

MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

*Policy Manual for MCSW Regional
Commissions*



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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN



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1. Appointment Procedures

a. Appointment Consideration

i. In accordance with the mission of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (hereafter referred to as MCSW) to work towards the improvement of the status of all women in Massachusetts, the following should be considered of potential appointees to regional commissions:

1. The diversity of the applicant's background, especially as it pertains to race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identification, and socioeconomic background;
2. The experience of the applicant in working toward the improvement of the status of women;
3. The area of residence of the applicant, as it relates to the regional commission to which the applicant has applied.

b. First Time Application Process

i. Submission

1. MCSW will promote a call-for-applications (for all regional commissions) during the annual application period, between August and October each year.
2. In the event that a seat becomes open outside of the annual application period, a separate call for applications can be issued for that individual regional commission.
3. Applicants apply through an MCSW-issued electronic form (e-form) that is shared with the public during any call-for-applications promotion, and also lives on the MCSW website year-round. [Regional Commissions - Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women \(masscsw.org\)](https://masscsw.org)
4. Regional commissions are welcome to share this e-form with prospective candidates in their region.
5. Applicants must also submit a résumé by email to the MCSW office for their application to be considered complete.
6. When the application window has closed, MCSW makes a record of applicants received for each regional commission.



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ii. Review

1. First, MCSW shares application packets (e-form and résumé per candidate) and an applicant rating sheet with respective regional commissions to garner general their candidate feedback.
2. Regional commissions return the rating sheet containing compiled, specific candidate feedback to the MCSW office. (Please see section 6. a. ii for instructions on how to call an executive session in regional commission meetings for a preliminary screening of candidates for appointment.)
3. MCSW shares each regional commission's rating sheet and application packets

(e-form and résumé per candidate) with the Program and Planning Committee.

4. Program and Planning Committee members individually review candidates in advance of the next available Program and Planning Committee meeting.
5. The Program and Planning Committee deliberate and vote on candidates at the next available Program and Planning Committee meeting.
6. The Program and Planning Committee bring a candidate recommendation before the Full Commission.
7. The Full Commission vote on whether to approve this recommendation, and formally appoint candidates to the regional commissions.

iii. Notification

1. MCSW will issue appointment letters to successful regional commission appointees, and connect appointees with the Chair of the regional commission to which they were appointed (who takes over as main point of contact for the new regional commissioner).
2. MCSW will issue a formal notification to unsuccessful candidates.

iv. Swearing-In

1. Each appointee should be sworn-in within 30 days of receiving notification of appointment.
2. The swearing-in of new regional commissioners may occur either in Boston or locally. The MCSW office will supply swearing-in instructions to appointees.



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c. *Reappointment Application Process (Please note: This is not an automatic process, MCSW reserves the right to deny reappointment.)*

ii. Submission

1. Regional commission Chairs lead reappointment conversation with those regional commissioners who are eligible for another term.
2. Regional commission Chairs notify the MCSW office on whether regional commissioners wish to be reappointed to another term, no later than 60 days prior to the expiration of a regional commissioner's term (October 1).
3. MCSW office share reappointment list with the Program and Planning Committee.

iii. Review

1. Program and Planning Committee members individually review reappointment candidates in advance of the next available Program and Planning Committee meeting.
2. The Program and Planning Committee deliberate and vote on reappointment candidates at the next available Program and Planning Committee meeting.
3. The Program and Planning Committee bring a reappointment candidate recommendation before the Full Commission.
4. The Full Commission vote on whether to approve this recommendation, and formally reappoint candidates to the regional commissions.

iv. Notification

1. MCSW will notify regional commission Chairs of vote outcome.
2. MCSW will issue reappointment letters to successful reappointees.
3. MCSW will issue a formal notification to unsuccessful candidates for reappointment.

v. Swearing-In

1. Each reappointee should be sworn-in again after receiving notification of reappointment.
2. The swearing-in of regional commissioners may occur either in Boston or locally. The MCSW office will supply swearing-in instructions to reappointees.



