

Fall Prevention ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018

A YEAR OF
ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE
FALL PREVENTION PROGRAM



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Falls are the leading cause of injury and injury related death among seniors in the US. Falls are also a serious problem for seniors in San Luis Obispo County, with EMS data showing that in 2014 an average of 5 seniors a day called 911 as a result of a fall. In response to this data, the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department began a new fall prevention program in 2017 to reduce the risk of falls for seniors.

To reduce the incidence of falls in the county, the program promotes fall preventing behaviors among seniors and helps high-risk seniors create safer home environments. To achieve these goals, the program has two components.

The first component is a fall prevention class series that promotes behavior change related to fall risk factors. The classes increase participant knowledge of fall risk factors, develop their skills in following an exercise program, and promote participant self-efficacy. The fall prevention classes are targeted at all seniors and will be hosted at various community locations where seniors congregate.

The second component is a home safety assessment for seniors considered to be at high risk of falling. The home safety assessment program is driven by referrals of high risk seniors by hospitals, physicians, and other community partners to the fall prevention program. After assessing home safety, the program works with the senior to identify hazards that can be removed and connects them to community resources as needed.

RATIONALE

Falls are the leading cause of injury and injury related death in seniors over the age of 65 in the United States. In 2014, roughly one in four seniors reported experiencing a fall, totaling nearly 29 million seniors nationally. Of these falls, 20% will lead to serious health consequences such as fractures, broken bones, or head injuries. Even though falls are common, half of seniors who experienced a fall do not discuss it with their health care providers. Lack of communication around falls is particularly concerning because experiencing one fall doubles the chance of falling again. The costs to the healthcare system for falls is \$31 billion annually, with hospital costs accounting for two-thirds of this total.

In San Luis Obispo County, seniors over the age of 65 made up 14.5% of the population in 2014 and accounted for nearly half of all EMS calls in the County. Of the nearly 9,000 calls to EMS by seniors in 2014, 1,634 calls were related to falls. This averaged out to five calls a day to 911 by area seniors solely for falls. Falls are also costly to our local medical system. In 2004, the mean cost of hospitalization for a senior who fell in San Luis Obispo County was \$57,742, the fourth highest cost among all California counties. The burden of falls will grow as the population of adults in the county over the age of 60 is projected to increase an astounding 60% between 2010 and 2030.

The growing size of the senior population, the high incidence of falls, and the burden of falls on both seniors and the medical system alike make effective fall prevention programming a critical need for the County.

GOALS

In our effort to reduce the falls experienced by seniors in San Luis Obispo County the fall prevention program has two goals:

- Promote fall preventing behaviors among seniors aged 60+ in San Luis Obispo County.
- Create safer home environments for seniors aged 60+ in San Luis Obispo County who are at a high risk of falls.

OBJECTIVES

- By June 30, 2018, provide a minimum of one multi-session fall prevention class per month for seniors residing in SLO County.
- By June 30, 2018, provide a minimum of two in-home assessments per month for seniors at the highest risk of falling leading to loss of independent living or mortality.

BY THE NUMBERS...

12

Total number of series classes held.

159

Total number of class participants.

11

Total number of class sites.

35

Total number of referrals received.

15

Total number of home assessments conducted.

Notes:

1: Series classes: Four-week Fall Prevention classes.

2: Number of participants at the first class of each series, accounting for potential dropout.

3: Number of sites where series classes were held.

4: Not all referrals equated to a home assessment conducted See page 6.

A CLOSER LOOK: FALL PREVENTION CLASSES

The Fall Prevention classes provided by the County consist of a four-week class schedule. Seniors are invited to attend class once per week for four weeks to learn about different fall prevention topics.

In the classes, seniors learn about fall risk factors and strategies to reduce their risk of falling. Each participant is screened for balance, mobility, and lower leg strength through a fall risk assessment. Additionally, seniors learn safe and effective exercise routines to improve their balance and strength.

