

Easter Seals and the CENTURY 21® System's Easy Access Housing for Easier Living Program

Adaptable and Accessible Housing

An adaptable house has certain structural features that make it possible to modify to accommodate people with a wide range of physical abilities. The adaptable house is a lifetime living house. It's similar to insurance for people in that if they, or someone close to them, become disabled or experience a change in their physical abilities, they can modify the house to accommodate their needs. An accessible house or dwelling is equipped with specific features to accommodate people with permanent disabilities or declining physical abilities.

Home Adaptability Checklist

A home may be considered adaptable if it has all or most of the following key structural features that allow reasonable entry and circulation without extensive modification:

- Located on a relatively flat or level site with paved walkways from parking (covered is preferred) and sidewalk areas to level entry
- A ground-level entrance or a one or two step entrance clear of any major obstructions, i.e. trees, building corners, etc., that would accept a ramp with a slope no greater than 1" height per 12" in length
- No steps or abrupt level changes on main floor
- Wider-than-standard doorways (32" or more clear width); 1/2" high maximum thresholds
- Wide hallways at least 42"; preferably 48" 60"
- At least one large bathroom with a 32" clear door opening and clear 5'x5' floor space
- A kitchen large enough for easy wheelchair mobility (U or L shaped or open plan preferred)

NOTE: The 1988 fair Housing Amendments Act protects persons with disabilities from unfair and discriminatory housing practices. It also provides for certain architectural accessibility and adaptable design requirements in new multifamily housing built for first occupancy on or after March 13, 1991. Builders and developers of multifamily housing should be familiar

with these design requirements.

There are no federal building access requirements for single residential settings. While in keeping with general federal and state housing accessibility standards, these checklists are not intended to be used to determine if builders, developers, etc. have met the necessary building codes governing single home construction. Building codes for single family residential structures vary from state to state and should be checked prior to any construction.

Accessibility Checklist

When you preview a house for accessibility, specifically wheelchair, note each item that is presently available. Individual access needs vary greatly. Wheelchairs are used for different reasons and come in many different sizes, so while one person using a wheelchair may be able to get through a 32 inch doorway, another may need 36 inches. Where a range of measurement is indicated on the accessibility checklist, note the exact width or height in the space provided.

The list will provide the user with a measure of existing accessibility features. Certainly all of these features are not necessary, nor even desirable, to meet the needs of an individual with a disability. This checklist is intended to generate enough information about any given home to let people interested in accessibility features know if it warrants consideration. At the end of the checklist, you will find some general adaptation tips and resources.

- One-story building
- Multilevel house with main level accessible
- entrance
- bathroom and
- bedroom
- Level entry way or ramp with entry level landing for easy door opening
- Wide doorways (32" 36" clear width)
- Wide hallways (42" 60")
- Low-pile carpeting with thin padding
- Chair-height (48" 54")* doorbell/mailbox
- Chair-height electrical controls/outlets (excluding the kitchen, generally controls are 6" lower and outlets are 6" higher than standard)

- Chair-height push-button telephones/jacks
- Accessible, easily operated window controls, i.e. slide to side can be opened with one hand or less than eight pounds of pressure, located 24" 28" from floor
- Direct outside emergency exit from bedroom
- Audio and visual smoke detectors
- Large windows, overhead lighting or several electrical outlets in each room. (Lighting is a big consideration for persons with low vision.)

*(Note: Chair-height is defined as how far a person using a wheelchair can reach. Using a front approach, chair-height for a person using a wheelchair is approximately 48 inches. Using a parallel approach, chair-height is about 54 inches.)

- Front control-operated range
- Countertop range
- Lowered wall oven (30" 42")
- Side by side, frost-free, dispenser-type refrigerator
- Varying countertop and cabinet heights
- Counters with pullout cutting boards
- Front control-operated, built-in dishwasher
- Front loading washer/dryer
- Outswing doors
- Non-slip floors
- Grab bars
- Reinforced walls (i.e., 3/4" plywood backing throughout) for installation of grab bars
- 5' square clear area (required for most wheelchair users to make a 360 degree turn). Since many wheelchair users can function in smaller areas, measure exact clear floor space if less than 5'
- Chair-height racks/shelves/cabinets
- Lever hand faucets
- Lowered or tilted mirror
- Roll-under vanity top
- Hinged, fold-down seat in shower
- Roll-in shower with no curb
- Handheld or adjustable shower head
- Bathtub with nonskid strips or surface
- Toilet seat 17" 19" from floor; or wall mounted toilet
- Telephone outlet

- Open floor plan
- Built-in cabinets have 6" baseboard recess
- Built-in wall bed
- Direct access to accessible bathroom
- Reinforced ceiling (to accommodate pulleys for lifting mechanisms)
- Sliding doors or bi-folding doors
- Adjustable shelves and hanging rods
- Shallow shelves no more than 18" deep
- Attached
- Oversized
- High ceiling (9'6" needed to accommodate a raised-top van)
- Automatic door opener
- On or near public transportation
- Conveniently located to shopping area