



News for Immediate Release

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Departments of Aging and Health Observe Falls Prevention Awareness Week

Harrisburg – The Pennsylvania departments of Aging and Health encourage all Pennsylvania residents to join in the observance of Falls Prevention Awareness Week, which is Sept. 22-28.

The theme of this year's Falls Prevention Awareness Week, "Preventing Falls, One Step at a Time," aims to promote practices that help protect people against hazardous falls.

"Falls are the leading cause of injuries and fatalities for Pennsylvanians age 65 and older," Secretary of Aging Brian Duke said. "Falls prevention programs such as the ones administered through the departments of Aging and Health have proven to be effective in preventing hospitalizations due to falls."

The chance of falling and becoming seriously injured increases with age. However, precautionary measures can be taken to increase an older person's strength and balance.

"Through state programs and partnerships, we are making great strides in Pennsylvania to address this important public health issue," Secretary of Health Michael Wolf said. "The departments of Health and Aging, as well as other partners, are working together to educate, manage concerns and increase physical activity to help older adults lead healthier lifestyles and reduce the risk of falls."

The Department of Aging offers the "Healthy Steps for Older Adults" and "Healthy Steps in Motion" programs. They raise awareness of fall risks, educate people on how to reduce falls, increase strength and balance, and provide referrals and resources.

"Healthy Steps for Older Adults" is a falls prevention workshop that screens people for their risk of falling, and provides education on nutrition, footwear, medication safety, exercise and home safety. Both programs work with the 52 Area Agencies on Aging to offer educational materials and exercise guidance that can help keep older adults healthy in their homes and communities.

The Department of Health supports the "A Matter of Balance" program, which is designed to help people manage concerns about falls and increase physical activity.

The program uses a variety of activities to address physical, social and cognitive factors that affect the fear of falling and teach fall prevention strategies. From September 2010 to June 2013, more than 200 coaches have been trained and more than 1,200 older adults have participated in the program.

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

For more information about these programs, visit the Department of Aging at www.aging.state.pa.us or the Department of Health at www.health.state.pa.us.

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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 that work collaboratively to bring education, awareness and evidence-based solutions to local communities. Falls Free® Initiative seeks to provide hundreds of thousands of older Americans with the resources and education needed to reduce their risk of injury.

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