



Preventing Falls Among Older Adults

Hawai'i Injury Prevention Plan 2012-2017

Injury Prevention Advisory Committee
Injury Prevention and Control Section

Background and Accomplishments

The Hawai'i State Department of Health, Injury Prevention and Control Section (IPCS) has been working with partners in the community to prevent falls among older adults for nearly a decade.

- ▶ In 2003, IPCS supported the establishment of the Hawai'i Fall Prevention Consortium which provides a forum for information sharing, collaboration on fall prevention activities, and promotion of best practices for reducing falls among older adults. Members represent government agencies, professional associations, non-profit organizations, hospitals, care facilities, and senior organizations.
- ▶ Statewide conferences on fall prevention, held in 2005 and 2007, featured nationally recognized leaders in the field.
- ▶ In 2009, a Tai Chi for Health intervention was successfully piloted at Pohai Nani Care Facility. IPCS sponsored a similar intervention at Leahi Hospital in 2011.
- ▶ Educational materials were developed and distributed to raise awareness about fall prevention and fall prevention information, including a fall prevention directory of services and resources, was added to the state injury prevention website www.nogethurt.hawaii.gov.
- ▶ In partnership with the Fall Prevention Consortium, IPCS facilitated fall prevention screening for balance by physical and occupational therapists and medication reviews by pharmacists statewide as part of annual fall prevention awareness activities.
- ▶ The State Executive Office on Aging and county Area Agencies on Aging used data collected by IPCS to inform their 2011-2015 State and Area Plans on Aging.
- ▶ In 2011, the Executive Office on Aging and IPCS partnered to establish the Hawai'i State Fall Prevention Task Force. This short-term, volunteer Task Force comprised of key stakeholders is developing a comprehensive statewide approach to fall prevention by December 2012 that will address recommendations in this report.
- ▶ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) selected IPCS as one of three states to participate in an injury prevention message development and framing initiative. In 2010, IPCS, members of the Fall Prevention Consortium, and other community partners engaged in training to develop a coordinated communication strategy for fall prevention. Participants developed messages for independent older adults that IPCS tested, and the Fall Prevention Consortium is coordinating final revisions and dissemination.

Recommendations

In 2010, a statewide needs assessment was conducted that included a literature review, an online survey of more than 200 fall prevention professionals and community members, and follow-up telephone interviews with 58 key informants. IPCS, together with the Fall Prevention Consortium and other partners, used the results from this needs assessment as the basis for the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Raise awareness about fall prevention among older adults, caregivers, and providers

Enhance awareness among the public, older adults, caregivers, and providers that falls can be prevented and promote adoption of four key prevention behaviors:

- ▶ Beginning a regular exercise program
- ▶ Having one's health care provider review medicines
- ▶ Having one's vision checked
- ▶ Making one's home safer

The scientific literature and the June 2010 survey of key informants in Hawai'i confirmed that many older adults are unaware of their increased risk of falling or the simple steps they can take to reduce their risk (World Health Organization (WHO), 2007).

Recommended Next Steps

- ▶ Disseminate previously developed and tested messages for older adults.
- ▶ Develop and test additional clear, audience-specific messages for care givers, pharmacists, and physicians.
- ▶ Identify and use appropriate communication channels to reach key audiences.
- ▶ Distribute messages through community partners, including Fall Prevention Consortium members.
- ▶ Develop a packet of fall prevention educational materials to be distributed through partners.

PARTNERS

AARP Hawai'i
Catholic Charities of Hawai'i
Child and Family Service
Gerontology Program
City and County of Honolulu
Area Agency on Aging
Comforting Hands Hawai'i
Executive Office on Aging
Fall Prevention Consortium
Hawai'i Community
Pharmacists Association
Hawai'i County Fire Department
Hawai'i County Office on Aging
Hawai'i Optometric Association
Hilo Medical Center
HMSA Health Ways Corporation
Injury Prevention
Advisory Committee
Kaua'i Agency on Elder Affairs
Kaiser Permanente
Kapi'olani Community College
Kupuna Education Center
Kuakini Health Systems
Kupuna Caucus
Maui County Office on Aging
Ohana Pacific Rehab, Inc.
Project Dana
Rehabilitation Hospital
of the Pacific
Straub Medical Center,
Physical Therapy Division
Tai Chi for Health Institute
The Queen's Medical Center
United States Veterans
Administration
University of Hawai'i Center
on Aging
University of Hawai'i
John A. Burns School of Medicine
University of Hawai'i Office
of Public Health Studies

Recommendation 2: Increase availability and accessibility of fall prevention programs statewide

Fall prevention programs can help older adults:

- ▶ Assess balance and strength
- ▶ Exercise to increase their strength and balance
- ▶ Get their medications reviewed and adjusted at least annually
- ▶ Assess and modify their homes to reduce fall hazards
- ▶ Check for and correct vision impairments

The scientific literature has shown these activities can reduce the risk of falling, and there are various fall prevention programs available in the state (WHO, 2007). These programs are not, however, available across all islands and in all communities. In addition, these services are not always covered by insurance; for example, Medicare does not pay for eye glasses.

Recommended Next Steps

- ▶ Expand exercise programs tailored to increase balance and strength such as Enhanced Fitness, Tai Chi, and No Fear of Falling.
- ▶ Increase the availability and use of successful home safety assessment programs.
- ▶ Develop strategies to coordinate services among venues where older adults gather, such as community clinics, senior centers, meal sites, senior housing, assisted living facilities, care homes, day health centers, shopping centers, schools, and churches.
- ▶ Develop and disseminate an updated fall prevention resource guide to supplement current materials produced by the Area Agencies on Aging and the Adult Disability Resources Centers (ADRC).
- ▶ Explore resources to print translations of educational materials. Languages might include Ilocano, Tagalog, Mandarin Chinese, and Korean.

Recommendation 3: Engage professionals and community members in fall prevention activities

Develop fall prevention activities that engage:

- ▶ Public workers (e.g., paramedics, fire fighters, public health nurses, Area Agency on Aging staff)
- ▶ Health care providers, elder care providers, ADRC staff members, program trainers (e.g., physicians, nurses, social workers, physical and occupational therapists, pharmacists)
- ▶ Coalitions (e.g., Fall Prevention Consortium, the Hawai'i Healthy Aging Program)
- ▶ Non-profit organizations (e.g., AARP, YMCA)
- ▶ Interested individuals (e.g., retired workers, volunteers)

Many individuals and organizations must join together to prevent falls in Hawai'i. Already, paramedics and some pharmacists provide medication reviews, and many hospitals and rehabilitation programs assist with home assessments and modifications. But more individuals and organizations can, and should be enlisted in the cause.

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Recommended Next Steps

Develop mutually beneficial partnerships with groups to facilitate fall prevention activities, for example:

- ▶ Encourage community partners, such as fire departments and EMS providers to assist with home assessments.
- ▶ Enable more pharmacists and other qualified professionals to provide free annual medication reviews.
- ▶ Encourage medical professionals to provide fall risk assessments.
- ▶ Train care home providers to lead exercise programs for their residents.
- ▶ Engage and support students in professional schools by:
 - Training occupational and physical therapy assistants to certify eldercare providers in senior-friendly exercise programs.
 - Enlisting medical and pharmacy students to assist with medication reviews.
 - Training nurses, certified nurse aid students, and certified medical assistants in home assessment.
- ▶ Work with partners to develop and implement a training program and tool kit to educate all health care providers about the special needs of older adults and fall prevention strategies.
- ▶ Engage new and current members of the Fall Prevention Consortium, including representatives from the Aging Network, to achieve identified priorities.