

Elder Home Safety & Environmental Assessment

Training Manual



Promoting Elder Fall Prevention Awareness & Safe Living in Our Brevard County Communities

Elder Home Safety & Environmental Assessment Train the Trainer Program

Note to Trainer:

The program you will be presenting is designed to increase awareness of the issues surrounding elder falls. Your presentation will be directed to persons of all ages. Attendees of your presentation will likely include;

1. Persons less than and/or greater than 65 years,
2. Elder caregivers,
3. Healthcare organizations and healthcare professionals,
4. Community leaders,
5. Community, church, and government service providers

Specifically, your role is to increase awareness regarding safety actions and activities that can be taken following use of the “*Elder Home Safety and Environmental Assessment*” tool.

The *Elder Home Safety and Environmental Assessment* tool was designed to assist Florida residents regarding how to identify the most common causes of falls in our communities. As such, you will be educating attendees to the fact that many elder falls are preventable by simply taking a few moments to review areas inside and outside the home setting. Although there are many potential medical issues that may cause a fall and injury, properly identifying and making environmental changes is a first step to improving elder safety.

The *Elder Home Safety and Environmental Assessment* tool is also designed as a stand alone document. Your presentation should stress that this tool can be utilized by the general public without the necessity of having any specialized safety training. We developed this tool specifically so that people who do not have the ability to attend an educational session can utilize the tool to identify potential safety issues.

Finally, the *Elder Home Safety and Environmental Assessment* tool is to act only as the first step of a review of elements that commonly cause elder falls. Your presentation will be to encourage community awareness of common elder safety hazards and reinforce corrective before an injury occurs.

The Brevard Commission on Aging

Slide 1 – Program Introduction:

Elder Home Safety & Environmental Assessment



*Promoting Elder Fall Prevention
Awareness & Safe Living in Our Brevard
County Communities*

Slide Description: - to provide some introductory comments as to why elder home safety is an important issue in our communities.

Your introductory comments may include:

- Welcome
- Presentation Purpose
 - To increase your awareness to the fact that falls are the #1 cause of injury to persons 65 years of age and older in the State of Florida.
 - Forty percent (40%) of falls that elders experience can be traced back to a specific reason why they occurred. In other words, when you take a look back at what caused the elder to fall, a few preventative actions may have been all that were needed to prevent an injury.
 - This is not to say we can prevent all falls. But, if we can take action to reduce some of the most common contributors to falls we can make a great inroad to improving the lives of our residents.
 - The objective of today is to teach you the first steps to improving elder safety and how to use the Elder Home Safety & Environmental Assessment tool (and show others how to use it as well).

Slide 2 – Home Entrances

#1 Home Entrances

Safe	Issue	N/A	Area Reviewed	Comments
✓	✓	✓		
			The primary doorway is visible (it is not obstructed by plants or shrubs).	
			Railings are securely mounted.	
			Outside lighting is present and working.	
			Primary door entrance has "peep-hole" for outside viewing.	
			Door locks in good working order (extra keys have been provided to essential caregivers).	
			Doorbell is working (determine if the bell can be heard from all areas of the home).	
			Walking surfaces are in good repair (free from cracks that present trip hazards). No broken steps or boards in need of replacement.	
			Outside areas where garbage is placed are free of trip hazards.	

Slide Description: - This slide introduces elder home safety by focusing first on entrances and exits to the residence. Although 60% of all elder falls occur inside the home, 30% occur in the community. A thorough home safety assessment should include a review of surfaces surrounding the residence.

Your comments may include:

- The importance of a clear line of site and pathway for entering and exiting the residence.
- Secure surfaces (railings) that allow the ability to safely ascend and descend steps and stairs.
- Security lighting that will allow the resident to see who is at the door
- Ability to see outside so as not to have to open the door to greet someone.
- Door locks that work properly and can be opened by those who visit the residence.
- A doorbell that can be heard from all areas of the residence.
- Outside surfaces that are frequently traveled (IE. to and from the mailbox) are free from trip hazards.
- Ability to remove trash from the residence without encountering potential safety hazards.

