



# *COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR PORTUGUESE SPEAKERS IN METROWEST*

Judy Freiwirth, Psy.D.,  
Principal  
Nonprofit Solutions Associates

[Judy@NonprofitSA.com](mailto:Judy@NonprofitSA.com)  
[www.NonprofitSA.com](http://www.NonprofitSA.com)

December 2016

**Community Needs Assessment Report**  
**Table of Contents**

I. Introduction and Purpose ..... 2

II. About MAPS ..... 2

III. Methodology..... 3

IV. The Respondents ..... 4

V. The Findings..... 7

    A. Current and Former MAPS Clients..... 7

    B. Services Received at Other Organizations ..... 8

    C. Knowledge About MAPS and Its Services..... 9

    D. Unmet Service Needs..... 10

    E. Barriers to Service ..... 12

VI. Data Analysis, Implications for MAPS, and Recommendations ..... 13

VII. Conclusion..... 17

## I. Introduction and Purpose

MAPS conducted a Community Needs and Services Assessment of the Portuguese-speaking populations in the Framingham and surrounding areas in MetroWest. The purpose of the assessment was to better understand the unmet community health, social service, and other related needs of the Portuguese-speaking communities. In addition, MAPS sought to understand the key barriers to accessing those services. With a more thorough understanding of the service needs and key barriers, MAPS hoped to provide expanded and new programs/services to better meet the current needs. MAPS also was interested in learning from current and former MAPS clients about their level of satisfaction with MAPS services in Framingham.

## II. About MAPS

The mission of the Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS) is to improve the lives of Portuguese-speaking individuals and families from Massachusetts and help them become contributing, active participants in American society while maintaining strong ethnic identity and a sense of community. MAPS is a nonprofit that works with and for the Brazilian, Cabo Verdean, Portuguese, and other Portuguese-speaking communities to increase access and remove barriers to health, education, and social services through direct services, advocacy, leadership, and community development. The organization has offices located in Framingham, Cambridge, Somerville, Brighton, Dorchester, and Lowell.

MAPS has provided culturally and linguistically competent health and social services for Brazilian, Cabo Verdean, Portuguese, and other residents of Greater Boston and beyond since 1970. The current organization was formed from the 1993 merger of the Cambridge Organization of Portuguese Americans and the Somerville Portuguese Language League.

MAPS (including all offices) programs include:

- Citizenship Assistance
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services
- Driver Alcohol Education Services
- Elder Services
- English as a Second Language and Portuguese Language Classes
- Family Support Services
- HIV/AIDS/STI Services
- Immigrant Integration Services
- Intimate Partner Abuse Educational Services
- Translation and Notary Public Services

**The Framingham office currently provides the following six services:**

1. Help applying for citizenship and limited assistance with applications for public benefits, such as food stamps
2. Help with Green Card renewal applications
3. Domestic violence and sexual assault counseling, translation/interpretation, legal advocacy, case management, and safety planning
4. Information about HIV and sexually transmitted diseases/infection prevention
5. HIV or sexually transmitted diseases/infection testing
6. Referrals to other organizations

### **III. Methodology**

MAPS retained consultant Judy Freiwirth, Psy.D., Principal of Nonprofit Solutions Associates to assist them in designing the community assessment tool, advising on outreach and distribution, analyzing the survey data, and developing a set of recommendations. She worked closely with a Design Team, comprised of senior staff and staff located in the Framingham office, to design and implement the survey.

The survey consisted of 35 questions, primarily designed using quantitative questions for better accessibility. Two versions of the survey, one in Portuguese and one in English, were developed and were available as both an online electronic survey and a paper survey. The electronic survey was completed by residents both in the MAPS office and on their own computers. Four MetroWest communities were targeted for the survey: Framingham, Marlborough, Ashland, and Milford.

Paper surveys in both Portuguese and English were distributed by staff for a period of three and a half months, from July 2016 until mid-October 2016, to current MAPS clients and non-clients at the MAPS office, churches, community events, businesses, and other nonprofits. Press releases were sent to local papers and radio shows focused for the Brazilian community to publicize the survey and its purpose.

