



**A MATTER OF
BALANCE**
MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

Chances are you know someone who has fallen or who is afraid of falling and might even restrict their activities because of these concerns.

A Matter of Balance helps people manage concerns about falls and increase physical activity. The Hamilton County Falls Prevention Task Force is looking for partners to become certified coaches to provide this program in their communities.

Coaches need:

- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Enthusiasm
- Dependability
- A willingness to lead small groups of older adults
- To be able to lead low to moderate level exercise

The Problem:

Studies indicate that up to 50% of independent living older adults experience a fear of falling and that many respond to this concern by reducing activity levels. Being inactive results in the loss of muscle strength and balance. It can also compromise social interactions and increase the risk for isolation, depression and anxiety. *Fear of falling can actually contribute to future falls.*

The Program:

A Matter of Balance is an evidence-based program designed to reduce fear of falling and increase activity levels among older adults who manifest this concern using a Lay Leader Model. It is based on the “Fear of Falling: It’s A Matter of Balance” program that was originally developed by researchers at Boston University. The Boston University version was difficult to disseminate to the community, hence the MaineHealth Partnership for Aging worked with the original researchers to adapt the program to reflect the lay leader model. *A Matter of Balance* program was developed and formally evaluated by researchers at Boston University. The program has received seven awards from various

agencies, including national agencies, peer reviewed journals and the Archstone Foundation Award for Excellence in Program Innovation in 1998.

The program consists of (8) two-hour sessions (can be conducted weekly or bi-weekly) and is led by lay leaders (i.e. volunteers from the community or staff members at the agency hosting the program). This person acts as a “Program Coach” and has a co-coach to help facilitate the sessions. Hamilton County Public Health is licensed by the Partnership for Healthy Aging to train the Program Coach and Co-coaches and to provide each coach with eight hours of training (complete with a Coach Handbook), mentor coaches and helps them prepare to lead the individual sessions. The coaches will be certified by Hamilton County Public Health and will operate under our license.

A Matter of Balance acknowledges the risk of falling but emphasizes practical coping strategies to reduce this concern and remain active and independent. The trained facilitators will conduct the (8) two-hour sessions designed for groups of 10-12 participants. During the class, participants learn to view falls and fear of falling as controllable and set realistic goals for increasing activity. They also find ways to challenge the environment to reduce fall risk factors and learn simple exercises to increase strength and balance. Participants must have cognitive capability to be able to participate in the class.

The session topics are as follows:

1. Introduction to program and the concept of falling
2. Exploring thoughts and concerns about falling
 - a. participants discuss attitudes about falling
 - b. how to shift thoughts from self-defeating to motivating
 - c. build confidence about avoiding falls
3. Exercise and fall prevention
 - a. discuss “costs” associated with physical inactivity
 - b. recognize benefits of moderate levels of exercise
 - c. 45 minutes of group exercise (*exercises will be done at every session after session 3*)
4. Assertiveness and fall prevention
 - a. in depth discussion about fall risk factors (*medications, vision/hearing could be incorporated here*)
 - b. discuss the importance of older adults advocating for themselves (*especially relevant to medication management*)

5. Managing concerns about falling
6. Recognizing fall-ty habits
 - a. discuss behaviors, environmental situations that are more likely to lead to falling (*this is a good session to plug home assessments*)
7. Recognizing fall hazards in the home and community
 - a. guest PT is invited to speak about physical therapy and falls
 - b. discuss what to do after a fall
 - c. discuss *how* to eliminate behaviors, environmental hazards that were talked about in session 7)
8. Practicing no-fall-ty habits/putting it all together
 - a. program wrap up

A variety of teaching methods are used to generate group discussion, problem-solving strategies, activities and videos. Sessions 3-8 include 30 minutes of light exercise and stretches. Additionally a guest Health Care Provider is invited to teach part of any session (4 or 7 is the best fit) and is provided a handbook of material to cover and FAQs.

Outcomes and Evaluation

Sites use the tools listed below to measure participant benefits and collect feedback.

- First and last session surveys include:
 - Demographic information (first class only)
 - Five-Item Fall Management Scale
 - One question concerning social activity to measure short-term participant outcomes
 - The modified PACE to measure exercise level
 - Consent form
- Attendance form
- The Class Evaluation provides participant feedback about the class. It also evaluates participants' comfort level with talking about fear of falling and increasing activity, and their plans to continue to exercise.

Senior Services (Seattle, WA) will compile and analyze A Matter of Balance participant demographics, the first and last class surveys, class evaluations and attendance. Senior Services will provide the Master Trainer Site with reports on a quarterly basis or upon request.

The Results:

Participants demonstrate significant improvements after completing *A Matter of Balance* in their level of falls management, falls control, level of exercise and social limitations with regard to concern about falling.

Program outcomes (800 MOB participants surveyed):

- 97% of participants more comfortable talking about falling
- 97% feel comfortable increasing physical activity
- 99% plan to continue exercising
- 98% would recommend MOB to other senior adults

Participants report increased confidence in:

- taking a walk, climbing stairs, carry bundles without falling
- increasing their strength, find ways to reduce falls, and protect themselves if they do fall
- the amount of physical activity they get on a regular basis



Program Recognition:

2002- The Aging States Project

2002- National Council on Aging, Healthy Aging: A Good Investment, Exemplary Programs for Senior Centers and Other Facilities

2003- National Governors' Association

2003- Journal of Physical Activity and Aging

2004- National Council on Aging, Partnering to Promote Healthy Aging

2004- AHRQ Workshop, Evidence-Based Prevention Programs for Elders:
 Translating Research to Community-Based Programs
 2006- American Society on Aging, Healthcare and Aging Award

Site & Coach Responsibilities

- Agree to coach two MOB classes within one year of certification
- Send Program Coaches (staff or volunteer) & Co-coaches (staff or volunteer) to 8-hour training hosted by Hamilton County Public Health (HCPH) that will be broken into two 4-hours sessions
- Recruit participants (PR materials provided)
- Reserve/set up ADA accessible classroom, chairs and tables (U shape) with room to exercise and space for snacks (10-12 participants)
- Distribute, collect and submit consent form, first class survey, last class survey and class evaluation.
- Two coaches lead the sessions, follow curriculum and lead exercises as outlined
- Coach will prepare for each session (1-2 hours)
- Trained coaches will be observed by the Master Trainer during one of the first four sessions and will be provided feedback and support.
- Send all data forms to HCPH who will send it to Senior Services so data can be analyzed
- Maintain communication with HCPH
- Maintain program fidelity
- Compete and submit attendance sheet and did not finish form
- Participate in MOB coach calls

Estimated Cost for Materials

Item	Estimated Price
Name Tags	3.08
Flip Chart Markers	5.77
Flip Chart (sticky back) & stand	30.62
Pencils	2.79
Printing costs for participant workbooks	Variable
TV/VCR/DVD player	Variable
Healthy snacks for sessions (8)	120.00 (approx.)
Staff time about 64 hours (coach training 8 hours, prep 1-2 hours/class, teaching 2 hours/class x 8 classes)	Variable