



Program: Evidence-Based Disease Prevention:
Falls Prevention

Organization: Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging
Project Title: A Matter of Balance
Project Period: October 1, 2003 to September 30, 2006
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Evidence Base

Southern Maine will be using the Matter of Balance (MOB) program for their intervention, a program that aims to reduce the risk of falling, stop the fear of falling cycle, and improve activity levels among community dwelling older adults. “It is a comprehensive approach to maximizing activity engagement and function and reducing fall risks.” The program is designed for small groups of older adults living independently in community settings or senior housing. Coping strategies are taught that focus on the fear of falling and ways to reduce the risk of falling, including changing attitudes and self-efficacy, as well as exercising to improve balance and strength.

Original Research Evidence

The Matter of Balance program was developed by the Roybal Center for Research in Applied Gerontology at Boston University and the New England Research Institutes with funding from the National Institute on Aging.

Adaptation of Model

For the purposes of this intervention, the model has been adapted to use lay leaders rather than health care professionals as facilitators.

Project’s Overall Design

The Matter of Balance/Volunteer Lay Leader (MOB/VLL) program is designed to reduce the fear of falling, stop the fear of falling cycle, and improve the activity levels among community-dwelling older adults. The goal of the program is to use volunteer lay leaders as facilitators, in order to make the program affordable to offer in the community setting.

A variety of classes and activities are held, which address the physical, social and cognitive factors associated with falling, and also incorporate an introduction to exercise. Strategies include:

- Promoting the 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

Target Population

The target population is low-income seniors in the geographic areas of York and Cumberland Counties (particularly the City of Portland) during year one, expanding statewide during years two and three. Franco Americans and Native Americans tribes will also be targeted as part of this program.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Strategic plan to implement MOB/VLL with trained lay leaders
- Design and implement a process evaluation of the dissemination of MOB/VLL
- Implement the MOB/VLL program in the greater Portland area in the first 18 months, and expand the program statewide by the third year.
- Plan for evaluating effectiveness of the training program for lay leaders
- Design and conduct a participant satisfaction survey
- Measure the effectiveness of lay led MOB/VLL classes
- Prepare and submit presentations for national conferences

Evaluation Design

The Process Evaluation will track all design and implementation activities in order to assess problems encountered and successful completion of activities. Data will be collected concerning the procedures, problem identification, and problem solving. An analysis of this data will be presented to the Advisory Committee at regular meetings.

The Impact evaluation will compare outcomes for participants of the MOB/VLL to outcomes for participants of MOB that used professional leaders. Measures that were used to evaluate the original MOB evidence based program will be used for the VLL program, as well. These measures include the Howland-Pearson Scale, the Sickness Impact Scale, and Pearlin & Schoolers Mastery Scale. To evaluate specific improvements for MOB/VLL participants, baseline data will be compared with outcomes at 6 months and 1 year.

Partnerships

- Southern Maine is the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and grantee for this project. They will develop and lead a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to oversee the translation of MOB/VLL to a lay leader model.
- Partnership for Healthy Aging is the Community Aging Service Provider (CASP) and will be responsible for the project management and implementation.
- The Geriatric Center at the Maine Medical Center, a nonprofit community hospital, will serve as the health care provider. They will assure the quality and appropriateness of the health components of the program, as well as promote the coordination of the program with social service community.

- The University of Southern Maine School of Social Work will serve as the academic partner and will design and conduct the evaluation of the intervention.
- Other partners include: City of Portland Department of Health and Human Services, Maine State Housing Authority, and the Maine Department of Human Services, Bureau of Elder and Adult Services. These agencies will serve on the PAC.