One limitation of the assessment is that the paper survey allowed for respondents to skip questions, while the electronic version did not. While not affecting the responses from the majority of respondents, some questions for current and previous clients were skipped, which limited the sample size for those responses.

In the “Respondents” and “Findings” sections below, percentages often were rounded to the nearest whole numbers.

## IV. The Respondents

174 people completed the survey and of those 174, 154 completed the survey in Portuguese and 20 in English. Framingham, Milford and Marlborough accounted for over 78% of the respondents, while Ashland, Worcester, Medway, Shrewsbury, and Hudson contributed 10%.

**Table 1: Where respondents live:**

Framingham	Milford	Marlborough	Ashland	Worcester	Medway	Shrewsbury	Hudson	Other
39%	25%	14%	6%	1%	1%	1%	1%	12%

Fifty-four current or past MAPS Framingham clients completed the survey: 46 respondents were current clients and eight received services from the MAPS Framingham office in the past.

Twenty-two current and past respondents received services at a MAPS office other than the Framingham office.

**Table 2: MAPS offices other than Framingham where respondents received services:**

Cambridge	Somerville	Brighton	Lowell	Dorchester
40%	27%	13%	9%	9%

### Respondent Age

Fifty-seven percent of all the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 49. and 20% were between the ages of 25 and 29. See chart below for further details.

**Table 3: Age**

Age	Percent
18-24	6%
25-29	20%
30-39	32%
40-49	25%
50-64	12%
65-74	2%
75-84	1%
85 and over	0%

## Gender

Almost 60% of the respondents were self-identified as female, 39% as male, and one person as transgender, unspecified.

**Table 4: Gender**

Gender	Percent
Female	59%
Male	39%
Transgender-unspecified	(1 person)

## Ethnicity

Eighty percent of the respondents self-identified as Brazilian, and 14% as Portuguese.

**Table 5: Ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Percent
Brazilian	80%
Portuguese	14%
Multi-ethnic	2%
Cabo Verdean	1%
Columbian	1%
Other	2%

## Table: Race

Almost 70% self-identified as Latino or Hispanic, 21% as white, 5% as Black.

**Table 6: Race**

Race	Percent
Latino or Hispanic	69%
White	21%
Black	5%
Other: Brazilian	1%
Undisclosed or other	4%

## Language preference for speaking with service providers

Ninety-one percent of the respondents preferred to speak Portuguese with service providers.

**Table 7: Language preference**

Language	Percent
Portuguese	91%
English	8%
Spanish	1%

### Size of Household

The size of households ranged in most cases from 1 to 4 people.

**Table 8: Size of Household**

Size of Households	Percent
2 person	36%
1 person	22%
4 persons	19%
3 persons	18%
5 persons	4%
6-10 persons	1%

### Estimated Household Income

Almost half of the respondents have a household income of \$39,000 or less. Thirty percent of the respondents reported a household income of \$19,999 or less, which is under the U.S. poverty income level of \$20,160 for a family of three.

**Table 9: Household Income**

Estimated Yearly Household Income	Percent
Less than \$4,999	14%
\$5,000-9,999	4%
\$10,000-19,999	15%
\$20,000-39,000	15%
\$40,000-59,000	11%
\$60,000-79,999	6%
\$80,000-99,999	6%
\$100,000 or above	6%
Don't know	23%

## V. The Findings

### A. Current and Former MAPS Clients

#### a. Services received at MAPS Framingham office

Respondents were asked about the types of services that they received at the Framingham office: the largest number of respondents received help with green card renewal applications, HIV testing, domestic violence services, or referrals to another organization.

The following chart describes the percentage of current and former MAPS clients who indicated they received specific types of services. Fifty-four former and current clients responded **and** some clients received more than one service.

