



A Program of Inglis
Community Services

Self-Determination Housing of Pennsylvania's

Home Modifications



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About SDHP

SDHP's mission is to promote self-determination and control in housing for persons with disabilities and older adults in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

SDHP strives to:

- **Bridge the information gap** between the housing and disability communities
- **Promote partnerships** that enable people with disabilities to choose and control their own housing
- **Increase access** to affordable, accessible, and integrated housing



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Agenda

- Why Home Modifications
- Rights & Responsibilities
- Navigating Resources
- Advocacy & Next Steps



Why



Rights



Resources



Next Steps

Why Home Modifications

Why

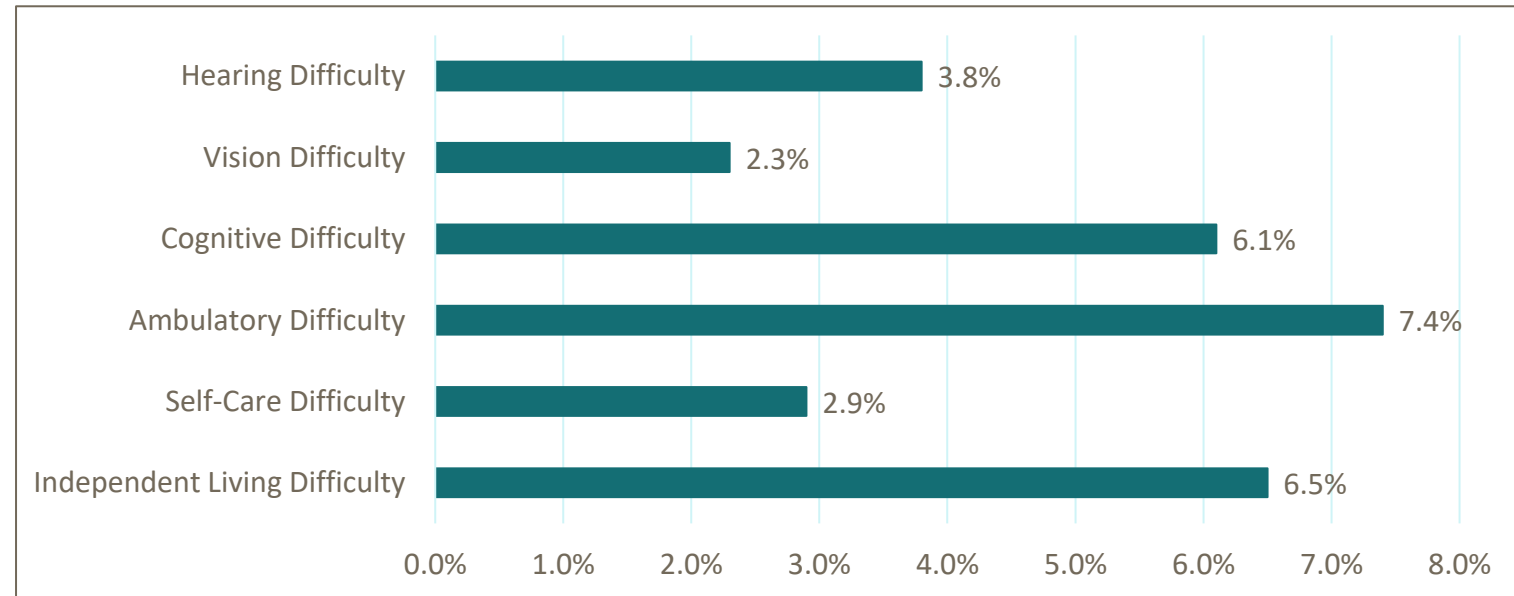
Rights

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Disability in Pennsylvania

- 12.7% of U.S. population has a disability
- 14% of Pennsylvanians have a disability



Statistics on Home Modification Needs

“With an expected doubling of the senior population by 2060, more homes will need to be accessible to ensure disabled residents’ independence and to accommodate mobility-impaired visitors.”

