



Innovations in Falls Prevention

2024-2025 Grantees and
Proposed Innovations

The National Council on Aging’s (NCOA) National Falls Prevention Resource Center is providing grants for a 12-month period (June 1, 2024-May 31, 2025) to selected organizations for the development of innovative approaches to older adult falls prevention focused on one of the following areas: First Responders/Emergency Medical Services; Housing/Housing Agencies; and Nutrition Services/Food Access Points.

Council on Aging Services for Seniors—Santa Rosa, California

Focus: Nutrition and Food Access

Target Populations: Hispanic/Latino, Tribal Communities, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, and people with non-English language preference

Council on Aging Services for Seniors is a private 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that has been providing services for Sonoma County citizens over the age of 60 since 1966. Their mission is to enhance the quality of life for our aging community by providing services that promote well-being and maintain independence.

Focusing on low-income, homebound older adults, in collaboration with the Meals on Wheels program, the Council on Aging will design and implement an in-home comprehensive fall reduction program that considers the physical, cognitive, and psychological aspects of fall prevention. The program will encompass education, informative handouts, motivational interviewing, and a customized pamphlet outlining the older adults' specific targeted fall reduction exercise routine. In addition to one-on-one fall prevention exercise meetings, each client will also receive a nutritious meal with every session. Lastly, COA will partner to provide remote monitoring devices to track vital signs and movement patterns to assist with potential intervention in case of fall incidents.

Kansas State University—Manhattan, Kansas

Focus: Nutrition and Food Access

Target Population: Rural older adults

K-State Research and Extension, the outreach arm of Kansas State University, is the sole provider of SNAP-Ed in the state of Kansas. SNAP-Ed is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education administered by USDA Food and Nutrition Service, with the goal to improve the likelihood that people eligible for SNAP will make healthier food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles.

This innovative intervention will:

- 1) Implement two A Matter of Balance programs in rural communities with recruitment from senior meal sites and food pantries;
- 2) Distribute falls prevention education (e.g., falls free checkups and home modification programming) in 10+ senior meal sites; and
- 3) Develop and disseminate a social media/newsletter campaign on the interconnectedness of nutrition and falls.

Professional training has also been identified as a need in the state (i.e., SNAP educators are not trained in falls prevention, and Adult Protective Services staff are not trained in fall prevention or nutrition-related topics). As such, K-State intends to provide expert-led training to at least 25 SNAP-Ed educators and 20 Adult Protective Services staff on the interconnectedness of falls prevention, nutrition/malnutrition, and nutritional self-neglect.

Public Policy Research Institute, Texas A&M University—College Station, Texas

Focus: Nutrition and Food Access

Target Population: Rural older adults, border communities, immigrants, Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latino individuals

The Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) has previously undertaken statewide congregate modernization efforts such as the Texas Congregate Meal Initiative, DINE in Texas, and CDSME MEALS. These initiatives identified the urgent need for older Texans to access and modernize evidence-based health programs as part of client engagement strategies at congregate meal sites.

The innovation's design aims to test the effectiveness of social marketing strategies in highlighting the often-overlooked connection between nutrition and various risk factors for falls. Research has shown that nutrition not only influences the severity of injuries resulting from falls but also affects recovery time afterward. Recognizing this connection will help establish Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) as the ideal settings for implementing the Matter of Balance program.

Sound Generations—Seattle, Washington

Focus: Housing

Target Populations: African Americans, Asian Americans, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+

Sound Generations, a multiservice nonprofit established in 1967, partners with older adults to provide accessible and inclusive services, supporting tens of thousands of older adults, people with disabilities, and those who care for them each year, enabling them to age their way. Additionally, Sound Generations provides infrastructure for the King County Fall Prevention Coalition and owns 25 apartments for older adults with low incomes. Recently, the organization has been approached by the King County Housing Authority to identify a fall prevention model.

Following a community needs assessment, Sound Generations will collaborate with EnhanceWellness coaches to work individually with participants. Participants will receive tailored health-related goals support and connections to resources, including a series of fall prevention offerings within the building. These activities may include: a Matter of Balance workshop, an EnhanceFitness class, screenings for vision and hearing, a cooking class led by a Registered Dietitian using vegetables grown in our rooftop garden, a home safety checklist, or a decluttering / home organization workshop. In addition to reducing the risk of falls, we also hope to reduce isolation by creating a stronger building community.

Habitat for Humanity Detroit—Detroit, Michigan

Focus: Housing

Target Populations: African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, people with disabilities

Habitat Detroit has been serving Detroit and the surrounding Wayne County communities for more than 35 years. The organization seeks to improve the quality of life for their neighbors through its Homeownership program, Critical Home Repair Program, Financial Education classes, and more. Known for building and rehabbing homes for low-to-moderate income, first-time homebuyer individuals and families, Habitat Detroit has built more than 400 homes.

