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New Fall Prevention Referral Service Available for Older Adults in Aurora and Westminster

Slips and falls are the #1 cause of injury-related deaths for people over the age of 65, and are the most frequent reason for hospital trauma admissions among older adults. Each year, 19,000 Americans die from slips and falls, and 8 million are hurt or hospitalized.

In Colorado, we have over 300 deaths from falls yearly, and almost 8,000 hospitalizations from falls for people over age 65. Colorado's fall-related death rates are significantly above the US average.

Despite being labeled "accidents," many fall-related injuries and deaths are actually predictable and preventable. There are four simple steps that can help prevent injuries from falls: physical activity to improve balance; evaluation of medicines that might cause dizziness; getting a yearly eye exam; and eliminating the hazards at home that could lead to slips and falls

Since there are many factors that can cause falls, multiple interventions are needed to address this issue. In an effort to prevent these injuries and deaths, Tri-County Health Department has collaborated with over 40 local agencies to create the Fall Prevention Network referral system, a coordinated community referral service available to Aurora and Westminster residents.

"This collaboration of diverse service providers is vitally important, since of those people over 65 who are hospitalized with a hip fracture, half cannot return home or live independently," states Richard L. Vogt, MD, Executive Director of Tri-County Health Department. "It is tragic that so many of these slips and falls could have easily been prevented."

By calling the referral line at 303-629-4931, older adults living in Aurora and Westminster can access a wide variety of programs that address the four key steps to prevent falls: physical activity, home safety assessments, vision screenings and medication reviews. A trained referral specialist works with callers to assess their risk for falls and makes the appropriate referrals to reduce their risk. Additional communities will be added in the future.

This collaborative project is sponsored by local governmental entities and community organizations, and is funded by The Colorado Trust as part of the Partnerships for Health Initiative, which is designed to improve the coordination of health services at the community level.

To access the Fall Prevention Network, older adults in Aurora and Westminster or their caregivers can call 303-629-4931 during business hours, or visit the website at www.FallPreventionNetwork.com.

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Tri-County Health Department is the largest local health department in Colorado, serving the 1,250,000 residents of Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties through 11 offices across the greater metro Denver region. Services include disease control and prevention, immunizations, birth and death certificates, nutrition services, tobacco prevention, family planning and prenatal care, environmental health services, injury prevention, restaurant inspections and emergency preparedness.

The Colorado Trust is a grantmaking foundation dedicated to achieving access to health for all Coloradans. Its five-and-a-half year (2006-2011), \$8.6 million Partnerships for Health Initiative is designed to improve the coordination of health services at the community level. This initiative supports 13 local community health partnerships across the state that are working together to proactively address public health issues of most importance to their communities.