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Effort to reduce falls among seniors is working, health advocates say

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A \$3 million investment by the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York is having a major impact in the reduction of falls and injuries among seniors — and saving millions in health-care costs.

The foundation announced Wednesday the results of an independent evaluation that showed counties that participated in its Step Up to Stop Falls initiative saw significant declines in the rates of adults over age 65 hospitalized due to falls, versus small declines statewide.

Besides reducing the number of injuries, the initiative has a major impact on costs: the state Health Department reports show 140 older New Yorkers are hospitalized each day due to a fall, costing \$1.7 billion on hospitalization charges each year.

"Falls' prevention programs save lives and save money," said [Amber Slichta](#), interim president at the foundation. "Falls can threaten older adults' safety and independence, but the good news is they can be prevented."

According to the evaluation

http://hfwcny.org/Tools/BroadCaster/Upload/Project511/Docs/Step_Up_Evaluation_Addendum_April_2015.pdf, conducted by a researcher at School of Public Health at the University at Albany, the rate of hospitalization from unintentional falls dropped from 2,108 per 100,000 residents to 1,762 between 2005 and 2013 in counties that participated in Step Up to Stop Falls.

During the same period, the statewide rate dropped just slightly from 1,974 to 1,908 per 100,000 residents.

Based in Buffalo, the foundation is among the region's largest private foundations, with assets totaling \$120.4 million in 2014.

Step Up to Stop Falls in 2007 and has since provided training to coalitions and health organizations in seven counties, including Allegany, Cattaraugus, Erie, Genesee and Niagara.

Programs implemented through the initiative have included exercise programs, home assessment and modification programs, community awareness and education programs.

Tracey Drury covers health/medical, nonprofits and insurance