Slide 3 - Home Entrances (continued)

#1 Home Entrances (continued)

Safe	Issue	N/A	Area Reviewed	Comments
✓	✓	✓		
			If needed, the home is accessible by wheel chair and/or walker.	
			Outside walking surfaces are free of lubricants (oil, grease).	
			Essential pathways in the garage are unobstructed.	
			Garage lights are working and of proper intensity so as to permit night-time usage.	
			If present, the automatic garage door opener is in good working order.	
			Throw rugs are removed from garage floors.	
			Automatic sprinklers near doorways are in good working order (not flooding walking surfaces).	
			Yard surfaces where pets are taken are free of trip hazards (holes, hoses, sprinkler heads, etc).	

Slide Description: - This slide addresses additional elements encountered entering and exiting the residence.

Your comments may include:

- The importance of wheel chair and walker accessibility to the residence. The resident should have the capability to access the residence without major difficulty.
- Surfaces should be free of chemical spills that may present slip hazards.
- The garage should permit easy access to the automobile and should be properly lighted so as to allow the resident to see at night and when the door is closed.
- Automatic garage doors should be checked to see if they are in proper working order and that the resident knows how to exit them if a power failure occurs.
- Loose rugs are removed from garage floor surfaces
- Automatic sprinkles do not present safety hazards (IE. in the winter months ice can form on paved surfaces).
- Yard areas are free of trip hazards (this is especially important for night-time walking of pets).

Slide 4 – Living Areas

#2 Living Areas

Safe	Issue	N/A	Area Reviewed	Comments
✓	✓	✓		
			Doorways permit access for a wheel chair and/or walker.	
			Pathways are clear. If not, furniture can be re-arranged to permit the opening of a pathway.	
			No electric or phone cords are present in the open walking areas.	
			Light switches are easily accessible upon entry into the room (IE. without having to walk through a dark room).	
			Chair seating permits easy sitting and rising.	
			Primary seating is secure to the floor (no casters or wheels on furniture).	
			Telephone access is available in each room.	
			A working smoke detector is on each floor of the residence.	
			Windows are easy to open (IE. can be un-locked without difficulty).	
			Blinds and curtains are easy to open and close.	

Description: This slide begins to address the problems encountered inside the residence.

Your comments may include:

- The resident should be able to move about the area without having to make special accommodation to enter or exit a room.
- Allow 42” or greater in all pathway areas in the home. Furniture that presents trip hazards should be moved out of common pathways.
- Extension, phone, or appliance cords should not be present in ambulation pathways.
- Entrances to rooms should provide lighting access.
- Chairs that require “low-seating” should be removed.
- Avoid the use of wheeled furniture (or furniture that is broken).
- Whenever possible, have phone availability in all rooms
- Ensure all smoke detectors are in proper working order.
- Windows should be easy to open and close.
- Blinds and curtains should easily allow the resident to open and close them so as to reduce glare.

Slide 5 – Living Areas (continued)

#2 Living Areas (continued)

Safe	Issue	N/A	Area Reviewed	Comments
✓	✓	✓		
			In rooms where glare is a problem can it be reduced (IE. install frosted bulbs, indirect lighting, shades on fixtures, or partially close blinds or curtains)?	
			Heating and air conditioning thermostats are easy to reach (and read).	
			All carpets are secured (no loose edges or throw-rugs).	
			Hallways are free of trip hazards (especially note clearance for walkers, canes, or a wheelchair).	
			Adequate lighting is present in all rooms (consider touring the home in the day-time and evening to inspect lighting).	
			Wood flooring is even with no trip hazards entering or exiting a room.	
			Terrazzo floors are clean and dry.	
			Pet food/water located in an area where they present no trip hazard.	
			Furniture (in high traffic areas) should be secure enough to be leaned-on.	

Description: This slide continues to address the problems encountered inside the residence.

