

Partnerships & State Coordination for Home Modification Access

A Technical Assistance Brief for State Units on Aging



Home modifications are changes to the home to make daily activities easier and safer. These changes can help people to stay in their homes and communities as they age.

Partnerships are often necessary to deliver these services because home modifications and repairs involve professionals and agencies from the aging, disability, housing, and health care sectors.

Collaborations between State Units on Aging (SUAs), government agencies and other organizations can yield synergistic results, reaching greater numbers of consumers than possible when acting alone.

This brief contains findings from a survey conducted of SUA Directors highlighting SUA efforts in building collaborations and partnerships.

Coordination was among the greatest needs to support home modification and repair funding and services identified by respondents.

Read on to learn more about who SUAs are partnering with, and why!

Collaborative Activities

SUAs are involved in the following collaborative activities to support home modifications and repairs:

- **Advocate** to increase funds and services, address gaps in services
- **Educate and train professionals** through public-private partnerships
- **Incorporate strategies into the state plan**
- **Integrate services** within home- and community-based and long-term care programs
- **Jointly administer programs**
- **Lead or participate in task forces/coalitions** for planning, addressing overlaps in programs and funding mechanisms

Common Department and Program Collaborators



- **Rehabilitation Services**
- **Medicaid Offices**
- **Weatherization, Energy Department**
- **Assistive Technology Programs**
- **Housing Finance Agencies**
- **HUD Community Development**
- **Social Services**
- **Veterans Affairs**

Collaboration for Home Modification and Repair Funding and Service Provision

SUAs can work to ensure that home modification and repair resources are maximized by collaborating on funding and service provision, especially when program target populations overlap.

How Does It Work? Collaboration Examples

Rehabilitation Services

SUAs that partner with rehabilitation services can combine service provision to benefit both agencies. Home modification and repair services (HMR) with eligibility linked to rehabilitation services as part of an individual written rehabilitation plan may serve to accommodate persons who are aging with a disability.

State Medicaid Waiver Programs

SUAs working with state Medicaid Waiver programs that provide funds to modify homes of individuals at-risk of institutionalization will address common goals of maximizing self-care and supporting caregivers. Examples include:

- One SUA conducted an analysis of Medicaid Waiver participants and determined that very few were accessing funds available for HMRs, yet the Waiver program's fall rate was very high. In response, the SUA and the Medicaid teams worked together to improve education and training of case managers about the use of Medicaid Waiver funds for HMRs.
- Including HMRs as part of transition service programs that SUAs help implement to ensure successful transitions of patients from nursing homes to supportive community settings.

Weatherization Assistance Program, U.S. Department of Energy

In partnership with their state department of health, the Vermont State Unit on Aging helps to administer a pilot program called "One Touch" in which experts who are called to a home for weatherization are able to do a falls risk screening and make simple modifications during the visit.

Fall Prevention Coalitions

Some SUAs participate in coalitions and task forces alongside other state agencies and community-based organizations to raise awareness of falls, expand resources to prevent falls (including home safety and home modifications), increase falls surveillance, and advocate for support.

Approaching Partners: How-To Tips

Collect and share Census data to demonstrate the need for home modification in your state, including the size of potential target populations to reach, homeowners versus renters, and those who may need financial support.

Look up relevant statistics such as your state or county's:

- Percentage of the population age 65 and older
- Percentage of population under age 65 with a disability
- Rate of homeownership
- Poverty rate
- Median household income

Describe the services, resources, and expertise your agency offers to effectively address these needs in ways that set you apart from the rest. Communicate what impact your partnership could have and how it would support your partner's goals and mission.

Sustainability: Once you begin a partnership, track key successes to demonstrate the impact of your efforts, help sustain the relationship, and secure new ones.

Learn more about your state's home modification funding sources!

The USC Home Modification Information Network is a state-by-state inventory designed to put details about each state's home modification policies, funding sources, and programs right at your fingertips: 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

References: Overton, J., Steinman, B. A., Nabors, E., Pynoos, J., and Terzaghi, D. (2020). *Home Modification and Repairs for Older Adults: Challenges and Opportunities for State Units on Aging* [report]. Fall Prevention Center of Excellence <https://homemods.org/resources/>

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