



## **News for Immediate Release**

**Sept. 25, 2012**

### **Departments of Aging and Health Host Event to Raise Awareness of Falls Prevention Programs**

**Harrisburg** – The Pennsylvania Departments of Aging and Health today hosted a joint event to raise awareness of falls prevention programs.

Falls are the leading causes of injuries and fatalities for Pennsylvanians age 65 and older.

“Raising awareness of falls prevention programs that are proven to be effective for older adults can save a life,” said Secretary of Aging Brian Duke. “As the number of older adults increases in Pennsylvania, it is important to focus our efforts on successful programs that promote older adult safety and independence.”

The two departments joined to emphasize the importance of uniting professionals, older adults, caregivers and family members to help raise awareness to prevent falls in the older adult population.

The chances of falling and of being seriously injured increases with age. Studies show that a combination of interventions can significantly reduce falls in the older adult population. Experts recommend:

- Exercising regularly for balance, strength training and flexibility;
- Consulting with a health professional about getting a falls risk assessment;
- Having medications reviewed periodically;
- Getting eyes checked annually; and
- Making sure the home environment is safe and supportive.

“Every 11 minutes, a Pennsylvanian age 65 or older is hospitalized for a fall injury, and every week 23 die from fall-related injuries. Hospitalizations related to these falls result in more than \$3 billion in medical costs annually in Pennsylvania,” said Secretary of Health Dr. Eli Avila. “It is imperative that we raise awareness of the precautionary measures that can be taken to prevent injuries and save lives.”

The Department of Aging offers a falls prevention program for adults 50 and older. The Healthy Steps for Older Adults and Healthy Steps in Motion programs are designed to raise awareness of falls, introduce ways to reduce falls, improve overall health, and provide referrals and resources. Since 2006, the Healthy Steps program has been offered in 45 counties to more than 20,000 older adults.

The Department of Health's program, A Matter of Balance, helps older adults manage concerns about falls and increase physical activity. The program uses a variety of activities to address physical, social and cognitive factors affecting fear of falling and to teach fall prevention strategies.

Both departments participate in the Falls Free™ Coalition, a collection of 70 national organizations and state coalitions working to reduce fall-related injury and death among older adults.

For more information, visit the Department of Health online at [www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us) or call 1-877-PA-HEALTH, or visit the Department of Aging online at [www.aging.state.pa.us](http://www.aging.state.pa.us)

**Media contact:** Christina Reese, Aging, 717-783-1549  
Kait Gillis, Health, 717-787-1783

**Editor's Note:**

Led by the National Council on Aging, the Falls Free© Initiative includes more than 40 states and 70 national organizations, professional associations and federal agencies who are working collaboratively to bring education, awareness and evidence-based solutions to local communities. Falls Free© seeks to provide hundreds of thousands of older Americans with the resources and education needed to reduce their risk of injury.

###