**Table 10: Services received at MAPS Framingham office**

Services received or current receiving	Percent of current & former MAPS clients
Help with green card renewals applications	64%
HIV testing	38%
Domestic violence counseling, translation, legal advocacy, case management or safety planning	22%
Referrals to another organization	22%
Help with applying for public assistance, such as food stamps (SNAP)	14%
Information about HIV or STDs	12%
Sexual assault counselling, translation, legal advocacy, case management or safety planning	0%

#### b. Length of time received MAPS services

Seventy-eight percent of the current and former MAPS clients indicated that they received services for less than a year: 22% received services between one and two years.

#### c. How respondents learned about MAPS services

Only 22 of the 54 respondents who identified as current and former MAPS Framingham clients completed this question. Of those who did, the highest number of respondents (63%) indicated that they found out about MAPS services through family, friends, or neighbors. Eighteen percent were referred by their church/faith-based organization or another organization; 13% from the website or internet; and only 9% from the radio, newspapers, or flyers.

#### **d. Highest referrals to another organization**

MAPS was interested in what types of referrals the respondents were provided. The highest number of referrals to another organization included English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes (43%), and citizenship classes (43%). The next highest number of referrals included: help enrolling in health insurance plans (20%), finding affordable housing (12%), and home based counseling and support services for children and families (9%).

#### **e. Satisfaction with MAPS Services**

The survey solicited opinions about different areas of satisfaction: a) ease of access to services, b) assistance by staff, c) treatment with dignity and respect, d) feeling welcomed, e) staff's understanding of their culture and community, f) overall satisfaction, g) whether they would refer MAPS to friends or family.

Of the 22 people who responded, satisfaction levels were high. 81% of the 22 respondents stated the length of time to get an appointment, ease of access to service, assistance by staff, and treatment with dignity and respect was good, very good or excellent. Ninety-five percent of the respondents indicated they felt welcome at MAPS, with only one person rating this as poor. Eighty-six percent of the respondents rated MAPS' understanding of their culture and community by staff and their overall satisfaction with MAPS' services as good, very good, or excellent.

Of the 22 people who responded to the question about whether they would recommend MAPS to a friend or family member, almost all (94%) stated "very likely".

#### **f. Service Outcomes: If MAPS' services helped respondents resolve or better deal with an issue(s) they were facing:**

Of the 22 people who responded to this question, 94% stated that MAPS' services helped them resolve or better deal with issues they were facing; 60% strongly agreed, and 29% agreed, with only two respondents stating that MAPS did not help them.

#### **B. Services Received at Other Organizations**

Only 20% of the total survey respondents received services at other organizations besides MAPS, with the highest percentage receiving help in enrolling in health insurance (13%). For each of the other services listed below, only 5% or less of the respondents received services from other organizations.

**Table 11: Services Received at Other Agencies**

Services received outside MAPS	Percent of respondents
<b>Housing:</b>	
• Help with finding affordable housing	3%
• Fuel assistance	2%
• Help with tenant issues	0%
<b>Immigration:</b>	
• ESOL	5%
• Help with translation	5%
• Learning about citizenship	4%
• Legal assistance with Portuguese-speaking lawyers	1%
• Help with Green Card renewals	0%
<b>Employment:</b>	
• Help with obtaining job skills, interview prep	2%
• Assistance with finding jobs	4%
<b>Domestic and Sexual Violence Services:</b>	
• Counseling, translation, legal advocacy, case management, safety planning	3%
• Legal services	3%
• Support groups	1%
<b>Health:</b>	
• Help with enrolling in health insurance	13%
• Help with substance abuse	1%
• Help with navigating HIV/AIDS services	0%
<b>Family Support:</b>	
• Child care	2%
• Parenting classes	1%
• Family support: In home counseling for children and families	2%
<b>Senior Support:</b>	
• Drop-in center	2%
• Senior meals	2%
• Information & referrals for long-term care	0%

**C. Knowledge About MAPS and Its Services**

22% of the respondents stated that they did not know about MAPS’ services.

## D. Unmet Service Needs

The data reveals that there were significant unmet needs within the Portuguese-speaking community, primarily the Brazilian community within the four target MetroWest communities served by the Framingham MAPS office. As the table below demonstrates, high percentages of the respondents demonstrated important unmet needs/issues in the areas of health insurance, immigration services, employment, family support, workers' rights, immigrant rights, health, and senior services.

