

Next Steps

Efforts of the Fall Prevention Center of Excellence to reduce the number of falls and the risk for falling among older adults culminated in the 2007 California Fall Prevention Summit: *Progress, Challenges & Next Steps*. It was, by all accounts, a highly successful event that greatly raised the awareness of falls as a significant threat to older adults' well being and independence. The California Commission on Aging (CCoA) welcomed the policy recommendations crafted by Summit participants and promised to support fall prevention as a public health priority.

On February 8, 2008, California Senator Alan Lowenthal authored (co-author Assemblywomen Patty Berg) and introduced Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 77. This measure would declare the first week of autumn each year as *Fall Prevention Awareness Week* and urge the California Department of Aging and the AAAs to incorporate fall prevention in their upcoming state and local area master plans, an idea that Lynn Daucher, Director of the California Department of Aging endorsed at the Summit. The resolution also recommends that the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS) develop standardized definitions and reporting methods that will improve available information on falls, and the incorporation of fall prevention guidelines in state and local planning documents that affect housing, transportation, parks, recreational facilities, and other public facilities.

While older adults are at higher risk for falling, younger and able individuals are not immune to falling and experiencing negative consequences. "All of us can trip and fall", noted Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil in his closing remarks and added that, "education about fall prevention has to start in our schools. Even teenagers have to learn to realize their strengths and recognize their limitations so that, later on, they can acknowledge and accept disability and the need for help. What we need most is a change in attitude that will benefit those who have fallen and those we can protect from falling."

