The Michigan Fall Prevention Partnership was formed in 2006 with members from health care, public health, the aging network, academia and professional organizations representing healthcare providers. The Partnership has as its mission to bring fall prevention efforts into the mainstream of health care efforts and the design of home and community environments to maximize health and independence for older adults. The Michigan Department of Community Health compiled these facts for distribution on behalf of the Partnership.

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Falls Cause a Downward Spiral of Health and Activity Decline in Older Adults

- Serious Fall → Decreased Mobility → Reduction in Activities of Daily Living/Fear of Falling → Decreased Body System Functioning → Increased Susceptibility to Disease and/or Infections → Disability → Death

- Between 1990 and 2004, the age-adjusted death rate due to elderly falls nearly doubled, from 20.2 to 38.3 per 100,000.¹
- In 2004, falls caused 79% of hospitalizations for injury among Michigan residents aged 65 and older. Most of the injuries sustained were fractures, specifically, hip fractures.²
- Twenty-seven percent of Michigan seniors reported falling within the past 12 months.³
- About one-quarter of Michigan seniors who fell required medical attention.⁴
- Falls that occurred to Michigan seniors in 2002 had estimated medical costs of $657 million and total costs of about $2.9 billion.⁵
- Seniors over the age of 75 who fall are four to five times more likely to be admitted to a nursing home for a year or longer.⁶

Falls that result in death are just the “tip of the iceberg.” The injury pyramid illustrates the magnitude of fall incidence and serious fall injuries that occur for every fatal fall. For every fall-related death in 2002, there were 33 non-fatal hospitalizations, 195 individuals requiring medical attention and 828 individuals experiencing a fall.

What Can Providers Do to Help Older Adults Prevent Falls?

A 2003 RAND study found that a multi-factorial falls risk assessment and individually tailored follow-up interventions—especially exercise—are effective in preventing falls.⁸ Diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis are effective in preventing fall injuries.

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¹ Analysis of data provided by Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) Vital Records and Health Data Development Section.
² Analysis of data provided by MDCH Division for Vital Records and Health Statistics.
³ MDCH. Falls and Fall Injuries Among Michigan’s Older Adults. October 2004.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.