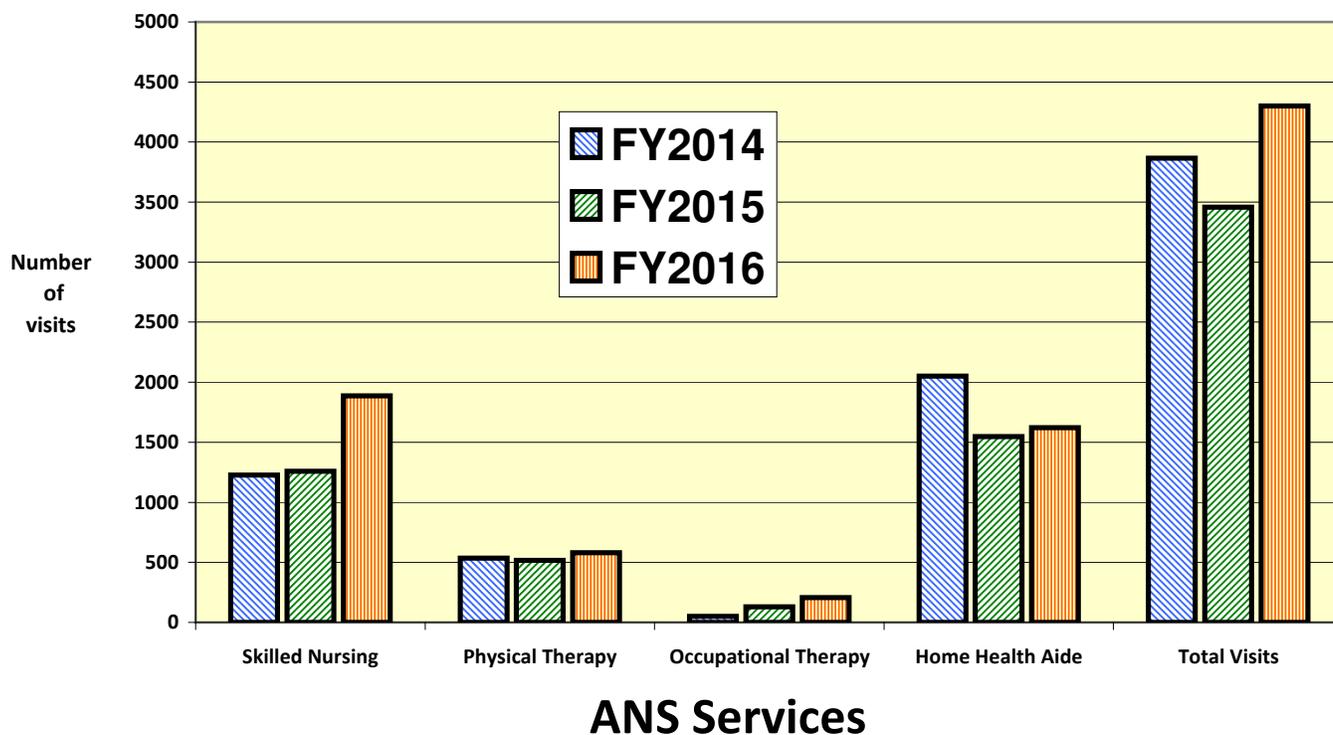


6b -- Home visits

The number of home visits is a valuable measure of the benefit of ANS services to Acton residents. As shown in the following table and graph the number of home visits averages more than 10 a day.

| ANS visits | FY2014 | FY2015 | FY2016 |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Skilled Nursing | 1228 | 1258 | 1887 |
| Physical Therapy | 535 | 516 | 581 |
| Occupational Therapy | 51 | 131 | 207 |
| Home Health Aide | 2051 | 1547 | 1621 |
| Speech Therapy | 0 | 5 | 4 |
| Total Visits | 3865 | 3457 | 4300 |

The number and type of home visits depend on the care needed by each patient and are not directly related to the number of admissions. In any fiscal year there are usually a number of patients receiving home visits who were admitted in the previous fiscal year.

ANS visits, totals for fiscal year

7 -- The future of home care in Acton

There are two factors which combine to indicate that the number of potential clients for ANS is likely to increase.

First, there is a national effort by the federal government as well as by the insurance companies who service the health care market to encourage the health care industry to minimize patient stays in hospitals, to transfer patients to home care as early as possible, and to provide services which allow older residents to “age in place”.

Second, the number of Acton residents age 60 and older is increasing, This was previously noted by Peter Ashton in his study for the Senior Center project and is confirmed by data for the last two years that ANSTF received from the Town Clerk.

