

A Matter of Balance Volunteer Lay Leader Model

Evidence-Based Falls Management Program for Older Adults

Program approved by AoA and NCOA

Contact Information

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Program Synopsis

- General description of program
A Matter of Balance acknowledges the risk of falling but emphasizes practical coping strategies to reduce this fear. These include:
 - Promoting a view of falls and fear of falling as controllable
 - Setting realistic goals for increasing activity
 - Changing the environment to reduce fall risk factors
 - Promoting exercise to increase strength and balance.

The workshop is conducted over eight sessions, meeting weekly or twice weekly for two hours per session. Meetings are led by volunteer lay leaders. A Master Trainer is responsible for teaching the Matter of Balance curriculum to the coaches and providing them with guidance and support as they lead the Matter of Balance classes.

- Program goal
 - The program's goal is to reduce fear of falling, stop the fear of falling cycle, and increase activity levels among community-dwelling older adults.
- Reasoning behind the program design and elements
 - Studies indicate that up to half of community dwelling older adults experience fear of falling (Howland & Peterson, submitted for publication), and that many respond to this concern by curtailing activity (Tinetti & Speechley, 1989).
 - A majority of falls occur during routine activities.
 - Falls usually are not caused by just one issue.
 - A large portion of falls are preventable.
 - Being inactive results in loss of muscle strength and balance. It can also compromise social interaction and increase the risk for isolation, depression, and anxiety. Fear of falling can actually contribute to falling.

- MOB acknowledges the risk of falling but emphasizes practical coping strategies to reduce this concern. Participants learn to view falls and fear of falling as controllable and set realistic goals for increasing activity.
- Participants also find ways to change the environment to reduce fall risk factors and learn simple exercises to increase strength and balance.
- The group format provides an opportunity for people with a common problem to learn from each other and to help each other deal with the shared problem of fear of falling.
- Target population
 - 60 or older, ambulatory, able to problem-solve
 - Concerned about falls
 - Interested in improving flexibility, balance, and strength
- Essential program components and activities
 - Group discussion
 - Problem-solving
 - Skill building
 - Assertiveness training
 - Exercise training
 - Sharing practical solutions
 - Cognitive restructuring—learning to shift from negative to positive thinking patterns or thinking about something in a different way.
- Length/Timeframe of program
 - Eight two-hour classes
- Recommended class size
 - 10- 12 participants (Minimum of 8, maximum of 14)
- Desired outcomes
 - View falls and fear of falling as controllable
 - Set realistic goals for increasing activity
 - Change participants’ environment to reduce fall risk factors
 - Increase strength and balance through exercise
- Measures and evaluation activities
 - Initial survey (given during the first class) with questions regarding falls management, exercise levels, and background information.
 - Last class survey; repeat of questions regarding falls management and exercise levels.
 - Last class evaluation with questions concerning comfort in talking about fear of falling, changes made to environment, comfort in increasing activity levels, plans to increase activity levels, and background information.
 - Results are entered on Excel spreadsheet for the organization’s tabulation; summary of results are sent to Maine Partnership for Healthy Aging

Health Outcomes and Evidence Supporting Health Outcomes

After completing A Matter of Balance,

- 97% of participants are more comfortable talking about fear of falling
- 97% feel comfortable increasing activity

- 99% plan to continue exercising
- 98% would recommend MOB (Healy, McMahon, & Haynes, 2006)

Participants demonstrated significant improvements after completing MOB in their level of falls management, falls control, level of exercise and social limitations with regard to concern about falling. (Preliminary findings, Healy, McMahon, & Haynes, 2006).

Program Costs

- Master Trainer Session \$1,500 (\$750 for additional staff) – includes 2-day training and all materials
- Reproduction costs of manuals and additional videos
 - Coach Handbook- \$16
 - Participant Workbook- \$9
 - Guest Therapist Handbook- \$4
 - DVD “Fear of Falling & Exercise is Never too Late” or VHS set. Available from Terra Nova Films- <http://www.terrano.org/contactus.htm>; call for price and to see if discount is available
- Other Costs
 - Coach training- 8 hours (usually 2 four- hour sessions) Costs: coach handbook, staff time & light refreshments, room & AV
 - MOB Class- Participant workbooks, refreshment for classes (\$5/person for eight sessions), room & AV

Program Savings

Not available.

Resource Requirements

- Facility
 - Enough space for each participant to move around comfortably
 - Tables, preferably set up in a U-shape
 - Chairs
 - ADA accessible
 - Space to set up snacks
- Equipment and materials
 - Name tags
 - Markers and tape
 - Flip chart and stand
 - TV/VCR
 - Attendance sheet
 - Pencils
 - Participant workbooks
 - Health snacks for each session

Training Requirements

- Instructor training
 - Attend 8 hours of coach training; must facilitate 2 classes within one year of certification
- Instructor certification required
 - Yes
- Instructor qualifications
 - Good communication and interpersonal skills
 - Enthusiasm, dependability
 - Willingness to lead a small group
 - Interest in working with older adults
 - Life experiences valued, with education or health care experience a plus.
 - Ability to perform range of motion and low-level endurance exercises
 - Ability to carry up to 20 lbs.
- Number of instructors required per class
 - Two; a new coach is paired with an experienced coach, when possible
 - A healthcare professional (such as a physical therapist, occupational therapist, or registered nurse) is invited to attend a MOB session to provide information and answer questions.

References

Healy, T., McMahon, E., Haynes, M. (2006, March). *Sustainability through Collaboration: An AoA Evidence-Based Prevention Program for the Elderly*. Presented at the ASA/NCOA Conference in Anaheim, CA.

Tennstedt, S., et al. (1998). A Randomized, Controlled Trial of A Group Intervention to Reduce Fear of Falling and Associated Activity Restriction in Older Adults. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 53B (6): 384-92.

Tinetti, M.E., Speechley, M. (1989). Prevention of falls among the elderly. *New England Journal of Medicine* 320(16): 1055-9.

This program overview was prepared by Ellen Schneider, Assistant Director for Communications and Program Relations, UNC Institute on Aging. For further program information, please contact the program administrator listed on page 1. Available health outcomes, cost, and savings data presented when known. We extend our thanks to the NC Area Agency on Aging directors for their assistance in designing the format for this document and to Elaine McMahon, Maine Partnership for Healthy Aging, for reviewing the content.