

Balance & Fall Prevention in Community Dwelling Older Adults

An APTA-Geriatrics Credential Course Series

Background and Description

The Balance & Falls Professional credential will provide a national, uniform indicator that a physical therapist possesses advanced knowledge and skills in balance and fall prevention in community dwelling older adults. This interactive credential course series is designed for experienced physical therapists pursuing advanced expertise who work with older adults in or who will return to community-settings.

Credentialed Balance & Falls Professionals will demonstrate current and comprehensive knowledge, expert analysis and clinical reasoning, mastery of psychomotor skills, and the capacity to advocate for fall prevention. In-depth lab and learning experiences allow immediate application of knowledge and skills to clinical practice. Emphasis includes implementation of a screening, assessment, and intervention framework and reasoning process. Focused integration of community and aging services resources enhances the ability of credentialed professionals to bridge the clinic-to-community gap and serve as regional fall prevention experts.

The curriculum builds across the two-course sequence and an independent portfolio to promote mastery of hands-on skills and management of the multi-faceted complexities of balance interventions and broader fall prevention strategies.

Balance and Falls Professional Course 1

This course will focus on comprehensive assessment, using objective measures for fall risk stratification, and developing effective, individualized balance intervention strategies for community dwelling older adults. Interactive labs provide opportunities for mentored skill building and clinical reasoning. A focus on community evidence-based fall prevention programs is included to extend the clinic-to-community continuum. Participants will leave this course with immediate tools and skills for implementation into clinical practice.

Balance and Falls Professional Course 2

This course builds on the first course to expand participants' intervention approaches for complex patients. Special focus on vestibular rehabilitation considerations for older adults and utilization of technology for balance training and fall prevention are included. Interactive labs and activities allow dedicated time to advance care of the complex patient and to experience advanced technology. Technology stations will allow participants to experience virtual reality and other technology to enhance balance training, participation, and home safety. Emphasis on expanding the clinic-to-community bridge and building healthy lifestyles will be highlighted to integrate holistic fall prevention. Participants will leave this course with increased knowledge of and confidence for complex patient management, networking with professional and community partners to promote clinical services, and serving as a regional fall prevention advocate and resource.

Examination Requirements for Credentialing

Individuals who want to achieve the credential of Balance and Falls Professional will need to complete advance preparatory work, participate in the two courses (in sequence), complete portfolio assignments (including a comprehensive clinical case study, community program analysis, and the Otago Exercise Program online training), and successfully complete two skills checks and an online exam with passing scores.

All attendees who sign in and out each day will receive a certificate of attendance for continuing competence purposes. However, to receive the Balance and Falls Professional Credential, individuals must successfully complete both skills checks, the online exam (within 2 months of taking course 2), and portfolio assignments. Participants will have two attempts to successfully complete the on-site skills checks and the online exam. Failure to pass either of the skills checks or the exam will result in not obtaining the Balance and Falls Professional Credential.

Participants will receive a certificate to recognize their credential as a Balance and Falls Professional after successful completion of all credential components as described above.

Balance and Falls Professional Credential Faculty

Faculty vary from course to course but are experts in the field of geriatrics and specifically balance and falls prevention, and are approved by the APTA Geriatrics Board of Directors (see [website](#) for faculty list). All faculty have advanced training and have successfully completed the Balance and Falls Professional Credential course series. Course administrators are Lori Schrodt, PT, PhD and Judy Dewane, PT, DSc.

Continuing Education Credit (total 41 contact hours)

- Course 1: 17.5 contact hours (2 for advance preparatory work and 15.5 for onsite course)
- Individual portfolio: 10 contact hours
- Course 2: 13.5 contact hours

***PLEASE NOTE:** Participants are urged to check with their state licensure board to see if these courses meet their continuing education requirements.*

Objectives

Upon completion of the 2-course series and related work the participant will:

1. Analyze multi-factorial screening results to determine relative fall risk level and appropriate follow-up care in primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention situations.
2. Select, administer, and interpret clinically meaningful objective measures of fall risk, balance, and gait based on individual client presentation and goals.
3. Develop and implement population-based and individualized preventative and rehabilitative strategies to reduce fall risk.
4. Monitor treatment outcomes with appropriate objective measures and modify the care plan as indicated.
5. Design and improve interprofessional practice strategies, including communication, collaboration, and referral.
6. Demonstrate the capacity to act as an effective fall prevention clinical expert, educator, facilitator, and advocate in their community, region, and state.