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d. *Should a regional commissioner move to another region and wish to join another regional commission*

- i. The commissioner should notify the chair of the current commission of her resignation due to a change in residence outside of the region.
- ii. The commissioner should apply to become a regional commissioner of the new region in the regular manner (as described in Section 1. B. i.).
- iii. The chair of the current commission should contact the chair of the new regional commission and offer her a reference of the commissioner, indicating whether the commissioner is in good standing at the current commission.
- iv. The commissioner may also contact the chair of the commission to which she now resides or is moving to - and indicate that she has applied.
- v. The commissioner's application will be reviewed in the regular manner (as described in described in Section 1. B. ii.).

e. *Term Limits*

- i. Regional commissioners are issued initial terms depending on the regional commission seat they are appointed to fill.
- ii. Regional commissioners who are offered a three-year initial term, are eligible to request reappointment to a second, three-year term, for a total of six years served. Thereafter, they are not eligible for reappointment.
- iii. Regional commissioners who are offered a one- or two-year initial term, are eligible to request reappointment to a second term, which would be a three year term. Thereafter, they are eligible to apply to a third term, as they have not yet completed six years of service. Thereafter, they are not eligible for reappointment.

f. *Removal Process*

- i. Should a regional commissioner wish **to resign** from her position, the following steps shall be taken:
 1. The regional commissioner should notify the Chair of her regional commission of her resignation.
 2. The regional commissioner should also submit a letter of resignation to MCSW, a minimum of 30 days before her resignation becomes effective (except under extenuating circumstances).



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3. MCSW will issue an acknowledgment of resignation acceptance to the regional commissioner.
- ii. Should a regional commission wish to remove a regional commissioner due to lack of **attendance** (the threshold of which should be identified in the regional commission's bylaws), the following steps shall be taken:
1. The regional commission shall issue verbal and written warnings to the absent commissioner in regard to her lack of attendance.
 2. Should attendance not improve, MCSW shall then issue separate, verbal and written warnings.
 3. After each warning has been issued, the absent commissioner has the opportunity to explain and defend her reasons for absence.
 4. If after all warnings, attendance does not improve, the commissioner will be subject to review and possible removal from her position.
 5. The Program and Planning Committee, upon evidence and review of the attendance record, may make a removal recommendation.
 6. The Full Commission shall vote on whether to approve any recommendation of removal.
- iii. Should a regional commission request removal of a **regional commissioner** due to an **ethics violation**, the following steps shall be taken:
1. After MCSW receives notification of an alleged ethics violation, MCSW Chair and Vice-Chair shall open an inquiry into the matter, and investigate the alleged violation.
 2. The accused commissioner shall be provided with the opportunity to defend her actions.
 3. The Program and Planning Committee will review and discuss the findings of the Chair and Vice-Chair's investigation, and the testimony of the commissioner, and formulate a resolution.
 4. If removal is recommended, the Full Commission shall vote on whether to approve Program and Planning's recommendation of removal.
- iv. Should a **regional commission** be accused of an **ethics violation**, the following steps shall be taken:



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1. After MCSW receives notification of an alleged ethics violation, MCSW Chair and Vice-Chair shall open an inquiry into the matter and investigate the alleged violation.
2. The regional commissioner in question shall be provided with the opportunity to defend their actions.
3. The Program and Planning Committee will review and discuss the findings of the Chair and Vice-Chair's investigation, and the testimony of the regional commission, and formulate a resolution.
4. This resolution will be reported to the Full Commission.



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2. Administration

a. Membership

- i. Members shall be subject to the provisions of Chapter 268A as they apply to special state employees (except in the case of raising campaign funds to run for political office, please refer to Section 6 iv. for more information).
- ii. Regional commissions possess the authority to establish commissioner emerita programs.
- iii. Regional commissions may invite outside persons to join advisory boards or special interest committees. These persons do not possess voting rights or the title of “commissioner”.

b. Meetings

- i. Regional commissions must, at minimum, meet at least six times per year or as often as designated in their respective enabling legislation. Beyond this, the frequency of meetings is at the discretion of the regional commission.
- ii. The threshold for absences from meetings and events becoming grounds for removal should be established by the regional commission in their bylaws.
- iii. Written minutes for meetings must be taken as often as required by the Open Meeting Law.
- iv. Minutes should be distributed to members before the commission’s next meeting and thereafter be voted and approved by the full regional commission.
- v. Regional commissioners should encourage public attendance at their full-body meetings. This may be done through posting a public announcement and/or rotating meeting locations.

c. Calendar

- i. The planning and approval of the regional commission’s calendar is at the discretion of the commission.
- ii. The regional commission should send MSCW their calendar after its final approval.

d. Conflict Resolution

- i. The regional commission may request intervention from the appropriate authority within MCSW should the regional commission:
 1. Face an impasse while resolving internal conflict.



