

Making a Difference: Social Isolation, Vision, Hearing and Falls Prevention

Presenters

Kirsten Dorsey, OTR/L

Program Manager, MaineHealth, A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns about Falls Lay Leader model

Valerie Biediger

Health & Wellness Specialist, AACOGs Bexar Area Agency on Aging

Learning Objectives

1. Learn about the A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns about Falls Lay Leader program.
2. Experience vision and hearing loss through a simulator in order to understand how changes in sight and/or hearing impairment impact participation in group programming.
3. Identify strategies by Bexar Area Agency on Aging supporting individuals with vision and/or hearing loss in A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns about Falls programs.
4. Formulate a plan to increase participation of older adults with vision and/or hearing loss into your evidence-based falls prevention.

What do we know about falls?

- More than 1/3 of adults ages 65 and older fall each year¹
- People with vision loss are two times as likely to experience multiple falls as those with normal vision¹
- People with mild hearing loss are nearly three times as likely to fall, with each 10 decibels of hearing loss increasing falls risk.²

¹ Center for Disease Control (CDC) from Preventing Falls - VisionAware;

² Hearing loss quote from NCOA website came from: Johns Hopkins Medicine. Hearing Loss Linked to Three-Fold Risk of Falling. 2012.
https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/media/releases/hearing_loss_linked_to_three_fold_risk_of_falling

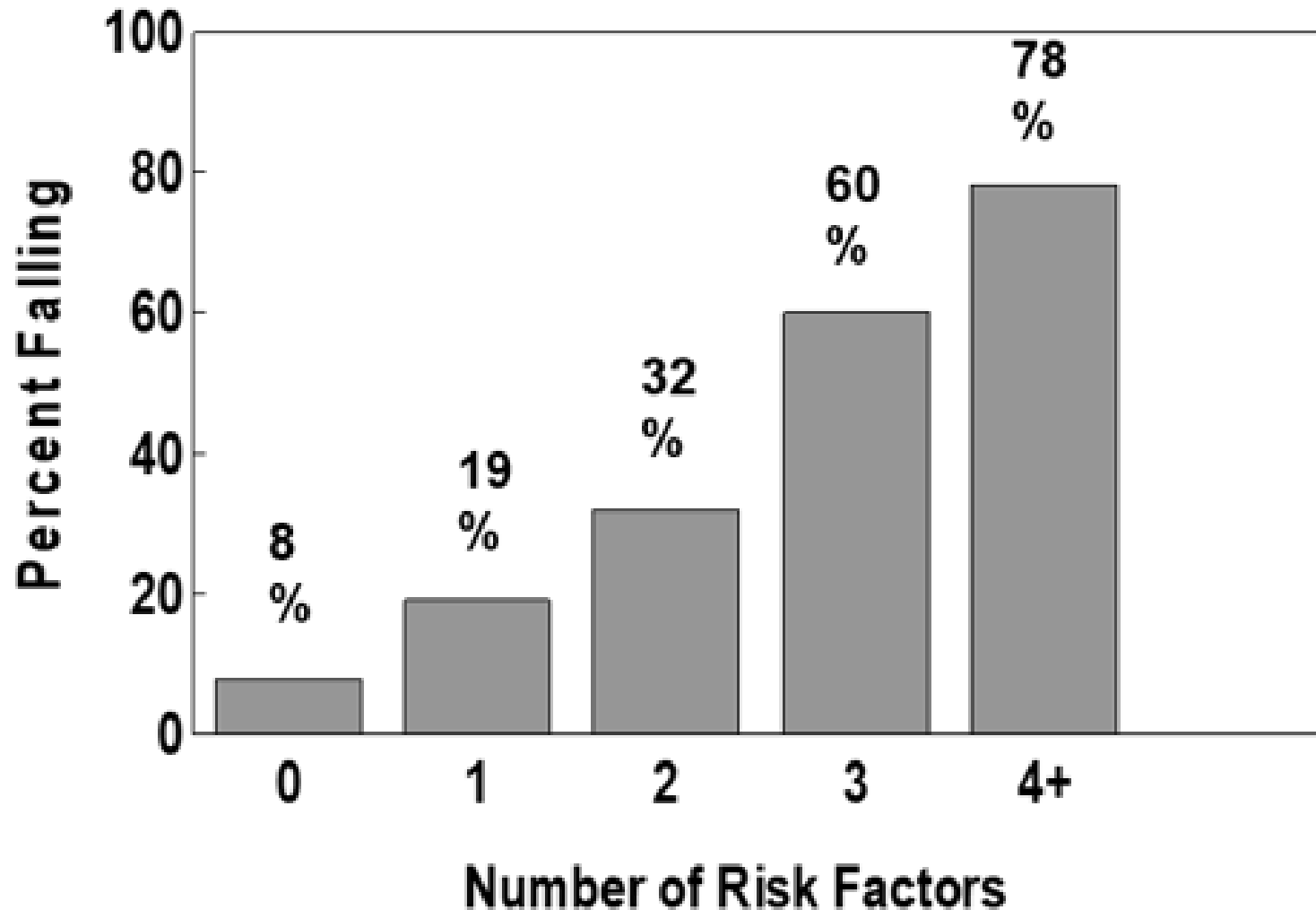
What do we know about falls?