The most significant unmet needs cited by over 65 % of respondents revealed by the study were as follows:

1. Help with enrolling in health insurance (84%)
2. Help with finding affordable housing (75%)
3. Job skill training (75%),
4. Learning English (69%)
5. Domestic or sexual violence services (67%)

The next level of unmet need includes the following:

6. Help with finding jobs (55%)
7. In-home counseling and support for children and families (49%)
8. Child care (45%)
9. Learning about U.S. citizenship (42%)
10. Drop-in center for seniors (42%)
11. Legal help with immigration issues (39%)
12. Home care for seniors (32%)

The following table describes the percentage of respondents indicated unmet needs by category:

**Table 12: Unmet Service Needs**

Unmet Service Needs	Percent of respondents
<b>Housing</b>	
• Help with finding affordable housing	75%
• Landlord or tenant issues	17%
• Help with fuel assistance	22%
<b>Employment needs</b>	
• Job skills training	75%
• Help with finding jobs	55%
<b>Immigration</b>	
• Learning English	69%
• Learning about U.S. citizenship	42%
• Legal help with immigration issues	39%
• Workers’ rights or immigrant rights	23%
• Help with translation	23%
• Help with green cards	21%
<b>Domestic Violence or sexual assault Services</b>	
• Domestic or sexual violence counseling	67%
• Support groups	16%
• Finding shelter	16%
• Safety planning	16%
<b>Health Needs</b>	
• Help with enrolling in health insurance	84%
• Mental health needs	24%
<b>Family Support Needs</b>	
• I- home counseling and support for children and families	49%
• Child care	45%
• Parenting classes	29%
<b>Senior Services</b>	
• Drop-in center	42%
• Home care for seniors	32%
• Long-term care	28%
• Meals at home	19%

## E. Barriers to Service

The respondents indicated a range of significant barriers to accessing services. The most cited barriers included: 1) not being able to afford fees (43%), 2) lack of Portuguese-speaking staff or interpreters (42%) 3) lack of written Portuguese materials (38%), 4) long waits for services (37%), and 5) lack of child care when receiving services (36%). Of these barriers, about 25% of the respondents indicated that the barrier was a “severe” problem to accessing services.

Other key barriers included: 1) lack of services in their area (34%), 2) having to go to different places for different services (34%), 3) lack of evening or weekend services (32%), 4) lack of transportation (31%), and 5) immigration concerns (30%).

Almost 40% of respondents, however, stated that they didn’t know where to go for services. The table below describes the additional barriers. In the second column below, the percentages are added together for those that thought the barrier was either a “severe” or “moderate problem. The third column below only lists the percentages of those that stated the barrier was “severe”.

**Table 13: Barriers to Services**

Barrier	Combined respondent percentages: “Severe” plus “moderate problem”	Percent who indicated “severe problem”
Can’t afford fees	43%	29%
Lack of Portuguese-speaking staff or interpreters	42%	28%
Lack of written Portuguese materials	38%	26%
Don’t know where to go for services	38%	24%
Long waits for appointments	37%	17%
Lack of child care when receiving services	36%	20%
Services not available in my area	34%	22%
Having to go different places for different services	34%	18%
Lack of evening or weekend services	32%	16%
Lack of transportation	31%	19%
Immigration concerns	30%	21%
Too much paperwork	26%	25%
Health or disability issues	23%	12%
Difficulty reading or writing in own language	21%	12%
Felt discriminated against by service provider staff	19%	9%
Concerns about confidentiality	16%	9%

Felt uncomfortable or unwelcome at some service providers	16%	10%
---	-----	-----

## VI. Data Analysis, Implications for MAPS, and Recommendations

### Satisfaction with Framingham office services:

While only 37% of the current and past MAPS clients completed the questions regarding satisfaction with MAPS’ service, those who responded indicated a high level of satisfaction with the services they received. Almost all the clients rated the components of satisfaction with “excellent” or “very good”, including ease of access, treatment with dignity and respect, welcoming culture, and cultural responsiveness. Moreover, the high percentage of respondents (94%) who stated that they would recommend MAPS’ services to family or friends is an important indicator of a very high overall level of satisfaction. The findings reveal that although the range of MAPS’ current services in Framingham is very limited, those services that are provided are perceived by former and current clients as accessible and high quality. The culture of MAPS in Framingham appears to be perceived as welcoming, respectful of, and culturally responsive of Brazilian and other Portuguese-speaking communities.

