



Most older adults prefer to remain in their homes as long as possible. To do so, it is essential that their home environment supports them to do their daily activities safely. **Home Modification** - making changes to the home environment to support a person's changing needs - can promote health, safety, and independence.

## Why are Home Modifications Important for Older American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians?

**Older populations in tribal communities are growing rapidly, as are their rates of disability. Home modifications and repairs can:**

- Remove hazards that can cause injuries, especially in homes with extended families, such as uneven floors, unsafe entrances, and poor lighting
- Add supports to make daily activities easier, such as bathroom grab bars and stair handrails
- Fix plumbing, heating, and electrical issues

**Title VI Native American Aging Programs and other tribal organizations offer a range of services to address the housing needs of tribal elders including:**

- Assessments to determine the need for modifications
- Information about home modification and repair
- Minor and major home modifications
- Weatherization to protect homes from the elements
- Referrals to home modification and repair programs
- Referrals to or from occupational and physical therapists



# Low-Cost Home Modifications

This checklist contains examples of changes that can help people **REMAIN** at home independently: **R**emove, **E**nhance, **M**odify, **A**ccessorize, **I**nstall, and **N**otice.

<p><b>Remove:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Clutter</u> on floors for clear pathways</li><li>• <u>Electrical cords</u> from pathways by tacking them to the walls</li><li>• <u>Tripping hazards</u> such as throw rugs, loose carpeting or uneven areas on floors</li><li>• <u>Heavier and frequently used items</u> from out of reach locations and place within easy reach</li><li>• <u>Furniture</u> from walking pathways</li></ul>	<p><b>Enhance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Safety at night</u> with night lights to mark the path between the bedroom and bathroom and a lamp by the bed</li><li>• <u>Navigation</u> by marking uneven thresholds with contrasting tape or paint or remove thresholds entirely</li><li>• <u>Bathing safety</u> with non-skid strips on tub or shower floors, secured bathmats, and shower chairs for sitting while bathing</li></ul>
<p><b>Modify:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Toilet seats</u> to make them higher so that it is easier to sit down and stand up</li><li>• <u>Light switches</u> to rocker switches and <u>door knobs</u> to levers for easier use</li><li>• <u>Shower head</u> to be adjustable height and/or a hand-held to improve reach</li><li>• <u>Doorways</u> to 32" through offset hinges</li></ul>	<p><b>Accessorize with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>An emergency alert system</u> if a fall or urgent need takes place</li><li>• <u>A bell on a small dog or a cat</u> - small pets can be obstacles when not seen or heard</li><li>• <u>Gripper rug pads</u> under throw rugs</li><li>• <u>Added seating for dressing and cooking prep</u></li></ul>
<p><b>Install:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Soft corners and edges</u> to sharp furniture</li><li>• <u>Grab bars</u> for support in and around tubs, showers, and toilets with wall reinforcement and anchored to studs</li><li>• <u>Anti-scald</u> water devices to keep the temperature below 120 degrees</li></ul>	<p><b>Notice:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>After modifications are made</u>, are they used, and if so, used correctly? Awareness is key to continued use; if not, it is important to determine why</li><li>• <u>Needs change over time</u> - new circumstances may merit new modifications</li></ul>

# How to Get Home Modifications

## 1. Funding

Depending on income, abilities, and age, a resident may qualify for financial support to make the changes from a variety of public funding sources. To learn about home modification funding sources by state, visit [www.homemods.org/hmin](http://www.homemods.org/hmin)

## 2. Finding A Professional

Some modifications may be performed by the resident or in-house maintenance staff. You can access a home modification program or specialist through:

- The free Eldercare Locator at <https://eldercare.acl.gov> or 800-677-1116
- An [Independent Living Center](#)
- The [National Directory of Home Modification and Repair Resources](#)

## 3. More Information

- **The National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA)** is a nonprofit organization that advocates for improved comprehensive health, social services and economic wellbeing for American Indian and Alaska Native elders. <https://www.nicoa.org>
- The **National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA)** aims to improve the quality of life and delivery of support services to American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian elders <https://www.nrcnaa.org> and operates a Native Elder Service Locator to search for services by state: <https://www.nrcnaa.org/service-locator>



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