

Wisconsin's Healthy Aging Grants: A Singular Opportunity for State Budget Support

The Governor's proposed budget for 2023-2025 recommends \$600,000 per year over the biennium to create a grant for healthy aging programs. This is an opportunity for critically needed funding to sustain the falls prevention, chronic disease self-management and physical activity initiatives of WIHA and its community partners.

Our Ask: Please contact your state legislators (and encourage others to do so) beginning now through May - in person, at local listening sessions, via letter, phone call, e-mail.

Use your own words and whenever possible include your personal experience - or that of someone you know - with falls prevention or healthy aging programs or initiatives.

- Talking Points that may be helpful in your communication -

What would Healthy Aging Grants do?

Healthy Aging Grants can provide funding to support a statewide network of researched and proven programs for the safety and health of people as they age. WIHA, through a network of local providers (aging offices and ADRCs, health systems, senior centers, public health, physical activity centers and others) offers programs in falls prevention, chronic disease self-management, and physical activity.

Programs and initiatives that this grant could help sustain:

Falls Prevention: Falls Free Wisconsin Center & Stepping On (falls prevention program)

Managing Chronic Conditions: Living Well with Chronic Conditions, Healthy Living with Diabetes, Healthy Living with Chronic Pain, Mind Over Matter (incontinence program)

Physical Activity: Physical Activity for Lifelong Success, Walk With Ease, Stand Up and Move More

Why healthy aging programs and initiatives are important:

- Wisconsin has the highest rate of deadly falls in the country. One in four older adults has a fall every year.
- An estimated \$1 billion is spent annually in Wisconsin for Medicaid and out of pocket costs due to falls-related health care.
- Older adult falls have a significant impact on public safety (EMS, Fire, ED)
 - Oshkosh Fire Department – 21.4% of calls were for falls
- 95% of older adults have one chronic condition, 80% have two or more
- 90% of the nation's health care costs are for chronic conditions; in Wisconsin the direct costs to Medicaid are about \$1.15 billion annually.

Why healthy aging programs and initiatives (such as the Falls Free Wisconsin Center) are good for Wisconsin:

- Promote self-management, behavior change and encourage older adults to take charge of their health and safety.
- Improve health, reduce costs. Examples include:
 - Stepping On – reduced falls by 31%
 - Healthy Living with Diabetes - reduced A1C levels, reduced ED visits by 53%
 - Stand Up and Move More – Reduced sedentary behavior by 68 minutes a day, reduced pain and reduced problems performing daily activities.
 - Walk with Ease – reduced arthritis pain; increased balance and strength
- Reach people in their own communities, in accessible locations (senior centers, libraries, county centers, health centers, churches) with providers they know and trust.
- Expand the reach, visibility and accessibility of falls prevention practices through a robust falls prevention campaign and virtual interactive demonstrations of:
 - How to spot and eliminate falls hazards in the home
 - Balance & strength exercises
 - How medications, footwear, vision, hearing affect falls risk
 - How to safely get up after a fall
 - Resources and effective strategies used by local community coalitions

How this helps local communities:

Details of the allocation are not spelled out but it is hoped that dollars will be used to:

- Strengthen and expand training and support to grow the number of evidence-based prevention classes, facilitators, and participants throughout the state
- Provide resources, funding and support for local falls prevention efforts, build falls prevention coalitions and test collaborative strategies to reduce falls
- Provide localized falls, chronic disease and cost data to strengthen targeted outreach
- Provide materials and resources that can be customized for local needs and connect consumers to local help

Sample Letter or Email to Legislator

Date

Senator or Representative (Name)

Address (if writing a letter)

Dear Senator or Representative (Name),

[Why I'm writing] I'm writing to urge you to support state funding for Healthy Aging Grants – a \$600,000 annual appropriation to support the researched and proven healthy aging programs that promote independence, wellness and self-management for older adults in the state.

[Why this is an issue – see Healthy Aging Grants Issue Brief for data on falls, chronic conditions, physical activity] Funding is needed to ensure that programs and initiatives are available and accessible in communities all over the state to help people [reduce falls, better manage their health problems, get more physical activity to stay well and independent].

[Why is this important to you?] Briefly share your experience with, personal story about, or connection to falls prevention, chronic disease self-management, or physical activity programs—as a volunteer, leader, class participant, professional or concerned citizen. If possible, give a brief example of how a program or initiative has helped you, someone you know, or someone you have served.

[What do you want legislators to do?] Please support the health and well-being of older adults in your community by supporting an appropriation for Healthy Aging Grants in Wisconsin.

[Say thanks] Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of the needs of your constituents.

Sincerely,

Name

Address