Your comments may include:

- All attempts should be made to reduce glare inside the residence. Explain the importance of how glare negatively impacts visual capability in the elderly and increases the likelihood of a fall.
- A clear path to thermostats should be provided.
- Carpeting should be properly secured or removed
- All rooms should be adequately lighted.
- Flooring height differences should be noted and changes made if a trip hazard is present.
- Floors are clean and dry.
- Pet food, water, pet sleeping areas, and toys should not be walking obstacles.
- Any furniture that is used for stability (I.E. frequently grasped while ambulating through a room) should be secure to the floor. In particular check furniture that is on wood or terrazzo flooring. Also ensure chairs that are frequently used have secure arm rails.

Slide 6 – Bathrooms

#3 Bathrooms

Safe Issue N/A			Area Reviewed	Comments
✓	✓	✓		
			Will the doorway permit access by a walker* or wheelchair?*	
			Floor free of clutter (no throw rugs).	
			Toilet seat height appropriate for the primary resident (consider raising the seat if standing, sitting, or standing balance is a problem).	
			Grab bars installed in the shower, tub, and near the toilet.	
			Hot water temperature is safe (should be adjusted not to exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit).	
			Shower bench seat is available.	
			Non-skid surface in the tub and shower.	
			Night light is present.	
			Towels, toilet paper, and personal supplies are easy to reach.	
			Hand-held shower wand available.	
			Examine opportunities to install a phone in the bathroom.	

* If the bathroom will not permit forward entry with the use of a walker, it may allow side-ways entry.

** If the bathroom is not wheel chair accessible, a bedside commode may be an option.

Description: This slide introduces safety problems encountered in the bathroom setting.

Your comments may include:

- In some Florida residences walker and a wheelchair access into the bathroom is not possible. In other instances, however, turning the walker and ambulating “sideways” is possible. The important point to reinforce is that the resident must exercise great caution when forced to change ambulation direction to obtain entrance or exit the bathroom.
- Despite the dangers of water on the bathroom floor, all rugs must be secured to the floor.
- Toilet seat height must be appropriate to meet elder needs.
- Grab bars should be located in the shower, tub and near the toilet area.
- Water temperature should not present a burn hazard.
- Shower benches are very important for those with balance problems.
- Anti-“slip-strips” should be installed in the tub and shower.
- Nightlights should be installed in bathrooms.
- All “most frequently used” personal supplies should be easy to reach.
- Consider the installation of a hand-held shower wand.
- If opportunities are available, a phone in the bathroom is useful.

Slide 7 – Bedrooms

#4 Bedrooms

Safe	Issue	N/A	Area Reviewed	Comments
✓	✓	✓		
			Pathways clear throughout room.	
			Light switch is available at doorway entrance.	
			Light available on bedside stands (IE. should be one for each bed in room).	
			Floor free of clutter (no throw rugs).	
			Bed is firm and height adjusted to align with back of knees.	
			Chair in the room (with arm-rests).	
			Bedroom nightlight is installed.	
			Telephone access is near the bed.	
			Flash-light is close-by in the event of a power failure.	
			No rolling furniture is present.	
			Closet permits easy access to daily clothing items.	
			No electrical or phone cords are present as trip hazards.	

Description: This slide introduces safety problems encountered in the bedroom setting.

Your comments may include:

- As in other parts of the residence, attempt to have a 42” wide path clear of all trip hazards throughout the bedroom areas.
- Upon entering the room, the resident should be able to turn on a light without having to walk into a dark room.
- Rugs should be secured to the floor and all objects capable of creating a trip hazard should be removed from the floor.
- Bed height should allow for the resident to get easily in and out with minimal effort.
- Have at least one chair in the room with arm-rests.
- Install a nightlight near the bed that provides sufficient lighting of the floor surfaces.
- Provide a phone and flash-light on a bedside stand.
- Ensure all furniture is secured to the surface of the floor.
- Inspect the closet to ensure all essential clothing items are within reach
- Remove all electrical or phone cord trip hazards.

