



# A Matter of Balance Volunteer Lay Leader Model

## Evidence-Based Falls Management Program for Older Adults

**Program approved by AoA and NCOA**

**Website:** [www.mainehealth.org/pfha](http://www.mainehealth.org/pfha)

### **Program Synopsis**

- General description of program
  - A Matter of Balance (MOB) 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 called coaches. A Master Trainer is responsible for teaching the Matter of Balance curriculum to the coaches, providing them with guidance, a coach observation visit, and support as they lead the Matter of Balance classes. A Guest Healthcare Professional visit to the community class may be arranged by the Master Trainer.

- 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, Levin, Fried, Pordon, & Bak, 1993), 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 sessions
- Recommended class size
  - 8 - 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.
  - Online data management services (attendance, pre and post surveys and class evaluation) are available through Senior Services in Seattle.

## **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

Preliminary findings of the participant outcome evaluation indicate that there were significant improvements for participants regarding their level of falls management (the degree of confidence participants perceive concerning their ability to manage the risk of falls and of actual falls); falls control (the degree to which participants perceive their ability to prevent falls); level of exercise; and social limitations with regard to concern about falling. These measures indicate that the program has been successful to date in reducing the fear of falling by increasing participants' confidence that they can manage falls risk better and actual falls if they occur and that they can take action to help reduce the risk of falling. In addition, participants indicated that their concerns about falling are interfering less with their social activity, and they report that they have increased their exercise levels (Healy, McMahon, & Haynes, 2006; Healy, Peng, Haynes, McMahon, Botler, & Gross, 2008).

### **Program Costs**

Please visit [http://www.mainehealth.org/workfiles/mh\\_PFHA/FeesFlyer.pdf](http://www.mainehealth.org/workfiles/mh_PFHA/FeesFlyer.pdf) for the most recent Matter of Balance cost information.

- Master Trainer Session at a regional training site: \$1,500 per person – includes 2-day training and all materials. It is strongly recommended that two people be trained from each organization.

As an alternative, a MOB Lead Trainer can travel to your site to train groups of Master Trainers. Fees are based on the size of the group:

- 11 to 15 participants \$16,000.
- 16 to 20 participants \$18,500.

Class materials, staff travel, meals, and lodging will be charged at cost.

- Approximate reproduction costs of manuals and additional videos (prices listed do not include shipping fees):
  - Coach Handbook- \$20
  - Participant Workbook- \$13
  - Guest Therapist Handbook- \$6
  - DVD "Fear of Falling & Exercise is Never Too Late" (\$164.76)
- Other Costs
  - Coach training - 8 hours (usually 2 four- hour sessions) conducted by Master Trainers. Costs: Coach handbook (\$20), staff time & light refreshments, room & AV (cost varies)
  - MOB Class - Participant workbooks (\$14 each), refreshment for classes (\$5/person for eight sessions), Guest Therapist Handbook (\$6 each), room & AV

### **Program Savings**

In 2013: Report to Congress by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services which evaluated Community-based Wellness and Prevention Programs. A Matter of Balance demonstrated a \$938 savings with savings in the area of unplanned inpatient hospitalizations, skilled nursing facilities and home health.

### **Resource Requirements**

- Facility
  - Enough space for each participant to move around comfortably
  - Tables if possible, 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/DVD
  - Attendance sheet
  - Pencils
  - Participant workbooks
  - Health snacks for each session

### **Training Requirements**

- Coach training
  - Attend eight hours of coach training taught by the Master Trainer(s) and earn A Matter of Balance Coach Certification
  - Attend 2.5 hours of coach training update annually
  - Agree to coach two Matter of Balance 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) visit to a MOB session to provide information and answer questions from participants.

## 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.

Healy, T.C., Peng, C., Haynes, P., McMahon, E., Botler, J., & Gross, L. (2008). The Feasibility and Effectiveness of Translating A Matter of Balance into a Volunteer Lay Leader Model. *Journal of Applied Gerontology, 27* (1), 34-51.

Howland, J., Peterson, E.W., Levin, W., Fried, L., Pordon, D., & Bak, S. (1993). Fear of falling among the community-dwelling elderly. *Journal of Aging and Health, 5*, 229-243.

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, Associate Director for Operations and Communications, UNC Institute on Aging. For additional program information, please contact the Maine Partnership for Healthy Aging: [http://www.mainehealth.org/mh\\_body.cfm?id=449](http://www.mainehealth.org/mh_body.cfm?id=449). 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 the Maine Partnership for Healthy Aging for reviewing the content.