In 2022 Habitat Detroit began a program partnering with Henry Ford Health (HFH) called Return Home Safe. This program specifically aims to reduce falls, injuries, emergency department visits, hospital readmissions, and cost of care by providing minor home safety repairs and modifications for older adults. HFH compiles a list of older adults who have been recently admitted for medical care and are deemed a fall risk. Habitat then contacts the patient and sends its construction team to evaluate the patient's home and perform high priority home safety repairs/modifications (i.e. installing grab bars for the shower and toilet, installing/fixing handrails, improving lighting, repairing uneven flooring, etc.).

Jewish Family Services of San Diego—San Diego, California

Focus: Housing

Target Populations: African Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, people with disabilities

Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFSSD) offers a full spectrum of integrated services through a holistic program delivery model that provides: emergency and supplemental food programs; comprehensive aging and wellness services; mental health counseling; patient advocacy; parent education and support; case management and housing resources for the homeless; refugee and immigration services; case management; domestic violence services; poverty alleviation; and crisis intervention.

JFSSD will integrate falls prevention curriculum into the Fix-It program to provide home adjustments to enhance safety and implement additional preventive measures. The falls prevention curriculum will include information on nutrition for older adults, medication management, and appropriate opportunities for balance-related exercises, focusing on falls prevention education, robust assessments by an occupational therapist, and follow-up to track program impact. JFSSD will concentrate on program innovation for homebound older adults and individuals with early-stage Alzheimer's and dementia, who are at high risk for falls. This enhancement will help provide a more robust assessment and installation of minor home repairs.

McDowell County Senior Center—Marion, North Carolina

Focus: Emergency Medical Services

Target Populations: Rural older adults, people with disabilities

The McDowell County Senior Center, located in rural Western North Carolina, serves as a community focal point where older adults can come together either individually or in groups to access services and participate in activities. Additionally, the county has the fourth-highest hospitalization rate for falls in the state.

The McDowell County Senior Center, along with the Community Paramedic Program through McDowell County Emergency Medical Services, plans to pilot the use of DwellSafe, an innovative AI technology, to assist community paramedics in identifying and reducing fall risk to help clients prevent a first fall and reduce recurrent falls and lift assist calls. With verbal consent from the client, the community paramedics will use the DwellSafe app to scan the rooms where clients spend the most time and/or have had recurrent falls.

Each client will receive a personalized home safety report with expert recommendations that can be implemented immediately to improve home safety, along with a referral to a contractor and/or physical or occupational therapist, as needed. DwellSafe uses AI, so all results are reviewed by a human occupational therapist.

The City of El Paso Fire Department—El Paso, Texas

Focus: Emergency Medical Services

Target Populations: Border communities, immigrants, Hispanics/Latinos, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, and people with a non-English language preference

The El Paso Fire Department is a full-service fire department, responding to all calls involving fires, medical emergencies, hazardous materials, and other emergency events in the City of El Paso. It has 36 fire stations spread out over 260 square miles. In 2021, its Community Health Division instituted a Mobile Integrated Health Team to better serve the community with access to vaccinations, connect 911 high-volume utilizers with appropriate community resources, and reduce high-risk hospital readmissions, which align with its mission, vision, and values.

The City of El Paso Fire Department intends to use their Mobile Integrated Health team to conduct home visits for these individuals, providing a home assessment, medication review, ensuring an appointment with their primary care physician has been made, and connecting them to community resources. Individuals will be followed up to determine if they experience repeated falls within six months of the home visit. In addition to responding to emergencies, they are able to offer preventive advice, conduct home health assessments, and provide education and resources aimed at falls prevention.

Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging—Madison, Wisconsin

Focus: Emergency Medical Services

Target Population: Rural older adults

The Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to disseminate evidence-based programs and practices by engaging in collaborative public health strategies in Wisconsin and beyond. WIHA serves as the national purveyor for the Stepping On falls prevention program and currently licenses the program to 18 organizations in 14 states. Additionally, WIHA oversees Falls Free® Wisconsin (FFWI), a statewide initiative committed to reducing older adult falls.

Falls Free® Wisconsin (FFWI) is a statewide initiative designed to educate older adults on how to reduce their risk for falls, as well as to provide materials, resources, and connect professionals to evidence-based falls prevention programs and practices. Through this funding, WIHA plans to partner with

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to identify areas for collaboration, referrals, and policy and systems changes, and to develop materials and resources for distribution across Wisconsin. WIHA will begin by holding listening sessions with EMS personnel to explore current fire and falls prevention strategies and discuss opportunities and options for expansion. Once strategies have been identified, WIHA will partner with EMS to co-create a toolkit designed to provide local organizations working in falls prevention with a guide on how to connect with their local EMS departments to prevent falls.