Slide 8 – Stairs

#5 Stairs

Safe Issue N/A			Area Reviewed	Comments
✓	✓	✓		
			Steps are clean and free of objects.	
			Every step properly fastened and clearly visible (IE. the edge of each step can be seen).	
			Steps are equal in height and depth.	
			Light switches are available at the top and bottom of the stairs. Lighting should not produce a glare.	
			Carpet is securely fastened. Avoid the use of deep-pile, dark colored, and patterned carpeting on stairs.	
			If there is no carpeting present, steps have non-skid strips in place.	
			A sturdy handrail is installed (handrails on both sides of the stairway is HIGHLY recommended especially if walking difficulties or other medical problems are present). Elders tend to rely more on rails as they descend stairs.	
			Shoes are worn going up and down stairs (IE. avoid wearing socks or smooth soled slippers or shoes).	

Description: This slide introduces safety problems encountered in using stairs in the residential setting.

Your comments may include:

- Remove all objects from stairway surfaces
- Check for loose steps and ensure that each step is visible in all lighting situations.
- If steps are unequal in height, depth, or width, make sure the resident is aware of the differences.
- Light switches should be available at the top and bottom of the stairs. Check for sufficient lighting and for potential glare.
- Make sure all carpeting on stair surfaces is adequately secured. Install “skid-strips” in areas where the surface presents a slip hazard.
- Check the security of the rails. If possible, install a rail on both sides of the stairway.
- Encourage the use of shoes at all times when ascending or descending stairs.

Slide 9 – Kitchen

#6 Kitchen

Safe Issue N/A			Area Reviewed	Comments
✓	✓	✓		
			Floor free of clutter (no throw rugs or mats)	
			Floor clean and dry and produces no glare (IE. no evidence of grease or other liquids on floor surface).	
			Appliances in good working condition (IE. all on/off indicator lights work).	
			Smoke detector working.	
			Storage spaces are easily accessible (IE. the most commonly used kitchen supplies are located between eye and knee levels).	
			All flammables are located away from heat sources.	
			Electrical outlets are not over-loaded.	
			Lighting sufficient for all kitchen activities.	
			Lighting switches are located at the primary entrance to the kitchen.	
			Appliances are un-plugged when not in use.	
			Drawers open and close without difficulty and are closed when not in use.	
			A step ladder (or step stool) is used to reach over-head objects in cabinets. Chairs should not be used for standing-on.	

Description: This slide introduces safety problems encountered in a residential kitchen setting.

Your comments may include:

- Floors should be clean and dry with no trip hazards. If a throw rug is near the sink, it should lie flat on the floor.
- Check stove and top burners to ensure on and off indicators are in good working condition.
- Inspect smoke detector to see that it is functioning properly
- Place the most frequently used kitchen utensils in a location that does not require significant over-head reaching.
- All flammables should be stored away from heat sources.
- Light switches are available upon entry into the kitchen
- Appliances are un-plugged when not in use.
- Drawers (including the dishwasher) are closed when not in use.
- A step ladder is used for reaching top cabinets. The use of a chair should be discouraged.

Your Home Survey Results

The goal for most of us is to remain living in our home for as long as physically possible. The purpose of the review of your home is to identify six (6) areas where a potential hazard is present that could lead to a slip or trip and fall.

The following is the summary of the six (6) areas inside or outside your home where potential fall risks were identified:

<u>Safety Topic</u>	<u>Potential Fall & Safety Issues</u>
1. Home Entrances	_____ (from pages 5 & 6)
2. Living Area	_____ (from pages 7 & 8)
3. Bathrooms	_____ (from page 9)
4. Bedrooms	_____ (from page 10)
5. Stairs	_____ (from page 11)
6. Kitchen	_____ (from page 12)

Description: This slide summarizes the results of the home and environmental survey.

Your comments may include:

- The summary page is used to identify environmental areas and residential rooms that potentially may pose a safety problem. The summary is designed to call to the users' attention areas where issues have been identified. Essentially, the higher the number of potential problems in any area or room, the greater the safety risk.
- A common misinterpretation of how to use this page is that a low number of identified issues indicates the area is safe. Remember, it only takes one "small issue" to cause a fall and injury. Risk is lessened ONLY when all issues have been identified, corrective action has been taken, and risks are lessened to zero in each category.