Class topics include:

- Overview of Fall Risk Factors
- Home Safety
- Medications and Nutrition Management
- Vision and Pedestrian Safety

We had over 150 senior participants in the classes this year. Participants provided very positive verbal feedback about the program, including comments that the classes helped to build confidence, promote safety, and reduce their risk of falling.

The Fall Prevention Program provided 12 series classes at 11 different sites throughout the County, reaching nine communities. These sites included assisted living facilities and senior centers in San Luis Obispo, Oceano, Paso Robles, Atascadero, Pismo Beach, Morro Bay, Nipomo, Arroyo Grande, and Heritage Ranch.

A CLOSER LOOK: HOME ASSESSMENTS

Home assessments are a strong component of the Fall Prevention Program. Being that half of all falls occur in the home, the program aims to provide a safer home environment for vulnerable seniors throughout the County. We provide free home assessments to senior residents to ensure safety in the home and prevent falls.

This year, the program received 35 referrals from existing partnerships and conducted 15 home assessments. These referrals came from partners like Community Health Centers (CHC) and Department of Social Services (DSS). Discrepancy between the number referred and the number of assessments conducted was due to the client being unreachable or no longer interested in the service.

Home Assessment Process:

1. Health Education Specialist (HES) completes a home safety checklist.
2. HES identifies home hazards or repairs needed in home.
3. HES discusses potential home modifications with client that would improve safety in the home.
4. HES refers client for free safety equipment installation and minor home repairs as needed.

Home assessments have made a lasting difference in our senior community. Since seniors don't always have the capacity or ability to make home modifications themselves, our partnerships with existing county programs like Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County (CAPSLO) and Habitat for Humanity allow even the most vulnerable or low-income seniors to receive the assistance they need.

NOTES FROM OUR HEALTH EDUCATION SPECIALIST

The Fall Prevention Program can be described as small but mighty. We continue to provide fall prevention services to seniors and adapt, as well as improve, the program to meet the needs of our senior community.

