



# CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE HOME

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A Guide for Families Caring for Loved Ones Living with Disabilities



# INTRODUCTION



Creating a supportive and accessible home environment for a family member with disabilities is essential to ensure their safety, independence, and comfort. This guide provides practical tips to help you enhance your home and make it more inclusive for their needs.



# PROJECT TIMELINE

01

## Assessing Needs

Begin by understanding your loved one's specific requirements.

02

## Enhance Mobility

Improving pathways and entryways makes moving around the home safer and more convenient.

03

## Home Modifications

Adapting rooms with safety features reduces risks and supports personal independence.

04

## Smart Home Technology

Incorporating assistive technology simplifies daily tasks and enhances independence.

05

## Emergency Preparedness

Planning for emergencies ensures your loved one's safety during unexpected situations.

06

## Explore Financial Assistance

Seeking funding opportunities helps ease the financial burden of home modifications.





# ASSESSING NEEDS

When preparing a home for a loved one living with disabilities, there are three key focus areas to consider: mobility, sensory needs, and daily activities.

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- 01 Mobility (wheelchairs, walkers, etc.)**

Mobility involves ensuring your home accommodates wheelchairs, walkers, or other aids, with wide pathways, ramps, and accessible doorways to facilitate safe movement.
- 02 Sensory Needs**

Sensory needs may require adjustments such as adaptive lighting, creating quiet spaces, or modifying environments to reduce overstimulation.
- 03 Daily Activities**

Daily activities focus on making essential tasks like bathing, cooking, and sleeping more accessible through supportive features like grab bars, roll-in showers, and adjustable-height furniture.

On the next page, we will delve deeper into these areas, providing specific questions to help you evaluate your home and make it a safer, more comfortable, and empowering environment for your loved one to live independently.



01

# ASSESSING NEEDS

## Questions to Ask When Preparing a Home for Handicap Modifications

### General Accessibility

- Are doorways wide enough for a wheelchair or walker to pass through easily?
- Is there sufficient clearance in hallways and between furniture for mobility devices?
- Are all frequently used areas of the home on the same level, or are ramps or lifts needed?
- Is the flooring slip-resistant and free of trip hazards like loose rugs or cords?

### Entryways

- Is there a ramp or platform lift to access the home?
- Are thresholds low or beveled to allow smooth transitions for wheelchairs?
- Are entryway lights bright and motion-activated for safety?

### Living Spaces

- Is there enough room to maneuver comfortably in common areas?
- Are light switches, outlets, and thermostats within reach from a seated position?
- Are there sturdy grab bars or supports in key locations?

### Bathroom

- Is there a walk-in tub or roll-in shower available?
- Are grab bars installed near the toilet, shower, and tub?
- Is the sink accessible from a wheelchair?
- Are non-slip mats or flooring used to prevent falls?



01

# ASSESSING NEEDS

## **Kitchen**

- Are countertops and cabinets at an accessible height?
- Are appliances easy to use and reachable?
- Is there adequate space for wheelchair users to move around?
- Are frequently used items stored within easy reach?

## **Bedroom**

- Is the bed height adjustable for ease of access?
- Are closet rods and shelves within reach?
- Is there enough space for a wheelchair or walker to maneuver?

## **Technology and Safety**

- Are there smart home systems for controlling lights, temperature, and appliances?
- Are smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms equipped with visual or vibrating alerts?
- Are emergency exits easily accessible and unobstructed?

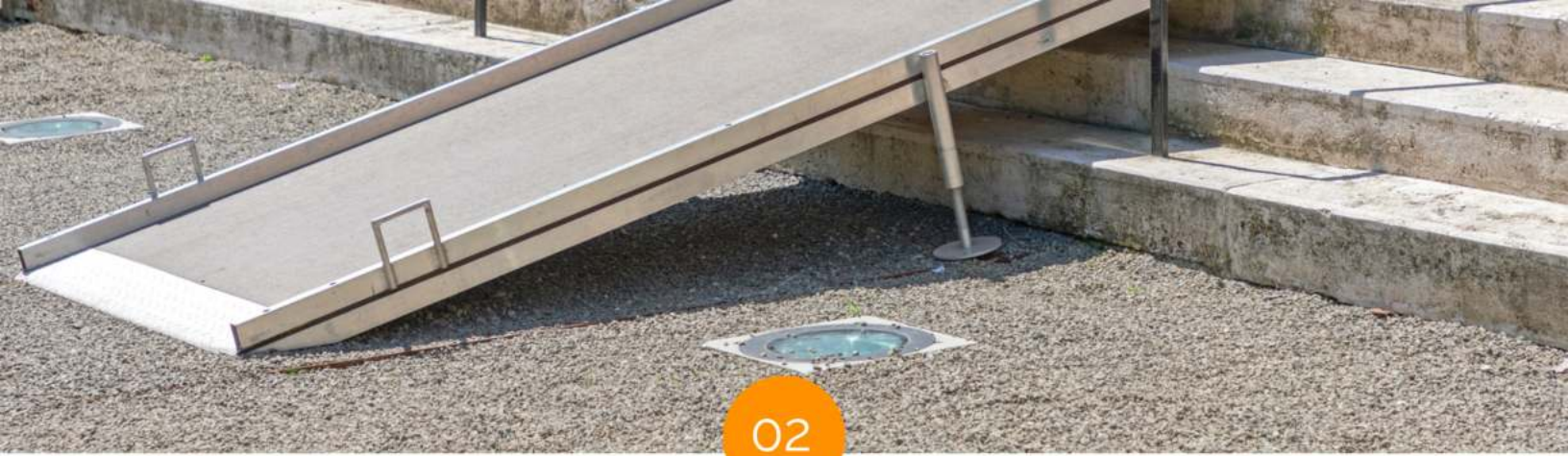
## **Outdoor Spaces**

- Are pathways leading to the home even and accessible?
- Is the garage or parking area equipped for wheelchair access?
- Are outdoor stairs equipped with railings or ramps?

