



Interagency Program for Assistive Technology

HOME DESIGN FOR DIVERSE POPULATIONS

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There is a movement to make homes more flexible to meet people's needs as their lifestyles change. There are important features to consider when remodeling, building, buying, or renting a home that will reduce barriers and inconveniences. The three places in the average home which create the most barriers are the entrance, bathroom, and kitchen.

The following is a checklist of features which address some of the biggest barriers in many homes. Many of the basic features will meet an immediate need, can be done with limited resources and may not require structural changes. It is important to seek knowledgeable advice during the planning stages which will help to identify the costs and to set your priorities according to your immediate and future needs.

Entrance:

- Door at least 36 inches wide, to allow for a 34 inch clear opening when the door is open at a right angle
- No split-level entry
- No step up or step down to enter home
- Door locks that are easy to operate, such as keyless locks with remote control
- Lever-style door handles
- Peep-holes at heights for adults, children, and people using wheelchairs
- Good lighting both inside and outside the entrance
- No raised threshold
- A roof, canopy, or awning to protect the entrance from rain and snow
- Ample landing space both outside and inside the entry door



Kitchen:

- Anti-scald faucet with a single lever to turn on and off
- Appliance controls that are easy to read, easy to reach, and can be operated by touch as well as sight
- Easy access to storage (pull out shelves, lazy susans in the corners)
- Good task lighting over sink, stove, and other work areas
- Enough clear counter space to set down dishes next to all appliances and cupboards



Bathroom:

Basic

- Adjustable height, hand held showerhead, with controls that are conveniently placed and easy to operate
- Anti-scald faucet with a single lever to turn on and off
- Shower seat or platform, either built in or free standing
- Toilet seat height appropriate for the household- 17 to 19 inches high for middle age and older people, lower for children
- Mirrors placed for both standing and sitting
- Non-glare lighting



Ideas for Other Living Areas:

- Light switches reachable from the bedside and the door and located about 36 inches to 40 inches above the floor
- Telephone jack near the bed
- Extra electrical outlets near the bed, (i.e. for medical equipment or rechargeable items) placed 18-24 inches above the floor
- Swing clear hinges that add a little more maneuvering room by moving the door completely out of the doorway
- Adjustable height shelves and clothing rods





- Laundry on main floor, near bathroom and bedrooms
- Front-loading washer and dryer, placed on platforms to reduce bending and kneeling
- Good task lighting in all areas

Seek knowledgeable advice at all stages of home planning and let your contractor, real estate agent or home inspector know which features are important to you.

What is Visitability?

A visitable home has enough accessibility to allow a person with mobility impairments to at least enter and visit the occupants of the home.

Visitable homes have:

- One entrance into the home with no steps;
- A 32 inch clear passage through doors and hallways; and
- At least a half bath on the main floor.

What are the benefits of a visitable home?

- Costs little up front, unlike the higher after-the-fact cost of renovation.
- Is easy to construct on most terrain, is visually unnoticeable, and allows increased flexibility in selling or renting.
- Enhances sale or resale value of the home at a time when the senior population is growing rapidly and baby boomers are attracted to homes that welcome their aging parents and provide easy-use homes for themselves.
- Seniors are more likely to be able to remain in their existing home if the home has visitability features.
- Creates easy access in and out for EVERYONE.



Next Steps: The use of assistive technology can make homes more flexible to meet people's needs as their lifestyles change. A simple first step is to contact your state AT program; you will find the information regarding it on the back cover of this brochure.

P O I N T I N G T H E W A Y T O A S S I S T I V E T E C H N O L O G Y S O L U T I O N S

POINTING THE WAY TO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS



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