

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 minute on average, resulting in an injury every five minutes, an emergency department visit every six minutes, two hospitalizations per hour, and three deaths each day. While residents age 65-plus make up 16 percent of our population, they account for more than 85 percent of fatal falls. The direct treatment charges alone for fall-related hospitalizations among older Ohioans is estimated at \$1.1 billion. Add costs related to work loss and the total climbs to \$1.9 billion, or \$5.2 million each day.

STEADY U Ohio – Statewide Leadership for Falls Prevention:

STEADY U Ohio is a comprehensive falls prevention initiative led by 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. Strategies include:

- Launch <u>www.steadyu.ohio.gov</u> to serve as the source of falls prevention information and resources in Ohio;
- Expand statewide the evidence-based A Matter of Balance education and exercise program, which helps elders increase their activity level and reduce their fear of falling;
- Give healthcare providers a toolkit they can use to conduct falls risk assessments of their older patients.
- Help stores, restaurants and other businesses become "fall-free zones" by identifying and addressing slips, trips and falls hazards.
- Help nursing homes evaluate their lighting and other environmental factors to identify and address falls risks.
- Partner with the Alzheimer's Association Ohio Chapters to implement strategies to reduce falls in this high-risk population.
- Make a falls risk assessment a core part of the state's home and community based Medicaid waiver programs.