

PHHS BLOCK GRANT SUCCESS STORY 2016

CALIFORNIA ACTIVE COMMUNITIES: OLDER ADULT FALLS PREVENTION

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS OFFER OLDER ADULT FALLS PREVENTION CLASSES IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES.

Issue: California has the largest older adult population in the nation (more than 4.3 million adults over age 65). Falls cause 41 percent of the injury deaths in California, and 70 percent of injury-related hospitalizations among older adults. In 2013, 1,733 Californians age 65 and older died from a fall, and 74,945 were hospitalized. These numbers will increase as California's older adult population continues to grow at more than twice the rate of the State's total population through 2020. Treating fall-related injuries is costly. Medicare costs for non-fatal falls totaled over \$31 billion in 2015.

Intervention: To address this public health problem, the California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) Safe and Active Communities Branch (SACB), with funding from the PHHS Block Grant, contracted with seven local health departments (LHDs) to expand their community-based fall prevention efforts and to embed expertise in falls-prevention programs at the local level. SACB accomplished this by supporting LHDs' implementation of two evidence-based programs that improve older adults' strength and balance: Tai Chi Moving for Better Balance (TCMBB) and Stepping On.

1. LHD staff, or their designees, held 22 classes in their jurisdictions and collectively trained a total of 159 older adults in TCMBB and 101 in Stepping On.
2. Three LHDs identified high-risk, non-English-speaking communities and held trainings for these individuals in alternate languages. With the assistance of interpreters, Alameda County held a TCMBB training in Mandarin, and San Diego and Ventura Counties held TCMBB trainings in Spanish. These trainings provided fall-prevention services for non-English-speaking older adults that these communities lacked.

Impact:

1. SACB's efforts highlighted the great demand for older-adult fall-prevention services at the local level, including services for non-English speakers.
2. Block-Grant trained LHD staff filled their classes, and in many cases had waiting lists.
3. Many attending the classes reported improved strength and balance as well as more confidence to remain active in their communities. Additional benefits, such as increased community engagement and the positive impacts of promoting good mental health to sustain physical health, were also reported.
4. At the conclusion of fall prevention classes, several LHDs reported that participants achieved measurable improvements in strength, balance, and flexibility, and in Timed Up and Go (TUG) tests.