



STEADY U OHIO

Confronting Ohio's Epidemic of Falls among Older Adults

Falls are an epidemic among our elders and are the number one cause of injuries leading to ER visits, hospital stays and deaths in Ohioans age 65-plus. An older Ohioan is injured in a fall every two minutes on average, resulting in an emergency department visit every eight minutes, two hospitalizations per hour, and three deaths each day. While residents age 65-plus make up 13.7 percent of our population, they account for more than 80 percent of fatal falls. The direct treatment charges alone for fall-related hospitalizations among older Ohioans in 2009 was estimated at \$645 million. Add this to other medical costs, missed work for individuals and their caregivers, and lost productivity for employers, falls among older adults have an incalculable impact on all aspects of life in Ohio.

Statewide Leadership for Falls Prevention

STEADY U Ohio is a comprehensive falls prevention initiative led by Governor John Kasich and the Ohio Department of Aging, and supported by Ohio government and state business partners to strengthen existing falls prevention activities, identify opportunities for new initiatives and coordinate a statewide educational campaign to bring falls prevention to the forefront of planning for individuals, families, health care providers, business and community leaders and all Ohioans.

Key components of STEADY U Ohio include:

- **Create a One-Stop Resource for Falls Prevention:** Many falls-prevention initiatives and resources exist in Ohio, but our state lacked a centralized point to house those resources. A new website – www.steadyu.ohio.gov – will be launched to serve as *the* source of falls prevention information and resources in Ohio.
- **Expand A Matter of Balance Education and Exercise Program:** The number one cause of falls among elders is poor balance. Fear of falling also increases an elder's falls risk, and one-third to one-half of older adults acknowledge a fear of falling. STEADY U will expand an evidence-based education and exercise program called *A Matter of Balance* to all 88 Ohio counties. Led by trained volunteers, *A Matter of Balance* classes have been proven to reduce the risk of falls by helping elders increase their activity level and reduce their fear of falling.
- **Develop a STEADY U Toolkit:** Health care providers will be given a toolkit they can use to conduct falls risk assessments of their older patients.
- **Partner with Businesses to Create "Fall-Free Zones":** STEADY U will help stores, restaurants and other businesses become "fall-free zones" by identifying and addressing slips, trips and falls hazards.
- **Promote Falls Risk Assessments:** STEADY U will help nursing homes evaluate their lighting and other environmental factors to identify and address falls risks. Additionally, falls risk assessments will be made a core part of the state's home and community based Medicaid waiver programs.
- **Target and Educate High-Risk Populations:** STEADY U will partner with organizations, such as the Alzheimer's Association Ohio Chapters, to implement strategies to reduce falls in high-risk populations.

For more information about the STEADY U Ohio initiative, go to www.steadyu.ohio.gov.

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