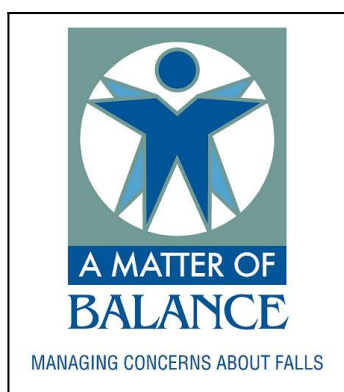


Health Department Seeks Volunteer Coaches to Help Improve Balance and Reduce Fear of Falling in Older Adults



If you are interested in learning more about becoming a coach, please contact Ana Marques at the New Bedford Health Department at 508-991-6199 or at Ana.Marques@newbedford-ma.gov.

The New Bedford Health Department is currently seeking volunteer to help lead a structured program designed to help older adults in the Greater New Bedford Area remain active, improve balances kills, and reduce their concerns about falling.

The program, "A Matter of Balance," is widely used nationally and internationally and has been shown to reduce concerns about falling, reduce recurrent falls, and decrease healthcare costs. A Matter of Balance is an interactive program involving small groups of participants who meet weekly for two hours over an 8-week period.

As part of the Prevention and Wellness Trust Fund awarded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health this past year, the New Bedford Health Department is working with area physicians to refer older adults at risk for falling to local health and community service organizations conducting A Matter of Balance classes, beginning later this fall on a pilot basis.

To become a Matter of Balance leader (referred to as a coach), individuals take an 8-hour course from a Master Trainer, agree to teach at least two classes within one year, and attend a 2.5 hour training update annually. Successful coaches have strong interpersonal/communications skills, enjoy working with older adults and groups of people, and can perform a range of low-level exercises. Portuguese- and/or Spanish-speaking coaches are always needed. There is no cost for the coach training and coaches who lead the 8-week courses receive a modest stipend for their time commitment.

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One of nine communities funded across the Commonwealth with a Prevention and Wellness Trust Fund award, New Bedford has been tasked with the goal of decreasing both healthcare costs and chronic disease burden through the implementation of a bi-directional e-Referral system between clinical and community organizations. Specifically, they will be working to test the e-Referral system in three areas: Pediatric Asthma, Falls

Among Older Adults, and Behavioral Health/Substance Abuse.

The New Bedford Health Department is committed to promoting and protecting the health of New Bedford residents by upholding important regulations and implementing innovative health and wellness programming.