### Outcomes from MAPS services

Although only 40% of the current or previous clients responded to the question about service outcomes, a very high percentage of those who responded indicated that the services helped them resolve, or better deal with an issue they were facing. It is not clear from the data why the response rate was low to this question; respondents may have felt that their issues did not improve or that MAPS was not responsible for the improvement.

### Barriers to services

While the range of barriers to accessible services cited by respondents refer to other organizations besides MAPS (e.g. the cited fees, lack of Portuguese-speaking staff or written materials), the significance of these barriers has important implications for MAPS as well. Some of the identified barriers to services may be affecting the number of clients using MAPS current services, such as the need for child care, and evening or weekend services. We recommend that MAPS consider providing both to increase accessibility.

The significantly high percentages of respondents who identified barriers to services demonstrates that additional services for Portuguese-speaking communities in MetroWest is profoundly needed. MAPS is uniquely positioned, given its ability to provide additional services in Portuguese and its long-time reputation for culturally responsive and high quality services to provide much needed services for the community.

### Unmet service needs/ Need for additional and expanded services at Framingham office

What was striking about the data were the significant unmet needs within the Portuguese - speaking community identified by the respondents within four communities in MetroWest. The data reveals that Portuguese-speaking residents, particularly the Brazilian community, did not access these services and that their needs continue to be unmet.

As the comparative chart below demonstrates, high percentages of the respondents demonstrate important unmet needs/issues in the areas of: 1) health insurance, 2) immigration services, 3) employment, 4) family support, 5) workers’ rights/immigrant rights, 6) health, and 7) senior services.

**Table 14: Comparison of Unmet Needs to Services Received**

Services	Percent Indicated Unmet Need	Percent received services outside of MAPS
Help with enrolling in health insurance	84%	13%
Help with translation and interpretation	77%	5%
Job skills training	75%	2%
Help with finding affordable housing	75%	3%
Learning English	69%	5%
Domestic violence or sexual assault Services	67%	3%
In-home counseling and support for children and families	49%	2%
Child care	45%	2%
Learning about U.S. citizenship	42%	4%
Drop-in center for seniors	42%	2%
Legal assistance with Portuguese-speaking lawyers	39%	1%
Home care for seniors	32%	Did not ask
Long-term care/Information	28%	0%
Workers’ rights/Immigrant rights	23%	Did not ask
Mental health needs	24%	Did not ask
Help with fuel assistance	22%	2%

The reasons for the high percentages of unmet needs may be due to the significant barriers identified in the findings, such as not being able to afford fees; lack of Portuguese-speaking staff, interpreters, written materials in Portuguese at agencies; or lack of child care, or services not being available near where they live. With almost 40% indicating that they do not know where to go for services, it will be important for MAPS to increase its ability to conduct outreach and visibility regarding its current and new services.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings regarding barriers, the most significant unmet service needs, and competencies already within MAPS as an organization, we recommend that MAPS consider adding or expanding the following services:

- **ESOL and citizenship classes**

It may be prudent to begin with the most needed services which MAPS is already providing at other office locations, as the organization has the competencies for these services, such as ESOL and citizenship classes. Additionally, MAPS is already providing some citizenship assistance at its Framingham office. Although there are other nonprofits in the MetroWest area that are providing ESOL and citizenship classes, the data reveals a significant need for additional classes. Additionally, 43% of current and former Framingham clients have received referrals from MAPS to other agencies for ESOL classes. It may also provide a way for community members and new immigrants to become more connected with MAPS.

- **Translation and interpretation**

Although the Framingham office offers some assistance in translation and interpretation, the findings reveal a significant need (77% of respondents) for these services. The lack of Portuguese-speaking staff and translation services was indicated as an important barrier in accessing services in MetroWest. MAPS could address this significant community need by providing a translator and interpreter service for community members and other nonprofit providers.