Although there is no age limit or requirement for patients served by ANS, most of its patients are older, as is the case for home care nationally. As shown in the Table, this year, 2016, the number of Acton residents 60 and older is 4697, an increase of 332 in just one year.

| Year | 2015 | 2016 |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|
| Total population | 21378 | 22092 |
| 60 and older | 4365 | 20.4 % |
| 60 and older as % of total | 4697 | 21.3 % |

Peter Ashton estimated that the 60 and older population will be about 5400 by the year 2020, just four years from now. At the current rate of increase the 2020 number will exceed Peter’s estimate.

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Change, 2015 to 2016 | + 332 | + 0.9 % |
|---------------------------------|--------------|----------------|

8 -- Miscellaneous.

ANS is known both as “Acton Nursing Service” and “Acton Nursing Services” (plural). The latter is the preferred name. However, the ANS website was set up and still works under the “actonnursingservice.com” domain.

To prevent someone else acquiring the other version, ownership of the “**actonnursingservices.com**” domain was secured and transferred to the Town. It is also connected to the ANS website.

9 -- ANSTF recommendations to the BoS

ANSTF recommends that the Board of Selectmen create a standing committee consisting of 7 Members and 2 Associate Members, and including the Director of ANS whose participation is key to such committee's work. Interest in and support of ANS to be the main qualification for membership, knowledge of health care and home care would be desirable but not a requirement. Liaison with FANS and with the BoS has also been very beneficial. The primary purpose of the standing committee would be to assist ANS with marketing and related tasks, to continue efforts to increase awareness of ANS and to provide factual information about ANS including financial data to the community as needed.

Possible name : "Acton Nursing Services Advisory Committee" (ANSAC)

Respectfully submitted 9 September 2016

Acton Nursing Services Task Force

Ellen Feinsand, Clerk
Adrian Hancock, Member
Charles Kadlec, Chair
Marge Kennedy, Member
Florence M. Ross RN, Member and FANS liaison
Howard Sussman, Vice-Chair

Contributions and support by ANS Director Heather York, BoS Liaison Katie Green, and by previous ANSTF members Pamela Harting-Barrat, Brenda Gowing and Dick Calandrella are gratefully acknowledged.

ANSTF created the "ANS Q&A" document which is on the Town website at :

<http://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3182>

Attachments :

ANSTF also created or assisted ANS in the publication of various documents related to the ANS marketing efforts. The following are attached :

- Handout for the April 2015 ATM printed and distributed by FANS
- Postcards mailed to Acton residents by ANS
- A sample poster displayed by many local businesses
- A sample "letter to referrers"

**Acton Nursing Services
Referral Marketing Communication
Introductory Letter for Referral Prospects
Draft: December 15, 2015**

To: Potential Referring Organizations

Dear (Head of Discharge Planning/Social Services or Name of Individual, if known):

As you may be aware, Acton Nursing Services has been providing skilled home care services to patients in the greater Acton area for 92 years. It has been a Medicare-Certified home care agency since 1966. In 2014, the Town of Acton citizens voted to make Acton Nursing Services a town department. We would like to meet with you to familiarize you with our patient outcomes and high quality service commitment.

Acton Nursing Services can be an extension of the care you provide to your patients once they are ready for discharge to their homes. We have earned 3.5 stars from Medicare for the period of April 1, 2014 through March, 31, 2015, and have been named to the list of the 2015 top 25% of elite home health care providers by OCS HomeCare and Decision Health.

Our aim is to ensure that our patients return to their desired activities as soon as possible without the need for further hospital admission. We have achieved higher patient satisfaction ratings than the Massachusetts and National averages for home care agencies.

Insert paragraph if data is known, make this as specific as possible:

We have had _____ referrals from _____ in the last year. The services we provided to your discharged patients included _____.

Acton Nursing Services can help you achieve superior patient outcomes for patients needing highly qualified registered nurses, physical, occupational and speech therapists, medical social workers, and certified home health aides. We can provide any additional information you may need in order to include Acton Nursing Services in your list of "Approved Home Care Agencies" for your patients seeking services in the greater Acton area.

We can provide more information about patient satisfaction, patient outcomes, and our commitment to meeting your needs when you refer patients for home care services.

Please contact us at 978-929-6650, or email at nursing@acton-ma.gov at your convenience. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss how we can begin extending care to your patients.

Sincerely,
Heather York, Director

Acton Nursing Services

Our local award-winning home care agency



Established in 1923 and governed by the Acton Board of Health

Acton Nursing Services (ANS)

provides patients with personal, consistent home healthcare in the comfort and safety of their homes

You
have the right to choose
your home care provider
(in most cases)



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www.actonnursingservices.com

Your home healthcare is our priority

As a Medicare-certified Home Care Agency we are proud to offer a variety of professional visiting nurse services to the towns of Acton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Littleton and Stow

Call us at **978-929-6650** or visit us at **www.actonnursingservices.com**



Acton Nursing Services



The Nation's Best Home Care in Your Home Town!

