



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 9/16/2025

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Human Services

Staff Name and Phone Number: Angela Struckmann 707-565-5800, CB Wohl 707-565-5930

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Gold Resolution proclaiming the week of September 22, 2025 as Falls Prevention Awareness Week in Sonoma County.

Executive Summary:

This Gold Resolution for Falls Prevention Awareness Week recognizes the serious concern of falls for older adults and brings awareness to fall prevention education.

Discussion:

National Falls Prevention Awareness Day is September 22 and is observed annually on the first day of fall in an effort to promote and increase public awareness about how to prevent and reduce falls for older adults. To recognize the importance of this critical issue, the State of California established the first week of fall as Falls Prevention Awareness Week beginning in 2008. By proclaiming the week of September 22, 2025 as Falls Prevention Awareness Week in Sonoma County, the Area Agency on Aging will continue the national and statewide effort of increasing education and awareness about the importance of preventing older adults from falling, coupled with providing access to programs and services to reduce fall risk.

Each year, millions of older adults fall and many are injured. While more than one in four older adults fall every year, less than half tell their doctor. Falling once doubles the chance of falling again.

Over 20% of falls cause serious injury, including broken bones or head injuries, leading to 3 million older adults being treated annually in emergency departments for fall injuries and over 300,000 hospitalizations for hip fractures. Falls are the leading cause of injury-related death among older adults, with the age-adjusted death rate increasing 41% in the decade between 2012 and 2021. Approximately \$80 billion is spent on medical costs related to non-fatal fall injuries and the financial toll for older adult falls is expected to soar as the population ages. Medicare and Medicaid shoulders 75% of these costs. Lifetime medical costs of falling are expected to reach \$101 billion in 2030.

Forty percent of nursing home admissions are due to injuries related to falls and 40% of those admitted never return to independent living. Even falls without injury can cause fear of falling, leading to physical decline, depression, and social isolation. Research suggests that older adults underreport falls due to embarrassment, fear, or avoidance, and falling is stigmatized because it implies weakness and frailty.

Falls are preventable! Increased risk of injury or death and decreased independence may be mitigated by

screening for fall risk and addressing contributing factors, which include poor strength and balance, limited physical activity due to fear of falling, medications that increase fall risk, and environmental hazards such as clutter or poor lighting. In response to this need, the Area Agency on Aging provides A Matter of Balance, an evidence-based falls prevention program for older adults to improve their balance, strength, and flexibility while also challenging fears of falling and developing assertiveness skills. In 2025, the Area Agency on Aging added the evidence-based Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention program to its education toolkit, partnering with host sites to offer the class to older adults in the community.

On September 10, 2025, the Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging convened its first “Safe Mobility Forum,” a gathering of diverse stakeholders from healthcare, older adult communities, faith-based organizations, and government (among others) to learn about the local landscape of fall prevention programs and services, build collaborations, and be inspired about aging with greater health and independence.

Prior Board Actions:

Every year since September 2011, the Board has adopted Gold Resolutions for Falls Prevention Awareness Week (with the exception of 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19 Pandemic).

FISCAL SUMMARY**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

There are no fiscal impacts.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

There are no staffing impacts.

Attachments:

Gold Resolution

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

None