

Healthy Aging Grants

Reducing falls. Managing chronic conditions. Reducing costs.

Aging is a lifelong process that connects us all. Today, one in four Wisconsinites is age 60 or older—and by 2040, it will be one in three. Now is the time to invest in systems that promote health, connection, and independence throughout our lives—strengthening the foundation for well-being in every community.

Healthy Aging Grants can do just that!

Research has demonstrated that no matter our age, we can learn and carry out effective strategies to reduce our falls risk, better manage chronic health problems, increase physical activity, and improve overall wellness.

The Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) and its community partners support legislation to fund the researched and proven strategies that give older adults, families, and caregivers the tools to protect our own health and wellness in these key areas:

Preventing Older Adult Falls

Falls are the number one cause of injuries as we age and are a key driver of emergency department (ED) visits, hospitalizations, and nursing home admissions. One in four older adults has a fall each year and, sadly, Wisconsin has the highest rate of deadly falls in the nation.¹ Yet, there is no state investment in falls prevention.

- \$1 billion is spent annually on falls-related health costs in Wisconsin which includes Medicare, Medicaid, and out-of-pocket expenses.²
- Falls have a major impact on emergency medical service (EMS) and health care providers. EMS providers responded to over 140,000 falls across the state making falls the top injury response in 2024, with over 10,000 more than in 2023. Over 20% of EMS responses were for older adult falls in 2024. The majority of these falls happened in the home.³
- More than 51,000 older people went to the emergency department due to a fall in 2023; over 11,000 were hospitalized.⁴

The **good news** is that while common, falls are not inevitable as we age. Many can be prevented with state investment in prevention efforts.



\$450,000

per year in annual state investment for Healthy Aging Grants to:

Improve health and quality of life through evidence-based programs proven to reduce falls, manage chronic conditions, and increase physical activity

31%

Reduction in falls for Stepping On program participants

\$2M

average healthcare cost savings per year through Wisconsin's evidence-based health promotion programs

Falls Free® Wisconsin – Launched in 2023, the Falls Free®

Wisconsin initiative provides:

- Virtual falls-risk assessments and interactive resources to educate and empower older adults to maintain independence.
- State and local public awareness campaigns to help Wisconsinites find and access falls prevention resources.
- Support and funding for local falls prevention programs and initiatives.
- Coordination of Wisconsin's statewide falls prevention coalition.
- Support and resources for emergency service and health professionals.
- Sustainability and expansion of Stepping On — an evidence-based program reducing falls by 31%.⁵ To date, over 23,000 people in Wisconsin have participated in the Stepping On program.



About WIHA

The Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging — a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization — provides leadership to falls prevention and social connection efforts – and offers evidence-based health promotion programs through a provider network that includes Aging & Disability Resource Centers, public health agencies, health care, and other community-based organizations.

To date, over 51,000 people have participated in WIHA programs statewide. But programs would not be available without WIHA engaging new providers, training new facilitators, providing technical assistance, collecting and managing data, and promoting healthy aging statewide.

Healthy Aging Grants are key to the sustainability and growth of these efforts.

Managing Chronic Conditions & Promoting Physical Activity

Nearly 95% of older adults have at least one chronic condition such as heart disease, diabetes, or arthritis; 80% have two or more.⁶

- 90% of the nation's health care expenditures are for chronic conditions.⁷
- The direct costs to the Medicaid system are estimated at \$1.15 billion annually in Wisconsin.⁸

WIHA and partners offer physical activity and chronic disease self-management programs — taken by over 20,000 people in Wisconsin — that focus on behavior change and are evidence-based to reduce health care utilization, improve outcomes, and reduce the risk of moderate or severe functional limitations.

State investment in Healthy Aging Grants will sustain the infrastructure needed to support local program providers and ensure that programs are accessible to people throughout the state. Together, we can reduce falls, better manage chronic conditions, increase physical activity, and preserve independence — all while reducing the burden and costs to health care and public safety.

1.CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/falls/data/fall-deaths.html>

2.WI DHS, Office of Health Informatics, 2023 data

3.WI DHS, Wisconsin EMS and Falls Report (2024). <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p03493-2024.pdf>

4.WI DHS WISH - Injury-related health outcomes, Unintentional fall-related injuries.<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/injury-ed/query.htm>

5.Clemson, Lindy, et al., "The Effectiveness of a Community-Based Program for Reducing the Incidence of Falls in the Elderly: A Randomized Trial," Journal of American Geriatrics Society, 52:1487-1494, 2004.

6.National Council on Aging. Chronic Inequities: Measuring Disease Cost Burden Among Older Adults in the U.S. A Health and Retirement Study Analysis. Page 5, Figure 2. April 2022.<https://ncoa.org/article/the-inequities-in-the-cost-of-chronic-disease-why-it-matters-for-older-adults>

7.CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/costs/index.htm>

8.National Health Interview Survey (NHIS); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics (CDC/NCHS)



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