

Core Member Organizations

- Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (ADPAW)
- Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter
- Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (WADSA)
- Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A)
- Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (WABS)
- Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (WAND)
- Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (WASC)
- Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA)
- Wisconsin Senior Advocates
- Wisconsin Senior Corps Association (WISCA)
- Wisconsin Tribal Aging Unit Association

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) is a collaboration of organizations and individuals working with and for Wisconsin's older adults to shape public policy and improve the quality of life for older people. WAAN advocates for all older adults by educating the community and policy makers on particular issues impacting older adults; mobilizing people on priority issues; and advocating for change.

WAAN State Issue Brief
March 2023

Healthy Aging Grants

Reducing Falls, Managing Chronic Conditions, Increasing Physical Activity to Reduce Costs and Improve Health in Older Adults in Wisconsin

WAAN's Position/Budget Request: A \$600,000 annual state investment in Healthy Aging Grants to reduce falls in older adults and associated injury-related costs, manage chronic conditions and increase physical activity to reduce costs, improve wellness, and reduce the burden on public safety.

One in four Wisconsinites is 60 or older; by 2040, it will be one in three. The demand for services, health care and long-term care is growing. But what if we could reduce that demand by improving the health and well-being of people as they age?

Healthy Aging Grants can do just that!

Research has demonstrated that people—at any age—can learn and carry out effective strategies to reduce their falls risk, better manage chronic health problems, increase physical activity and improve overall physical and mental wellness.

To that end, the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network supports a permanent state budget investment in the researched and proven programs, practices and

initiatives that give older people, their families and their caregivers a role to play in their own health and wellness by addressing these key areas:



Preventing Older Adult Falls

Falls are the number one cause of injuries in older adults 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.

- An estimated \$1 billion is spent annually on falls-related health costs in Wisconsin which includes both Medicaid and out-of-pocket expenses.²



- Falls represent an increasing percentage of 911 calls taxing local emergency medical services (EMS) and emergency department (ED) capacity. Several Wisconsin fire departments have reported the percentage of fall-related calls to be 30-40 percent. National data indicates that half of the calls requiring lift-assist resulted in a second lift-assist call within two weeks.³

The good news is that while common, falls are not a normal part of aging. They can be prevented with state investment in evidence-based prevention efforts.

The Falls Free Wisconsin Center—Launching in 2023, the Falls Free Wisconsin Center along with community partners statewide will provide:

- Virtual falls-risk assessments and interactive tools to reduce risk
- State and local public awareness campaigns to help consumers find and access prevention resources
- Support for local 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 shown to reduce falls by 31 percent.⁴ To date, over 21,000 people in Wisconsin have participated in the Stepping On program.

State investment in Healthy Aging Grants will ensure the long-term sustainability of the Falls Free Wisconsin Center and expand access to Stepping On and other programs to reach more people, reduce falls and save dollars.



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**Find this document with
complete references and other
WAAN issue briefs at:**

<https://gwaar.org/waan-issues-and-initiatives>

Managing Chronic Conditions & Promoting Physical Activity

Nearly 95 percent of older adults have at least one chronic condition such as heart disease, diabetes, or arthritis; 80 percent have two or more.⁵

- 90 percent of the nation's health care expenditures are for chronic conditions⁶
- The direct costs to the Medicaid system are estimated at \$1.15 billion annually in Wisconsin⁶
- 37 percent of adults age 65 and older engage in no leisure-time physical activity⁷

The Wisconsin Institute for Health Aging (WIHA) offers several physical activity and chronic disease self-management programs 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. Over 20,000 people in the state have taken one of WIHA's chronic disease self-management or physical activity programs.

State investment in Healthy Aging Grants will expand the number of local program providers, sustain the infrastructure needed to support them, 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.

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1. CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/falls/data/fall-deaths.html>
 2. Based on the CMS figures from 2014 and CMS-based inflation rates.
 3. National Council on Aging: Partnering with Fire and Emergency Medical Services to Prevent Falls <https://ncoa.org/article/partnering-with-fire-and-emergency-medical-services-to-prevent-falls>
 4. 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.
 5. 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. Found on the internet at <https://ncoa.org/article/the-inequities-in-the-cost-of-chronic-disease-why-it-matters-for-older-adults>
 6. CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/costs/index.htm>
 7. National Health Interview Survey (NHIS); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics (CDC/NCHS)