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2. Experience conflict with an outside group.

e. MCSW Liaison

i. A state commissioner may be assigned as a liaison between MCSW and a regional commission.

ii. The Liaison, along with MCSW staff, can be included on all regional commission correspondence.



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3. Communications and Outreach

a. Social Media/Website Usage

- i. Official social media accounts and/or webpages of regional commissions must include:
 1. Contact information for the commission.
 2. The commission's calendar of meetings and events.
- ii. Official accounts and/or webpages may include information about regional legislative agendas and endorsements of legislation.
- iii. The MCSW website will host a basic webpage for each regional commission on its site.

a. The regional commission webpage will be updated by MCSW office.

b. The regional commission webpage may include:

- i. Picture of section of state covered by this regional commission
- ii. List of current members of the regional commission
- iii. Contact information for the Chair (or general regional commission email if it exists)
- iv. URL links to any additional accounts and/or webpages developed and supported by the regional commissions (if applicable)
- v. Link to annual reports
- vi. Link to apply to regional commission

b. With MCSW

- i. All pertinent communications from MCSW is directed to the Chair of the regional commission and copied to the regional commission Liaison. The Chair of the regional commission is responsible for communicating messages to the other members of the regional commission.
- ii. Annual Reports
 1. MCSW will provide regional commissions with a template for annual reports.
 2. Regional commissions should submit their annual report to MCSW by May



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iii. Other Annual Submissions

1. Minutes from meetings and hearings.
2. Up-to-date roster of commissioners, including contact information.

iv. Regional commissions are encouraged to maintain open lines of communication with MCSW. Their main points of contact include:

1. The MCSW office staff
2. Their assigned State Commission Liaison

v. MCSW should maintain an up-to-date roster of all regional commissioners and their contact information in order to facilitate communication.

c. Other Regional Commissions

1. All regional commissions are strongly encouraged to participate in the semi-annual convening.
2. Regional commissions or individual regional commissioners that wish to communicate/collaborate with other regional commissions are encouraged to contact the Chair of that regional commission.

d. MCSW Events

i. MCSW will lead the communication strategy regarding MCSW events including Commonwealth Heroines and our four annual regional public hearings.

1. Example, regional commissions should not create Facebook events pages for Commonwealth Heroines or our four annual regional public hearings.

ii. For Advocacy Day, if regional commissions create an event page (on Facebook or other social media) to rally local organizations/partners, they must include the official MCSW registration link.

1. Only MCSW or other regional commissions may be listed as “co-hosts” of any Advocacy Day social media communications.
2. Considerations on conflict of interest and non-partisanship should be made before partnering with local organizations for Advocacy Day. *e. Media Inquiries*

i. Inquiries should be directed to the Chair of the regional commission, who may consult with other commissioners prior to determining any official response on behalf of the commission to such inquiries.



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- ii. If the inquiry is regarding a matter that is beyond the scope of the region, the commission should forward the inquiry to the MCSW liaison and staff.

f. Speakers Bureau

- i. Speaking Invitations as a Regional Commissioner

1. Should a regional commissioner receive an invitation to speak at or participate in an event from an outside group on behalf of her regional commission, the commissioner should share the invitation with the Chair of the regional commission. Before the invitation is accepted, the following should be considered:
 - a. Is this event about women in the region?
 - b. Should the subjects and organizers of the event be associated with MCSW? Are there potential conflicts of interest?
 - c. As per MCSW's mission to advocate for all women, how does this event promote diverse (i.e. race, ethnicity, age, gender, socio-economic background, religion, sexual orientation) participation and perspectives?
2. If the subject matter of the event falls outside the scope of the regional commission, the invitation may be accepted at the discretion of the commissioner, but she should not make reference to the regional commission or her role/title as commissioner.

g. Hearings

- i. In keeping with their mandate to study and report on the status of women and girls living in their respective region, regional commissions may hold public hearings/forums to hear the concerns of women.
- ii. Testimony during these events may be given by individuals and organizations.
- iii. Minutes and testimony from regional commission hearings should be included in regional commission Annual Reports

4. Issue Identification and Advocacy

In keeping with their mandate to study and report on the status of women and girls living in their respective region, regional commissions should commit to information-gathering, whether through public hearings and events, surveys, or focus groups. For the following section, advocacy is defined as the public promotion of a particular cause or policy with the intention of influencing existing legislation.

a. MCSW Legislative Agenda

- i. Regional commissions are encouraged to support and participate in the advocacy efforts of MCSW's legislative priorities.
- ii. Regional commissions are encouraged to advocate in a manner that could not be construed as acting in a manner that is contrary to the legislative priorities of MCSW.

b. Regional Commission Legislative Agenda

- i. Regional commissions are encouraged to pursue regional, issued-based advocacy and legislative priorities of their own.

c. State Level Advocacy

- i. When pursuing a state-level advocacy issue, regional commissions should coordinate their efforts with MCSW.
- ii. When interacting with elected officials, regional commissions should consider:
 1. Whether the official serves, or was elected to represent, women in the jurisdiction of the regional commission.
 2. If the official serves, or was elected to represent, women outside of the regional purview of the regional commission, the commission should notify the appropriate regional commission and MCSW before contacting the official.