- **Domestic and sexual violence services**

Although MAPS currently provides domestic and sexual violence services, it is noteworthy that 67% of respondents indicated that this was an unmet need. Respondents might be unaware of MAPS' Framingham services or some of the barriers listed in this report may be influencing their access to services. Community stigmas about domestic or sexual violence also may result in residents not accessing these services. Therefore, MAPS should consider increasing its staff capacity to provide additional outreach and publicity about their services and increase its prevention and educational efforts, specifically focused for the Portuguese-speaking community.

- **In-home counseling and support for children and families**

About 50% of the respondents indicated that this was an unmet need in the MetroWest area. Again, although other nonprofits offer in-home counseling in the area, MAPS may be uniquely qualified to offer these services to Portuguese-speaking and recent immigrants, especially given this is a service already provided in Greater Boston, Greater

Lowell, and other communities. We recommend that MAPS investigate possible funding for providing family support services in its Framingham office.

- **Case management/coordination**

Community members indicate high levels of unmet needs in areas where there are existing services. MAPS might consider increasing its staff capacity to include “case coordinators” to assist residents in navigating multiple agencies to address their needs, while providing needed translation and coordination. For recent immigrants, this support may be useful for helping newcomers or those with limited English to seek out and obtain all their needed services across agencies. It also would provide a continuum of care, thereby alleviating some of the identified barriers.

- **Assistance with finding jobs and affordable housing, health insurance enrollment**

Other MAPS offices help clients find jobs (a pilot program in Boston) and have developed partnerships with other organizations for providing job skills. Other MAPS offices help clients find affordable housing and in the past, MAPS provided health insurance enrollment assistance. Since MAPS has this knowledge base and experience in these services at other offices and the community need was significantly high, it is recommended that MAPS seek funding to provide these services at its Framingham office.

- **Increased staff capacity for referrals, follow-up and translation**

The data reveals that although MAPS does make referrals to other organizations, almost 40% of respondents still do not know where to go for services. We recommend that additional staff will be needed to augment the number of referrals, assist with translation and interpretation, and provide follow-up.

- **Increased marketing and outreach in MetroWest region/partnering with referral sources**

Portuguese-speaking residents will benefit from increased knowledge about MAPS’ current and planned services as well as other needed services in the region. We recommend that MAPS develop and implement a marketing and outreach plan to specifically focus on the Brazilian communities in MetroWest, including the use of targeted radio programs, social media, partnering with potential referral sources and community leaders, press releases, and flyer distribution in places people congregate, such as churches and Brazilian-focused events.

- **Workers’ and immigrant rights/Advocacy**

Almost 25% of the respondents indicated workers or immigrant rights was a significant need. Although MAPS does not have a specific workers or immigrant rights advocacy

program or campaigns, we recommend that MAPS develop deeper partnerships with other organizations such as the Brazilian Workers Center, Brazilian Women’s Group, and the Massachusetts Immigrant and Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), and actively encourage clients and others to participate in ongoing campaigns. Encouraging those who receive services to move beyond their own situations and work together in collective action with others would be in alignment with MAPS’ mission-- to “improve the lives of the Portuguese-speaking individuals and families and help them become contributing, active participants in American society while maintaining strong, ethnic identity and a sense of community... And to increase access and remove barriers...through direct services, advocacy, leadership and community development.”

## **Conclusion**

This needs assessment demonstrates the significant level of unmet needs of the Portuguese-speaking communities in MetroWest. MAPS has provided critical services for many years to the Portuguese-speaking communities of Massachusetts and the feedback from current and former clients demonstrates that MAPS is perceived as a highly welcoming, respectful, and culturally-competent service provider for the community. With its highly-regarded reputation for quality service, it is well positioned to address the needs of the Portuguese-speaking communities in MetroWest region. We recommend that MAPS increase its visibility within the different Portuguese-speaking communities of MetroWest and seek additional funding to meet the critical needs of the community.