## **Individual Preferences**

- Have you consulted with your loved one about their specific needs and preferences?
- Are the modifications tailored to their daily routines and comfort?





02

# ENHANCE MOBILITY

## **Entryways and Doorways:**

- Install ramps or lifts.
- Widen doorways to at least 32 inches.
- Replace doorknobs with lever-style handles.

## **Floors and Pathways:**

- Use non-slip flooring and secure rugs.
- Clear pathways for easy navigation.

**Entryways and Doorways:** Making entryways and doorways accessible is crucial for ensuring your loved one can move freely and safely throughout the home. Installing ramps or lifts eliminates barriers like stairs, while widening doorways to at least 32 inches allows for easy passage of wheelchairs and walkers. Replacing traditional doorknobs with lever-style handles makes opening doors easier, especially for those with limited hand strength or dexterity.

**Floors and Pathways:** Inside the home, safety and accessibility can be improved by focusing on flooring and pathways. Non-slip flooring helps prevent accidents, and securing rugs reduces tripping hazards. Additionally, maintaining clear and uncluttered pathways ensures that mobility devices can navigate the home without difficulty, fostering both safety and independence.



# HOME MODIFICATIONS

**Bathroom Safety and Accessibility:** The bathroom is one of the most important spaces to modify for safety and accessibility. Installing grab bars near the toilet, shower, and tub provides stability and reduces the risk of falls. Consider replacing traditional tubs with walk-in options or roll-in showers for easier access. Adding non-slip mats and a shower bench enhances safety, while a raised toilet seat or adjustable-height sink ensures comfort and ease of use creating a safer and more functional environment.

## **Bathroom Safety and Accessibility**

- Add grab bars near the toilet, shower, and tub.
- Install a walk-in tub or roll-in shower.
- Use non-slip mats and a shower bench for stability.
- Consider a raised toilet seat or an adjustable-height sink.

**Kitchen Adjustments:** Adapting the kitchen can help your loved one engage in daily meal preparation more independently. Lowering countertops and adding pull-out shelves make storage more accessible, while touch-activated faucets provide ease of use. Ensuring that frequently used items are stored within arm's reach eliminates unnecessary strain or risk, making the kitchen a more inclusive and functional space.

## **Kitchen Adjustments**

- Lower countertops and install pull-out shelves.
- Use touch-activated faucets and easily accessible storage.
- Place frequently used items within arm's reach.





# HOME MODIFICATIONS

**Bedroom Modifications:** The bedroom should be a sanctuary of comfort and accessibility. An adjustable-height bed allows your loved one to enter and exit with ease. Arranging the room layout to allow clear movement for a wheelchair or walker ensures functionality, while installing closet rods and shelves at reachable levels helps them maintain independence in managing their belongings. Together, these modifications create a supportive and relaxing environment.

## **Bedroom Modifications**

- Choose an adjustable-height bed for comfort and accessibility.
- Ensure the room layout allows easy wheelchair or walker movement.
- Install closet rods and shelves at reachable levels.



# SMART HOME TECHNOLOGY

**Smart Home Technology:** Incorporating smart home technology can significantly enhance your loved one's independence and comfort. Voice-activated systems allow effortless control of lighting, temperature, and other home features, making daily tasks more manageable. Smart doorbells with video and audio features provide added security and convenience, enabling your loved one to see and communicate with visitors without needing to move to the door. Automated blinds or curtains eliminate the need for manual adjustments, creating a more seamless and accessible living environment.

These innovations empower your loved one to navigate their home with greater ease and autonomy.

**Incorporate assistive technology to enhance independence:**

- Voice-activated systems for lighting and temperature control.
- Smart doorbells with video and audio features.
- Automated blinds or curtains for convenience.





# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

**Emergency Preparedness:** Ensuring your home is equipped for emergencies is a vital step in creating a safe environment for your loved one. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors that provide vibration or flashing light alerts, catering to individuals with hearing impairments or other sensory needs. Keep emergency exits clear and easily accessible to allow for swift evacuation if needed.

Additionally, maintain a reliable backup power source for essential medical devices to ensure uninterrupted care during power outages. These measures provide peace of mind and safeguard your loved one in unexpected situations.

**Prepare for safety during emergencies:**

- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors with vibration or flashing light alerts.
- Keep emergency exits clear and accessible.
- Maintain a backup power source for medical devices.



# FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Explore Financial Assistance:** Modifying a home to meet accessibility needs can be expensive, but there are resources available to help alleviate the financial burden. Look into grants or funding opportunities from disability-focused organizations that support home accessibility improvements. Government assistance programs, such as Medicaid waivers, often provide funding for necessary modifications. Additionally, explore local community nonprofits or support groups that may offer financial aid or guidance. These resources can make it more affordable to create a safe and accommodating home for your loved one.

**Home modifications can be costly. Consider:**

- Grants or funding from disability organizations.
- Government assistance programs like Medicaid waivers.
- Local community nonprofits or support groups.

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