Events

- i. Regional commissions may hold events with the intent of advocating for and educating about their regional agendas. Commissions should notify MCSW about the event before the event occurs.
- ii. Regional commissions may partner with local women's organizations to organize/participate in events, which may include legislative breakfasts and MCSW's Advocacy Day.
 1. Considerations on conflict of interest and non-partisanship should be made before partnering with local organizations.



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e. Advocacy Considerations

iii. Some organizations find it helpful to join coalitions to advance their legislative agendas.

Before doing so, regional commissions should consider:

1. If the goals of the coalition are within the scope of the regional commission.
2. The potential for conflict of interest, partisanship, or questions of ethics, with any of the partners of the coalition.



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5. Fundraising and Finances

a. Fundraising Mechanisms via third party donors

- i. Regional commissions may solicit and accept funds, including any gifts, donations, grants or bequests and federal funds.
- ii. The funds shall be deposited in an account managed by the MCSW, and housed at the State Comptroller's office, and expended at the discretion of the regional commission.
- iii. Donors and grantees must be vetted by regional commissions to ensure that there is no conflict of interest or organizational objective. See "Ethics" section for more information.
- iv. Receipt of funds by a regional commission from third party donors must be communicated and forwarded to the MCSW staff within 5 business days.

b. Financing Mechanisms via MCSW

- i. The MCSW may provide funding in the form of annual stipends and project specific grants. On an annual basis the MCSW, with guidance from the Finance Committee, will determine the amount of funds to be allocated and how funds will be distributed.
- ii. Stipend Funding:
 1. Stipend funding will be intended to cover costs related, but not limited to, the following items: banner, tablecloth, business cards, name tags, table tents, promotional materials, flyers, brochures, thank you notes.
 2. The amount of the stipend will be assessed on an annual basis, considering funding levels and budgeting requirements of the MCSW.
 3. Stipends will be allocated in September/October at the start of the MCSW's programmatic year and again in February/March.
- iii. Project Grants:
 1. Grant funding will be intended to cover the cost related to a specific project or initiative. Funding may support all or a portion of the project/initiative.
 2. The amount and number of available grants will be assessed on an annual basis considering funding levels and budgeting requirements of the MCSW.
 3. Applications must include a narrative, detailing the scope, timeline, anticipated impact, and goals of the program, as well as a detailed budget. Refer to the current MCSW grant application material.
 4. Applications will be reviewed by the MCSW's Finance Committee for a recommendation to and final approval by the MCSW full Commission.



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c. Expending funds

- i. Regional commissions will make a written request by email to the MCSW for the allocation of stipend funds prior to incurring the expense.
 - i. The MCSW will provide a reply within 3 business days.
- ii. Regional commissions will make a written request by email and provide invoices to the MCSW for the expenditure of funds.
 - i. The MCSW will process the invoice within 20 business days.
- iii. The MCSW is not responsible for any unapproved expenses encumbered by members of the regional commissions.

d. Budget and Reporting

- i. A reporting of the regional commission's budget, including income and expenses must be included in the annual report sent to the MCSW each May.



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6. Ethics

a. *Open Meeting Law* (Note: The *Open Meeting Law* is subject to change. Please refer to the state government website for the current version: <https://www.mass.gov/the-open-meeting-law>) i.

