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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION (PI)

EOEA PI -22-06
Ref: PI-17-01

TO: Aging Service Access Points (ASAP)
Executive Directors

FROM: Lynn C. Vidler, BSW, MBA, Director of Home & Community Programs

DATE: December 20, 2022

RE: **FALL RISK IDENTIFICATION, PREVENTION, EDUCATION AND REVISED FALLS
PROTOCOL**

Purpose:

Falls and fall-related injuries are a major threat to the wellbeing of older adults and their ability to maintain independence. Each year, more than one out of four adults 65 and older fall and 20 percent of falls cause a serious injury.¹ In 2021, 79 percent of Home Care Consumers assessed for falls were flagged as having a fall risk indicated; of those flagged, 51 percent accepted falls related education, a referral, or intervention. Mitigation of the risk can reduce the number of falls. This Program Instruction (PI) has been updated by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) to provide Aging Service Access Points (ASAPs) with the tools necessary to identify fall risks, implement interventions, and mitigate preventable falls and fall-related injuries.

This PI supersedes and replaces PI 17-01: *Falls Protocol*.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Facts About Falls, <https://www.cdc.gov/falls/facts.html> Accessed April 7, 2022

Background and Program Implications:

A falls protocol is a proactive approach to reducing the number of Consumer falls and may include, but is not limited to, fall risk assessments, preventative measures and interventions, Consumer education, and staff training. Implementing a documented falls protocol helps to ensure the continuity of Consumer care and the development of person-centered care plans. Complying with a screening and assessment process will allow ASAP Care Managers and Registered Nurses to identify Consumers who may be at risk for falls. Early identification of a Consumer's fall risk presents the opportunity to provide proactive recommendations and/or interventions for Consumers and caregivers that can help prevent falls and address associated health and welfare concerns.

Required Actions:

- A. The ASAP must provide fall prevention training during orientation and on an annual basis to all agency staff that interact with Consumers. Completion of staff training must be documented. The ASAP must meet the following minimum fall prevention training requirements by December 31, 2023, and then annually thereafter:
 1. Must include an evaluation of the learner's knowledge (e.g., pre and post training assessments)
 2. Must include the following topics:
 - a) Fall risk identification
 - b) Fall prevention and interventions
 - c) Fall prevention services and resources
 - d) How to document falls related information and what must be documented in the Consumers Aging & Disability (A&D) record
- B. The ASAP must implement a falls protocol which includes a mechanism for identifying fall risk factors and proactive strategies to develop person-centered interventions and teaching tools. There are two mechanisms for identifying which Consumers may be at risk for falls:
 1. Completion of the three fall risk assessment questions in the CDS:
 - a) Did the Consumer fall in the past six months?
 - b) Does the Consumer feel unsteady when standing or walking?
 - c) Does the Consumer worry about falling?
 2. Utilization of the *Fall Risk Identification and Intervention* report in HAR, including the following:
 - a) Monthly report generation
 - b) Identify responsible ASAP staff to review and monitor report compliance
 - c) Review the report for trends
 - d) Identify and mitigate issues and document actions in the Consumer's A&D record as appropriate
- C. The ASAP must require trained staff to educate Consumers regarding options and interventions.

1. When a Consumer is identified as being at risk for falls in accordance with the falls protocol referenced above, the ASAP must address the risk with the Consumer and/or designated caregiver as appropriate and offer person-centered recommendations and consideration for interventions.
2. Fall risk identification and interventions must be documented in the Consumer's A&D record. Details must be elaborated on in the narrative section of the CDS
3. If the Consumer declines recommendations and/or interventions, the ASAP must document this in the Consumer's A&D record.
4. It is strongly recommended that the designated medical provider is notified when a Consumer is at risk for falls. Notification is at the discretion of the Consumer and/ or designated caregiver.

NOTE: The ASAP care team involved with the applicant or Consumer must evaluate the possibility of abuse or neglect when a Consumer presents with evidence of a fall, particularly one accompanied by unusual or suspicious circumstances. ASAP staff working with Consumers are mandated reporters and must comply with state reporting requirements. Reports of suspected abuse or neglect concerning persons aged 60 and over who live in the community should be submitted to Protective Services through the Central Intake Unit (CIU) or through a Web Intake located on Mass.gov (<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/report-elder-abuse>). Suspected abuse of a person with a disability under the age of 60 should be reported to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (<https://www.mass.gov/reporting-abuse-and-neglect>).

Resources:

Attachment 1: *Fall Risk Factors* provides a list of examples that can be a useful learning tool. Fall risk factors are characteristics or situations that increase a person's chance of falling. Risk factors can generally be grouped into three categories: biological, behavioral, and environmental.

Attachment 2: The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) *Stay Independent* fall risk screening tool from the STEADI (Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths & Injuries) initiative offers a checklist that can be used to assess for risk of falling. This is available in both English and Spanish.

Attachment 3: *Strategies and Interventions for fall prevention* offers examples of interventions that may be utilized to meet the needs of the Consumer. The interventions implemented will vary for each Consumer and must meet their specific needs.

Effective Date:

This PI is effective as of March 1, 2023.

Contact:

For questions related to this PI please contact Melissa Enos, Home Care and Program Analytics Nurse at Melissa.A.Enos@mass.gov .

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Fall Risk Factors

Attachment 2 – *Stay Independent* Fall Risk Screening Tool

Attachment 3 – Strategies and Interventions for Fall Prevention