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Reduce the Fallout of Senior Falls with a Coordinated Community Strategy

By Gene Kyle, Chair, Ludington Senior Citizens Advisory Board

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related death among older adults. One in four adults aged 65+ falls each year in the United States, which equals

- **36 million falls;**
- **over 3 million emergency-department visits;**
- **800,000 hospitalizations, most commonly due to hip fractures and head injuries; and**
- **national medical costs totaling over $50 billion**

each and every year.

WHY THIS MATTER FOR EVERYONE

1. Falls drive EMS call volume, emergency transports, and repeat calls.
2. Hospitalizations often lead to long-term rehabilitation, nursing-home placement, or loss of independence.
3. Preventing falls reduces Medicare and Medicaid spending, caregiver strain, and long-term service needs.
4. Even a small reduction in the number of falls leads to measurable savings.

WHY SENIORS FALL

1. Loss of strength and balance.
2. Medication side effects.
3. Vision or hearing decline.
4. Unsafe home environments.
5. Chronic conditions, such as neuropathy, diabetes, or heart disease.
6. Fear of falling, reduced activity, and weaker muscles.

WHAT INTERVENTIONS WORK

1. Strength and balance training.
2. Annual medication reviews to identify drugs that cause dizziness and confusion.
3. Home-safety improvements such as grab bars, better lighting, removing trip hazards, etc.
4. Community education to reduce the fear of falling and to increase confidence.

WHAT CAN BE DONE LOCALLY

1. Partner with pharmacies or clinics for annual medication-review days.
2. Support or expand balance-and-mobility classes for seniors.
3. Promote vision and hearing screenings through local providers.
4. Create or fund a home safety assessment program (through local agencies, fire departments, senior services).
5. Launch a public awareness campaign during Falls Prevention Awareness Week, September 21–25.

The bottom line is . . .

⇨ **Falls are predictable, preventable, and expensive.**

⇨ **Small investments now can prevent large expenses later.**

⇨ **A coordinated community strategy can reduce EMS calls, lower medical costs, and keep seniors independent longer.**