Training

1. A regional commissioner should complete open meeting law training within two weeks of her initial appointment to a regional commission.
2. Documentation of completed training (in the form of the certificate received upon completion) should be submitted to MCSW.
3. Regional commissioners should complete open meeting law training within two weeks of reappointment to a regional commission.

ii. Notice Requirements

1. Except in emergency cases, regional commissions should provide notice of its meetings 48 hours in advance, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays.
2. Notices must be filed with the municipal clerk's offices of the region, with enough time to permit the posting of the notice at least 48 hours in advance by the clerk's offices. Alternatively, notices can be filed on the regional commission webpage on the MCSW website at least 48 hours in advance, provided that the commission has notified the public of where they can find the meeting notice and schedule.
3. Notices must include the time, date, location and/or a virtual meeting link and an agenda for the meeting being posted, in addition to the date and time that the notice was posted.
4. If the agenda is changed after a notice is posted, regional commissions must update the posting to grant the public as much notice as possible.
5. Regional commissions are also encouraged to post meeting notices on a conspicuous part their website (if applicable). Social media accounts do not count for this purpose.
6. A copy of the meeting notice must be retained by the regional commission's Chair or Secretary/Clerk

iii. Minutes Requirements

1. Regional commissions are required to create and maintain accurate minutes of all meetings, including executive sessions.



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2. The minutes, which must be created and approved in a timely manner, must include:
 - a. The date, time and place of the meeting;
 - b. The members present and absent;
 - c. The decisions made and actions taken, including a record of all votes;
 - d. A summary of the discussions on each subject;
 - e. A list of all documents and exhibits used at the meeting;
 - f. The name of any member who participated in the meeting remotely.

iv. Executive Session

1. While all meetings of public bodies must be open to the public, certain topics may be discussed in executive, or closed session.
2. Before entering Executive Session, please refer to the state government website for the current version of Open Meeting Law: <https://www.mass.gov/the-openmeeting-law>)

b. Conflict of Interest

i. Training

1. A regional commissioner should complete conflict of interest training within 30 days of her initial appointment to a regional commission.
2. Regional commissioners should complete conflict of interest training every two years thereafter.
3. Documentation of completed training (in the form of the certificate received upon completion) should be submitted to MCSW.

ii. Nonpartisan Advocacy

1. Regional commissions, as state entities, are prohibited from endorsing or opposing any candidate for political office, ballot question, or political party. As such, advocacy efforts should be nonpartisan and issue-based.
2. Regional commissions should work on issues of concern to women in their respective jurisdictions. When advocating, engagement with candidates and elected officials from all major parties should be non-exclusive, ensuring all correspondence is phrased in a neutral, non-partisan manner.
 - a. Example, if an elected official introduces a bill which might be detrimental to women, it is acceptable for a regional commission to



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voice opposition to the bill, but it is not acceptable to advocate against said elected official's re-election, because of that bill.¹

iii. Associating with Partisan Organizations

1. Regional commissions, or a commissioner acting in her official role, should not associate with partisan organizations to the extent that it gives the impression that the regional commission/commissioner supports that organization's partisan agenda.²

iv. Running for Office and Campaign Funding

1. Regional commissioners are *not* prohibited from running for political office, but must do so as a private individual, without using their "commissioner" title.

2. As commissioners are not "*employed for compensation*" as it relates to Chapter 268A, they are *not* precluded from not soliciting or receiving financial contributions for any political purpose. Please note, however, that Commissioners are subject to the prohibition on using public resources for any political purpose.

v. Social Media

1. All activity (posts, likes, shares) on official accounts and/or webpages of the regional commissions should be non-partisan in nature.
2. All posts on personal accounts and/or webpages of regional commissioners should be non-partisan, if a regional commissioner also lists her involvement with the commission on her personal accounts and/or webpages.
 - a. Example, if a commission's official Facebook page shares a post from a partisan organization, even when the post itself is not partisan, it is still considered a partisan activity, because people seeing the post will follow it back to the original partisan web site and can assume commission support for that partisan agenda. If there is any doubt, it is recommended to err on the side of caution.²

vi. Title Usage

1. It is only appropriate to use the title of "Commissioner" when conducting official business for the regional commission.
 - a. The title of "Commissioner" should *not* be attached to digital or letter signatures, except when conducting official business of the Commission.

¹ Language adapted from Chair Parrot's 2017 letter to regional Chairs and Co-Chairs regarding social media ethics.

² Ibid.

² Ibid.



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- b. The title of “Commissioner” should *not* be combined with any other titles when signing digital or letter correspondence.
- c. The title of “Commissioner” should *not* be used when engaging in partisan political activities as a private individual.

Please contact MCSW at mcsw@mass.gov with any questions or feedback.



MCSW Regional Commissions

- **Berkshire County**
- **Bristol County**
- **Cape Cod and the Islands**
- **Eastern Regional**
- **Essex County**
- **Hampden County**
- **Hampshire-Franklin**
- **MetroWest**
- **Plymouth County**
- **Upper Middlesex**
- **Worcester County**