- 1/2 to 2/3 of falls occur around the home
- Most falls occur during routine activities
- Falls usually aren't caused by just one issue. It's a combination of things coming together.
- A large portion of falls are preventable!

Falls are Multifactorial

Risk of Falls by Number of Predisposing Risk Factors



**The more risks
you eliminate,
the lower
the chances
of falling!**

What do we know about falls?

Falls are :

- Common
- Predictable
- Preventable



Falls are not a natural part of aging!

What do we know about Fear of Falling?

- It is reasonable to be concerned about falls - safety is important
- 1/3 to 1/2 of older adults acknowledge fear of falling
- Fear of falling is associated with:
 - decreased satisfaction with life
 - increased frailty
 - depression
 - decreased mobility and social activity
- Fear of falling is a risk factor for falls



What is A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns about Falls Lay Leader program?



MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

Evidence-based Falls Prevention Program designed to:

- reduce the fear of falling
- increase activity levels of older adults



A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns about Falls

Targeting older adults who:

- are concerned about falls
- have sustained a fall in the past
- restricts activities because of concerns about falling
- are interested in improving flexibility, balance and strength
- are age 60 or older, community dwelling and able to problem-solve



A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns about Falls

During 8 two-hour classes, participants learn:

- To view falls and fear of falling as controllable
- To set realistic goals for increasing activity
- To change their environment to reduce fall risk factors
- To promote exercise to increase strength and balance



MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns about Falls

What Happens During Classes:

- Group discussion
- Problem-solving
- Skill building
- Assertiveness training
- Exercise training
- Videos
- Sharing practical solutions



MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

Program Outcomes

99% plan to continue exercising

98% would recommend A Matter of Balance

97% feel comfortable increasing activity

97% of participants are more comfortable talking about fear of falling

"I'm picking up my feet more when I walk. I'm not trying to carry all my groceries at once into my home. I'm using a cane more when I walk on my lawn. I'm turning on more lights as I travel in my home."

"I feel better about being careful. My confidence has risen. And I am being more assertive and feel good about it, not intimidated."

Vision and Hearing Loss Simulator

[Vision and Hearing Loss Simulator / Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(mn.gov\)](#)

Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division

Reactions to Vision and Hearing Loss Simulator



Common Reactions to Vision & Hearing Loss

- Trauma
- Irritation and Fatigue
- Shock and Denial
- Mourning and/or Withdrawal
- Social Isolation
- Loneliness
- Depression
- Reassessment and Reaffirmation
- Coping and Mobilization
- Self-acceptance and Self-esteem

[Source: Mental Health Effects of Losing Your Hearing \(verywellmind.com\)](#)

[Vision Loss: A Public Health Problem | CDC](#)

Alamo Area Council of Governments Bexar Area Agency on Aging

Bexar County Total Population = 2,059,530

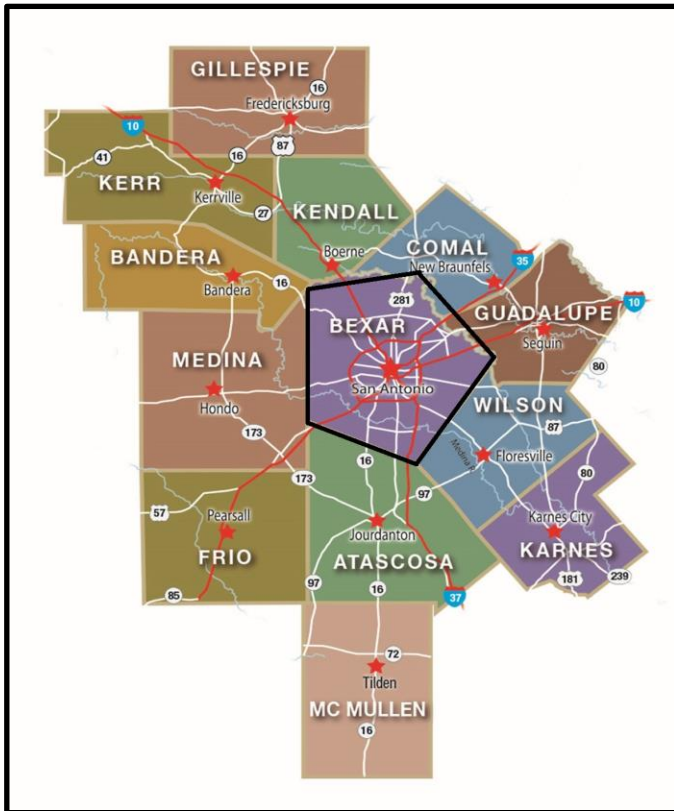
Age 65+ = 257,441 (12.5%)

