



## Preventing Falls Together

# THE HAZARDOUS HOUSE TEACHERS' GUIDE

### Background . . . Why the concern?

Falls can happen to anyone, but as a person ages, the risk of falling increases. In fact, one in three older Canadians falls each year and many of these falls occur in their own homes while doing everyday activities.

Falling is a serious health problem that accounts for most injuries to the elderly, and costs Nova Scotians an estimated \$72 million every year. There are not only medical costs, but also social and physical impacts. A fall can lead to a loss of independence, social isolation, and a reduced quality of life.

The good news is that many injuries due to falls can be prevented. The first step to avoiding falls is to become aware of what causes them. There are many opportunities within all of our communities to act more preventatively to reduce the risk of falls, whether using a meeting hall, walking on a sidewalk, climbing stairs, or lighting your hallway at home, if you are more aware of the risks, you will be more likely to take action.

### In the classroom

Our objective in designing this Hazardous House activity is to increase the awareness of students, teachers and families about the risks for falling that may exist in the home and community. We hope that everyone will become more aware of the causes of falls and will share the information and ways to reduce the risks of falling with the older adults in your lives.

We have included a photocopy master of the student activity sheet: "The Hazardous House: Finding the Falls Waiting to Happen", and the answer key that outlines the hazards for you to review with your students.

There are several ways to use this resource. Some suggested uses are:

- Students can be asked to "circle the hazards" independently.
- Students can work in groups to identify the hazards.
- It can be presented as a game in which students are challenged to identify the hazards in a particular time frame (2–4 minutes).
- It may also be used as a guide for the older students to assess the falls risks in their own homes or those of co-operative grandparents or neighbours.
- You may decide on specific rooms or areas to be assessed by each student as a homework assignment.



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### Next Steps . . .

Many schools are also used for community events and often grandparents are invited to the school for special activities. Students may want to make their school safer for the older adults who visit. Identifying falls hazards in and around the school and then developing solutions to reduce the risks of falling would make a good class project.

Discuss possible actions to improve some hazards—students can be encouraged to suggest improvements that are affordable and realistic.

### Want To Do More?

Older students can extend their assessments to the community as a part of their Social Studies curriculum. They can survey public meeting spaces, lighting in parking areas or on streets, sidewalk repairs—the list is endless. They could research how to follow up on their assessments with the municipality, public officials or with landlords. These are all steps that can influence public policy and demonstrate students' ability as responsible citizens to take action on unsafe conditions.

There are many other resources available to develop the work of your students around falls prevention in the home and community. Copies are available from the address below and on our website, [www.preventingfallstogether.ca](http://www.preventingfallstogether.ca)

We hope you and your students enjoy this activity. Your efforts to increase awareness about this issue are essential to the well-being of our communities. Thank you!

For more information contact your local Preventing Falls Together coalition:

Adapted from the resource developed by the Inverness and Victoria Counties and the CBRM Preventing Falls Together Coalitions, and the Cape Breton District Health Authority.