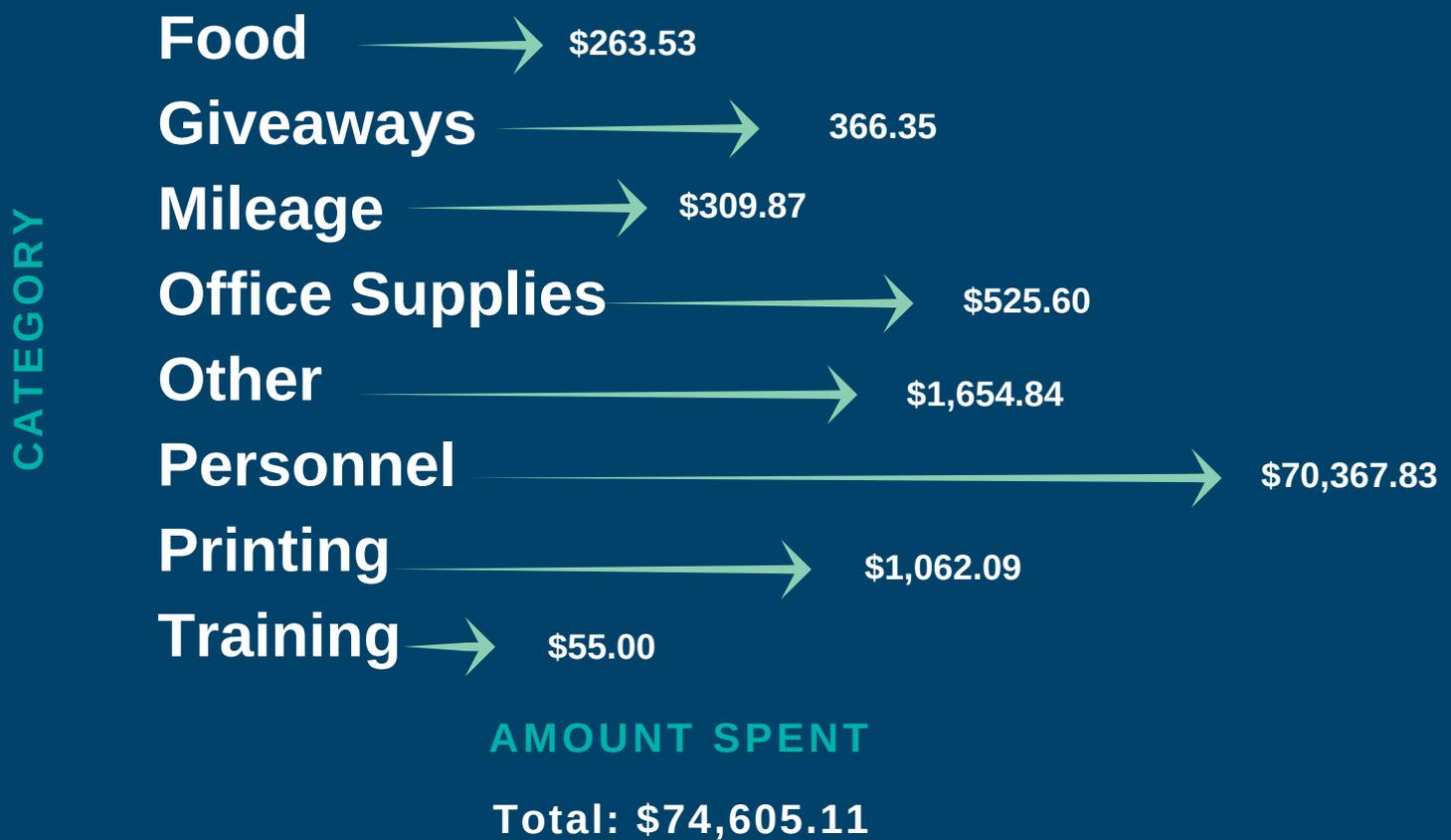
This year, we have increased partnerships throughout the County to promote the program, enhance senior services, and reach more of the senior population.

Our more notable improvements include developing manual books for participants in four-week series classes, providing one day workshops at sites unable to hold a four-week class series, and adjusting our classes and assessments to meet the needs of seniors in different stages of independence.

Going forward, the Fall Prevention Program will continue to provide education and will increase the amount of classes held and home assessments conducted each month. Additionally, home assessments will be open to seniors who are considered less vulnerable but still want to ensure their safety at home. We will also continue to provide one-day fall prevention workshops at sites unable to hold series classes. We will also be starting a senior support group in September 2018 in partnership with Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center.

Cassandra Marquez

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



Definitions:

- Food - Food purchased for fall prevention classes.
- Incentives - Incentives are given to class participants. Includes medicine boxes, eyeglasses wipes, and flashlights.
- Mileage - Personal car mileage billed to INJPREV.
- Office Supplies - Includes items purchased for the office and for classes.
- Other - Includes vehicle distribution and fuel charges.
- Personnel - Labor charges billed to INJPREV.
- Printing - Materials printed by ASAP.
- Training - Registration fees for relevant trainings.

WHAT'S NEXT?

SLOCO SENIORS

SLOCO Seniors is a support group for seniors wanting to share experiences, get support, or seek the guidance of other seniors in pursuing their individual endeavors.

This support group is open to the public and free of charge. Meetings will be held on the third Monday of every month at Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center.

CUESTA COLLEGE EMERITUS PROGRAM

Cuesta College Emeritus courses affirm and foster one's sense of individual accomplishment, value, and dignity. Starting Spring 2019, the Emeritus Program, in partnership with Public Health, will offer fall prevention classes for older adults.

Registration and tuition are completely free. Classes will be held at various locations throughout the County.