



West Metro Fire Rescue's Guide to Developing and Implementing A Fall Prevention Program for Senior Residence Facilities

Note:

- Falls are the most common, disabling and expensive health condition experienced by older adults.
 - Many factors predispose older people to falls, including unsteady gait and balance, weak muscles, poor vision, medications and dementia.
 - External factors include poor lighting, loose rugs, poorly fitting shoes, clutter and beds or toilets without handrails.
 - Preventing falls involves a multi-faceted approach to the issues that increase the risk of falls.
 - Careful review of effective programs indicates that a multi-faceted approach can help prevent falls in older adults.
- 1) The **Center for Disease Control** offers a comprehensive resource packet for preventing falls and developing community based fall prevention programs for older adults:
http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/images/CDC_Guide-a.pdf

Components of effective fall prevention programs for older adults include:

1. Education

- a. Individual Education – packet of information
 - i. List of Assessments to schedule regularly (balance/gait, vision, medication review, residence/home environment)
 - ii. Fall Prevention Checklist
 - iii. Your facility's lift assist policy
 1. How to get up from a fall
 2. When to call for help
 - iv. A copy of your Emergency Evacuation Plan
 - v. A copy of your Emergency Relocation Plan – including transportation plan
- b. Group Education – meetings, safety classes, newsletters, posters
 - i. Identify risks – individual and external factors
 - ii. Promote safe pedestrian behavior and remind people to walk safely
 1. Footwear – should be appropriate for mobility, ability and environment
 2. Walk slowly
 3. Walk in pairs or groups if possible
 4. Avoid walking on ice or slippery surfaces
 5. Be aware of any physical limitations pose as a safety hazard when walking in or near traffic
 6. Cross the street at intersections, cross walks or designated areas

2. Assessment

- a. Provide annual gait and balance assessments for residents. Identify any risks and hazards associated with gait and balance issues
 - i. Gait
 - ii. Balance
- b. Vision
 - i. Vision should be examined at least annually by a physician
 1. Vision assessment
 2. Vision Correction

3. Exercise

- a. Offer regular exercise and strength training classes to help with balance and walking
 - i. Exercise options to offer:
 1. Balance alone
 2. Strength with balance training
 3. Group Class
 4. Individualized exercise/physical therapy
 5. Tai Chi
- b. If exercise classes are not offered at your facility, offer transportation to off-site exercise facilities or classes

4. Medication review and blood pressure check

- a. Medications should be reviewed at least annually by a physician
 - i. Medication Review with complete list of medication taken
 - ii. Medication Management
 - iii. Record medical information and contact information on a File of Life that can be kept with the individual at the residence and a pocket version to take on outings
- b. Note:
 - i. Multiple medication use is associated with an increased fall risk
 - ii. Keep an updated list of medications and know how they affect balance and vision
 - iii. Record medications on the File of Life and create an individual safety profile online at www.smart911.com
 - iv. Consider using prepackaging services for medications
(An example of this type of company is <https://www.pillpack.com/>)

5. Residence/Home Environment

- Assessment
 - Identify risks associated with falls in the home and note needed corrections
 - Have hand rails and grab bars to assist with balance and movement
 - Slip-resistant surfaces in the bathroom

- Eliminate tripping hazards
 - Area rugs
 - Clutter on floor
 - Cords
 - Clean up spills immediately
 - Keep frequently used items within arm's reach (kitchen/ bathroom cabinets)
 - Lighting is sufficient to illuminate path from bed to bathroom at night
 - Basic Modification
 - Remove clutter and tripping hazards
 - Rearrange furniture, if necessary, to allow for ease of movement around the residence and not block exits
 - Have an unobstructed path for exiting the residence
 - Identify two ways out of the residence for emergency evacuation and make sure both ways have clear pathways
 - Skilled Modification
 - Grab bars and hand rails
 - Ramps
 - Electrical work

6. Role Model, Repetition and Encouragement

- a. Successful programs report having their staff members serve as role models for the residents.
 - i. They sometimes participate in the exercise classes with them
 - ii. Some facilities conduct the chair rise exercises before lunch and/or dinner daily with the residents
- b. Group meetings are held regularly with reminders to exercise and walk carefully.
- c. Posters are changed out with different safety messages encouraging residents to make safe choices.
- d. Staff members offer praise and words of encouragement to residents participating in exercise programs and walking programs.
- e. Recognize model residents in newsletters and at meetings.