

Best Practices in Home Modification: Translating Research into Action

Aging Network agencies, such as State Units on Aging, Area Agencies on Aging, and Title VI programs that provide services to older adults in Tribal communities) employ various approaches to deliver home modifications based on their communities' needs resources. The approaches and strategies below were compiled from a review of research on effective home modification practices for older adults and people with disabilities. Categorized in three phases of the home modification process and overall approaches, these are optimal strategies for Aging Network agencies to consider employing when planning new home modification activities or to strengthen existing services and programs.

Overall Approaches to Promote Efficacy

- **Home modification is multidisciplinary.** Adopt a team approach and develop partnerships with professionals from the housing, aging, disability, and healthcare sectors to call on when clients' needs require specific expertise.
- **Use the “person-occupation-environment fit” theory as a guide.** Consider the client, their functioning, and their home environment when determining home modification needs.

1. Assessing Client Needs: Use Providers' and Clients' Expertise

- Use a **person-centered approach**: communicate with the client from start to finish and let their needs, preferences, and concerns guide the process.
- Use **validated assessment tools** that evaluate the person, the home, and how the individual interacts with the home.
- Involve caregivers, family, and multidisciplinary professionals as appropriate.
- Engage **occupational therapists** when a person's health and functioning may impact their current and future home modification needs.
- **Educate clients** on the benefits of the home modifications. Offer options and alternatives when possible.
- Consider **affordability** and **share funding sources** if needed.
- If encountering resistance, **start with simple changes** that can make home modification more acceptable.

2. INSTALLATION (and Education)

- **Add supportive features** (e.g. grab bars, railings, raised toilet, shower seat, ramp, improved lighting)
- **Remove hazards** (e.g., clutter, electrical cords, throw rugs)
- **Rearrange space** (e.g., move bedroom and bathroom downstairs to allow convenience for wheelchairs)
- **Change behaviors** (e.g., keep frequently used items in easy to reach places, sit while getting dressed)
- **Ensure appropriate flooring** (e.g., slip-resistant flooring, dry surfaces)
- **Ensure appropriate furniture** (e.g., low bed/chair height, chairs with armrests)
- **Ensure clear walking pathways** (e.g., room to move and use walking aids, open floor plans)
- **Educate the client** on the home modifications, and how to use new devices and/or design features

3. FOLLOW-UP: Ensure clients' needs are met

Conduct follow-up home visits to examine the work, adjust as needed, answer questions, and educate clients on how to use the home modifications properly.

Fall Prevention Center of Excellence Resources

Home Assessments and Checklists

https://homemods.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/USC.NCOA_HomeAssessment.Inventory.2.-1.pdf

Home Modification Consumer Fact Sheets and Videos

<https://homemods.org/acl/consumerawareness/>

Home Modification Funding Sources

<http://www.homemods.org/hmin>

The Fall Prevention Center of Excellence offers information on how to make homes safe and where to find services, programs, and funding support: homemods.org

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