

# Addressing the Issue of Fall Risk for Adults with IDD: Creating Solutions in the Community

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## Introduction: Falls in Adults with IDD

Falls are a leading cause of injury and accidental death among older adults. This is especially true for high-risk populations such as those who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Practitioners can use existing tools to conduct appropriate fall risk prevention screening, assessment activities that lead to the appropriate selection of evidence-based fall prevention programs (EBFPs) for adults and/or older adults living with IDD. (Karlsson, 2019)

## Attaining Positive Outcomes

Falls are a significant problem for aging adults and especially those who are represented in special populations. As we continue to live longer, falls will represent a growing risk that has associated injury liability and medical cost to each of us individually and as a society. Professional and public awareness that lead to regular screening, early assessment, and intervention may reduce the risk of falls and greatly reduce the financial burdens associated with falls and injuries. (Senate testimony, 10/2019)

## Prevalence & Incidence

Adults who are aging and who have been diagnosed with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) are growing in number as life expectancy improves. High fall rates for both young and old adults with IDD in all settings have been reported. Low bone mass density is found to be common among individuals with IDD. Therefore, fractures are more prevalent among people with IDD than in the general population. Unfortunately, fall risk screening and evidence-based intervention programs are not readily available, though falls are a significant health concern for adults with IDD. (Renfro, Bainbridge, Smith, 2017)



## Measuring Fall Risk

Fall risk in adults with IDD can easily be assessed in the community by trained rehabilitation and/or public health professionals. Evidence-based, reliable and valid measures are available for use with this population to identify heightened fall risk. (Maring, 2013)  
The FRAST was modified in collaboration with the original author of the tool and iterative feedback and designed to score a number of factors related to falls risk during a chart review. The tool provides intervention recommendations based on the scores. (Maring, 2018)

## Selecting EBFPs for adults with IDD

Based upon the fall risk screening results, the adult with IDD should be referred to the best practitioner &/or evidence-based fall prevention program to address their individualized fall risk factors. The Otago Exercise Program has been successfully modified for adults with IDD with a significant decrease in fall risk and improved mobility. (Renfro, Bainbridge, Smith, 2017)