Did you know that Acton Nursing Services, the Town's full service home healthcare agency, has been ranked as one of the top 100 Home Care agencies out of the nearly 10,000 agencies that provide Medicare Certified home care in the United States?

Founded in 1923, Acton Nursing Services provides a wide range of skilled care to Acton residents in their own homes. Professional services include nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, social work, and the provision of home health aides. And, as a Medicare Certified Home Care Agency, these high quality services are covered by Medicare, Medicaid and most major insurance carriers.

Here's what your neighbors have to say about Acton Nursing Services:

We have used Acton Nursing Services after hospital stays. Because of their excellent Nursing Care, Physical Therapy and Health Services, we were able to stay in our own home.

~Edith McEvoy

Acton Nursing Services provided superior compassionate, comprehensive, and continuity of care. Continuity of care is imperative as it allows the patient and the nurse/home health care provider to develop a bond and trust.

~Patricia E. Haras

I had a heart attack and the group of nurses that attended to me was so wonderful. They helped ease my fears and relieve any stress I may have had.

~ Debby Pilch

Three times our family has been the beneficiary of their expert care and I would hate to think that any other Acton family would not have the benefit of their marvelous services.

~ Anne Hancock

How important it was to my husband and myself to see the same kind and caring professionals at each visit. They become almost family; you trust them with your loved one and that's worth everything to you.

~Betsy Eldridge and Family

Without Acton Nursing we would have had to call 911 for an agitated patient with an anxious family. Instead, everyone was calm and felt well cared for.

~Marcia Lewin-Berlin

My husband and I have been very fortunate over the past few years to have received the services of the Acton Nursing Services. Both the nursing and physical therapy services have made a big difference.

~ Joan Gardner

Talk to your doctor, check your coverage and learn more about making the healthy choice for your home care needs. Visit www.actonnursingservices.com.



You have the right to choose.

Helping You Safely Age in Place.

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Award-Winning Services, Right Here in Acton

Acton Nursing Services provides patients with personal, consistent home healthcare in the comfort and safety of their homes. We are your local member of the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) of New England.

Acton Nursing Services earns high marks from both *HomeCare Elite*™ program and from *Home Health Compare*, Medicare's quality rating program for health agencies nationwide.

Your Home Healthcare is Your Choice

In most cases, **you** have the right to choose the home healthcare provider **you** prefer – and the best time to choose is before you have to. Talk to your family, friends, neighbors and healthcare providers. We're sure that Acton Nursing Services will be high on your list.

Most of our services to speed your recovery or stay in your home are covered by Medicare, Medicaid and most major insurance carriers.

Call us at **978-929-6650** or visit us at www.actonnursingservices.com.

Acton Nursing Services – Your Hometown VNA

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JOHN DOE COMPANY
123 ANY STREET
ANYTOWN WA 98765-4321

*Award-winning
local services*



Helping You Safely Age in Place.

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Award-Winning Home Health Services

Acton Nursing Services provides patients with personal, consistent home healthcare in the comfort and safety of their homes. Let us help you to continue enjoying life in your own home or speed your recovery from a hospital stay.

Ranked among the winners of *HomeCare Elite*™ awards in recent years, Acton Nursing Services currently holds a **3 ½-star rating** from *Home Health Compare*, Medicare's quality rating program for health agencies nationwide.

Quality Home Healthcare is Our Priority

As a Medicare-Certified Home Care Agency, governed by the Acton Board of Health, our priority is to provide a wide range of high-quality visiting nurse services in the towns of Acton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Littleton and Stow.

Our services are usually covered by Medicare, Medicaid and most major insurance carriers.

Call us at **978-929-6650** or visit us at www.actonnursingservices.com.

Acton Nursing Services – Your Hometown VNA

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Your Best Choice

Helping You Safely Age in Place.

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Your Choice, Our Priority

You have the right* to choose the home healthcare provider **you** want to help you stay in your home or recover from a hospital visit. The best time to choose is before you have to, so talk to your family, friends, neighbors and healthcare providers.

Earning your preference by delivering award-winning services is our priority.

Why choose Acton Nursing Services?

Since 1923, Acton Nursing Services – governed by the Acton Board of Health – has provided patients with personal, consistent, locally-based, home healthcare in the comfort and safety of their homes.

Acton Nursing Services currently holds a **3 ½-star rating** from Medicare's nationwide *Home Health Compare* program and ranks among the winners of *HomeCare Elite™* awards.

Most of our services are covered by Medicare, Medicaid and most major insurance carriers.

We've helped your friends and neighbors – we're part of your community.

Call us at **978-929-6650** or visit us at www.actonnursingservices.com.

Acton Nursing Services – Your Hometown VNA

*rare exceptions apply

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