The Challenge
Falls remain the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injury for older Americans, sixty-five and older. Falls threaten older adults’ safety and independence and generate enormous economic and personal costs. CDC’s Injury Center monitors falls, fall-related injuries, and associated costs, reporting:

- In 2012, 2.4 million nonfatal falls among older adults were treated in emergency departments and more than 722,000 of these patients were hospitalized
- In 2011, about 22,900 older adults died from unintentional fall injuries
- In 2012, the direct medical costs of falls, adjusted for inflation, were $30 billion

Fall Facts in New Hampshire
- In 2009, costs for fall-related hospitalizations and emergency department visits for older adults was approximately $105.6 million
- Death rates for both male and female have increased significantly from 2003 to 2012 with the state crude rate between 2008 and 2012 being 77.4
- From 2005-2009 there were 11,604 hospital discharges and 44,963 emergency room discharges related to falls
- Emergency room visit rates due to falls in 2009 was 4622.8 per 100,000, which mirrors a national average

The Response
Falling is NOT an inevitable result of aging. Through evidence-based interventions, practical lifestyle adjustments, and community partnerships we can substantially reduce the number of falls.

The New Hampshire Falls Risk Reduction Task Force is a member of the Falls Free™ Coalition, a national collaborative effort to educate the public and support and expand evidence-based programs and interventions that help communities, states, federal agencies, non-profits, businesses, and older adults and their families fight back against falls.

The New Hampshire Falls Risk Reduction Task Force
In 1999, the New Hampshire Falls Risk Reduction Task Force (Task Force) was organized to address the growing concern of older adult (65 plus) falls. With an electronic membership of over 300 professionals statewide, and 20 regular members, the Task Force is currently made up a variety of disciplines, all working with the older adults, and all sharing a commitment to reducing the risk and numbers of falls among New Hampshire's oldest citizens.
The New Hampshire Falls Risk Reduction Task Force Goals

- Reduce the rate of death and disability in older adults due to falls
- Reduce the risk of falling in the older adult population
- Educate and train professionals working with older adults on falls

What outcomes measures does the Task Force monitor?
The Task Force evaluates all of its projects, which includes the process of outcomes evaluations.
Some of the more global measures include, but are not limited to:

- Deaths, hospitalizations, and emergency department visits due to falls
- 911 calls due to falls
- EMS runs due to falls

Some of the Falls Task Force Initiatives

- The facilitation of training for health care professionals on how to do falls risk screenings and assessments within the primary care setting according to national guidelines.
- Annual conferences on the latest in falls research and practice, including sessions specifically for those working in long-term, community-based, and acute care.
- "You can reduce your risk of falling", a health communications campaign designed to increase older adults' self-efficacy with respect to falls. This campaign includes different types of signage including public service announcements.
- "Slips, Trips and Falls, Prevent Them All", a multifactorial intervention curriculum geared towards the older adult that can be facilitated community wide.
- “Best Practice, Falls Risk Reduction Project” with 20 teams across the state for a two-year learning collaborative. Achievements from this project included staffing changes with high risk patients, increased signage and environmental modifications, falls rates and falls injury rates declining in places that made substantial changes, increased referrals, additional strength and balance exercise programs, and substantial improvement in physical status of exercise program attendees.
- Annual data symposium where various sources of falls data are discussed including home care, nursing home statistics, and emergency systems runs.
- Collaborative data project with E-911 to look at the nature and number of calls related to falls.
- Falls/Fire project with the State Fire Marshal, Concord Regional Visiting Nurse Association, and the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services on the value of joint collaboration in community based prevention. Sessions have been facilitated all across the state.
- Integration of falls screening in 13 community health centers funded through the state’s primary care system
- Collaboration with the Northern New England Geriatric Education Center conducting a survey of primary care and specialty providers regarding falls awareness and intervention
- Supported the increased dissemination of two evidence-based community program: A Matter of Balance and Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance
- Collaborating with the Foundation for Health Communities through an AoA grant to further disseminate and improve sustainability of community evidence-based programs.
The New Hampshire Falls Risk Reduction Task Force has been highlighted in the document "Making A Difference" (The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and the State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors' Association, 2006), “The State of Aging and Health in America, 2007” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Merck Company, 2007), and the “State Coalitions on Fall Prevention: A Compendium of Initiatives. The Task Force's work has been recognized locally, statewide, nationally, and internationally. In 2010, New Hampshire won the national Safe States Alliance “Prevention Program Achievement Award” for the work of the Task Force as a visionary force in the field of statewide falls prevention activities.

**Funding sources for the New Hampshire Falls Risk Reduction Task Force**
The Task Force has no direct funding sources. Members’ sponsoring organizations donate their time and other in-kind contributions. Members seek out grants for specific activities and interventions (based on data, need, etc. The Task Force and its member partners have received funding from the following sources including, but not limited to:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Endowment for Health
- New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
- New Hampshire Council on the Arts
- National Safety Council
- Consumer Product Safety Commission

**Looking Ahead**
New Hampshire continues to pursue the following long-term goals:

- Encourage older adults to adopt healthy behaviors, become more physically active, have their medications reviewed, and make appropriate safety modifications to their homes.
- Encourage health care providers to assess all older patients for fall risk factors.
- Educate and train caregivers and family members in strategies to reduce falls.
- Increase availability of evidence-based fall prevention and physical activity programs in community-based organizations serving older adults.
- Improve mechanisms for health care providers to refer older adults to community-based fall prevention and physical activity programs.
- Empower all individuals to promote fall prevention strategies in their communities.

The Task Force meets the first Tuesday of every month for two hours at 9 am at 29 Hazen Drive in Concord, New Hampshire. All are welcome.

For more information, visit [www.nhfalls.org](http://www.nhfalls.org) or contact Debra Samaha [Debra.A.Samaha@dartmouth.edu](mailto:Debra.A.Samaha@dartmouth.edu) or Dawna Pidgeon at [Dawna.M.Pidgeon@Hitchcock.org](mailto:Dawna.M.Pidgeon@Hitchcock.org)