



National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

**Statement for the Record
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging
Hearing on “Falls Prevention: National, State, and Local Solutions to Better
Support Seniors”
Wednesday, October 16, 2019**

The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) submits the following statement for the record of the October 16, 2019 hearing held by the U.S. Senate, Special Committee on Aging, on “Falls Prevention: National, State, and Local Solutions to Better Support Seniors.” NASHIA is a nonprofit member organization representing brain injury state government program staff and other professionals and consumers involved in brain injury service delivery as associate members.

We are pleased that the Senate Special Committee on Aging is holding this hearing to highlight the extent of falls and related consequences among older adults, and subsequently, the need for preventive efforts. Older Americans are a high risk group for traumatic brain injury (TBI) due to falls, and, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), account for a four in five (81%) of the TBI-related emergency department (ED) visits among adults aged 65 and older.

Identifying a TBI among this age group is challenging due to the similarity of symptoms associated with other conditions, which also may be present at the time of the fall (e.g., dementia, stroke, dehydration). Symptoms of TBI may include problems with memory; personality changes; fatigue; headaches; dizziness; changes in sleeping patterns; and problems with language/speaking. While age and other overlaying health issues may affect treatment for a TBI, without knowledge of a TBI, clinicians, providers and caregivers may overlook strategies and accommodations that may assist an individual with subsequent problems to enable them to continue to live more functionally independent.

NASHIA believes that public, provider, and caregiver education is important in order to be able to recognize symptoms and ensure that any hospital or physician visits due to a fall include information about a possible TBI. In addition, we support screening for TBI in home and community-based (HCBS) settings and training to enable healthcare and HCBS providers to do so, and to better coordinate resources at state level among aging and TBI programs.

For thirty years, NASHIA has been the only organization to offer states a national learning forum and other opportunities to help them promote partnerships and build systems to meet the needs of individuals with brain injury across the lifespan. We also

partner with federal agencies, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Injury Center and the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration for Community Living (ACL) to promote awareness, education, and training on traumatic brain injury (TBI) due to falls among older Americans, and with national partners, such as the National Council on Aging. We support continued and expanded efforts among partners to promote education awareness, training, and expertise.

Should you wish additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Rebecca Wolfkiel, Executive Director, at 202-681-7840 (execdirector@nashia.org). You may also contact Becky Corby, NASHIA Government Relations, at 202-480-8902 (rcorby@ridgepolicygroup.com) or Susan L. Vaughn, Director of Public Policy, at 573-636-6946 (publicpolicy@nashia.org). Thank you for your continued support.

Reference

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019). Surveillance Report of Traumatic Brain Injury-related Emergency Department Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths—United States, 2014. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

[Traumatic brain injury in older adults: do we need a different approach?](#) Matthew E Peters, Raquel C Gardner. Concussion. 2018 Oct; 3(3): CNC56. Published online 2018 Sep 20. doi:10.2217/cnc-2018-0001 PMC6199670