With a hearing impairment = 7,938 (31.2%)

With a vision impairment = 4,172 (16.4%)

Evidenced-Based Programs supported:

- A Matter of Balance
- Bingocize
- Chronic Disease and Diabetes Self-Management
- Texercise Select



Low Vision Aids and Adaptations

- Magnifying glasses Hand-held magnifiers
- Electronic magnifiers
- white letters on a black background or black letters on a yellow background
- Large print
- Alt Text for screen reader
- Using 20/20 pens
- Audio, Podcasts and video
- Avoid paper with a glossy finish to reduce glare.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Aids and Adaptations

- Subtitles and captions on videos
- American Sign language (ASL) interpreters
- Provide seating near the coaches
- Ensure your face can be seen clearly, talk face to face
- Repeat/rephrase information, when possible
- Ask if you are being heard clearly
- Limit background noise
- Speak clearly with more volume



MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

A Matter of Balance Low Vision Translation

Adaptations include:

- Participant Workbooks available in 12-point and 20-point fonts that can be utilized with a reader
- Coach education material for teaching to the low vision population
- A Matter of Balance participant workbook and exercises available on an audio CD
- Enhanced verbal descriptions of the exercises



MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

A Matter of Balance Low Vision Translation Exercise Adaptation

Original Description

Diagonal Arm Press Across the Body

This exercise warms the body and can improve your upper body range of motion, overall balance and physical endurance.

Starting with your left arm, press to the right, away from and across your body. Alternate your right and left arm. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

A Matter of Balance Low Vision Translation Exercise Adaptation

Low Vision Description

Diagonal Arm Press Across the Body

This exercise warms the body and can improve your upper body range of motion, overall balance and physical endurance.

Start with your left arm. Put your left hand straight out in front of you at shoulder level and move your left hand to the right across your body keeping it at shoulder level, stretching as if trying to touch something beside you on your right side. Bring your left hand back into your lap. With your right hand straight out in front of you at shoulder level, move it to the left stretching across your body keeping it at shoulder level, as if to touch something beside you on the left side. Return your right hand to your lap. Alternate your left and right arm. Repeat 5 to 10 times.

A Message from Larry



https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kNQQPypIA32KX-bbAzYZYgoBVS3SwFx3/view?usp=share_link

AMOB (2016) & MOB-V (2021) Coach

Strategies Towards Inclusion

Coach Training and Networking

- Include low vision adaptations from the A Matter of Balance Low-Vision Tool Kit in all coach trainings and binders.
- Model/experience low-vision exercises during training.
- Provide all coaches with original and low-vision exercise handouts and encourage them to start with the low-vision ones to ensure proper instructions and modeling.
- Remind coaches before each class series that larger font and audio versions of the participant materials are available if needed.

Recruiting and Adapting

- Work with community partners who already serve the individuals vision/vision and hearing impairments in order to maximize resources and provide adaptations for participants.
- Offer available adaptations for vision impairments through the curriculum – large font, audio versions
- Locate community partners with knowledge or expertise with assistive listening devices
- Be teachable and willing to ask for assistance from the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)

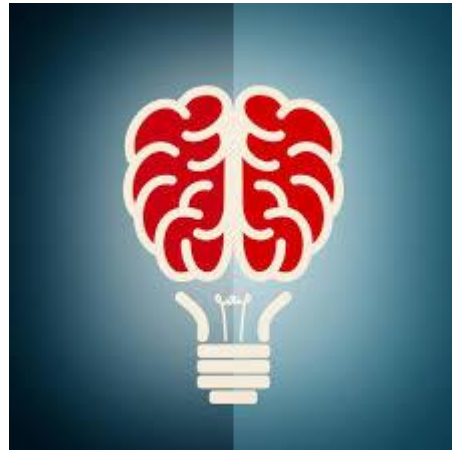
Helpful Hints

- Ask what assistance is needed
- Maintain a consistent room set up
- Have participants verbally identify themselves each session
- Provide verbal information in written format –large print is best
- Be specific with directions
- Be positive and patient
- Encourage self sufficiency
- Have additional people available to assist those with vision or hearing loss

Formulating a plan

Brainstorming Together

How will you increase inclusion for leaders and participants into your evidence-based falls prevention programming?



Contact



Kirsten Dorsey, OTR/L

A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns
about Falls

Kirsten.Dorsey@mainehealth.org



Valerie Biediger, MEd, MS BS

Health & Wellness Specialist

AACOG Bexar Area Agencies on Aging

vbiediger@aacog.com

Funded through the Texas Health and Human Services Commission
Alamo Area Council of Governments