- [Housing Matters, an Urban Institute Initiative](#)

*The **Mid-Atlantic region** is the least-equipped out of all U.S. regions to house the aging population, with only 5.8% of homes meeting the criteria.**

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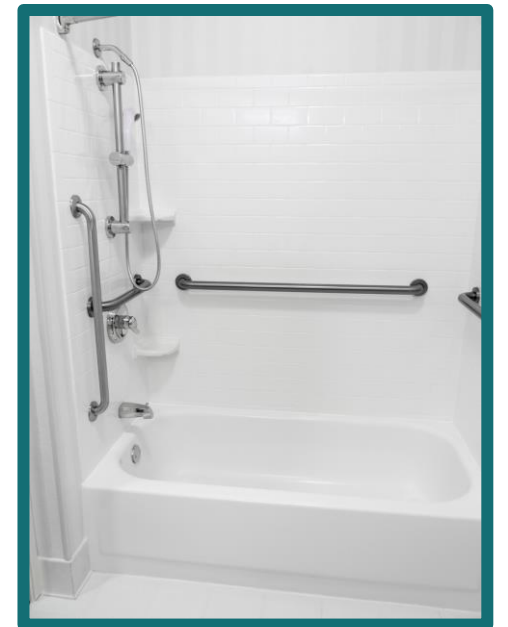
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Why Home Modifications?

- More independence & control, safer, more comfortable
- Accessible to all family members and visitors
- Allows people to remain in their homes



Common Functions of Home Modifications

- Mobility in/out of home
- Vision, hearing, and communication
- Home automation/Smart home technology
- Memory, safety, and security devices

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Why

What is 'Aging in Place?'

Staying in your own home as you get older

- 3 out of 4 adults 50+ want to stay in their homes and communities as they age

[AARP's HomeFit Guide](#) – smart ways to make a home comfortable and safe for older adults and people of all ages

[AARP Livable Communities](#) – A free publication about housing for a changing America

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Aging-Ready Home - Definition

Step-free entryway, first floor bed/bath, and at least one bathroom accessibility feature (e.g., an elevated toilet, built-in shower seat, and handrails or grab bars in bathroom).

-Census Bureau and US Dept Health and Human Services



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Rights & Responsibilities

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Fair Housing Act

The Fair Housing Act protects individuals from housing discrimination based upon the following protected classes:



Disability



Race



Sex



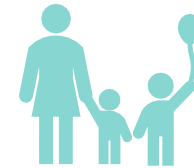
Color



National
Origin



Religion



Familial
Status



Sexual
Orientation/
Gender
Identity

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Fair Housing Act: Disability Definition

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities
- Examples: breathing, hearing, walking, seeing, learning, speaking, caring for self, etc.
- Includes people with a history of having an impairment and people perceived as having an impairment

Many impairments are not observable.

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What is a 'Reasonable Modification'?

A structural or other physical change to the unit or housing structure to provide physical access to a person with a disability

What is Reasonable?

- Does not cause an undue financial and administrative burden to the housing provider
- Does not cause a basic change in the nature of the housing program available
- Will not cause harm or damage to others
- Is technologically possible

Is it Reasonable?

- A resident has a new disability and requests to install a stair glide.
- A resident has a disability and requests that a staff member of the property drives him once a week to run errands?
- A person with a visual impairment requests a reserved parking space so family members can park while visiting?
- A resident, who has asthma and allergies, requests to be moved to another unit due to second-hand smoke from her neighbor entering her apartment?

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Recommendations: How to Request a Reasonable Modification

Things to note:

- Manner and time frame not dictated
- Family member or someone on behalf of potential tenant
- “Reasonable modification” words not required in request
- Can be written or oral request

The request should include:

- That this person has a disability
- The type of modification needed
- *The reason why*

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Modification Request Letters

General Request Letter

Third party letter of support:

- Relationship and length of time known them
- Meets definition of disability under FHA
- Do NOT disclose type/severity
- Connect to management of symptoms of disability

[Sample Letters](#)

Financial Responsibility: Private vs. Public Housing

Private rental unit- tenant responsible, landlord must allow if deemed reasonable

Public rental unit- housing provider must provide structural changes

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Home Modification Request Denial

- Promptness is key
- A delay or failure to reach agreement may equal a denial
- If discrimination is suspected, file a complaint

If the accommodation or modification proposed by a tenant is unreasonable, the housing provider must engage in an interactive dialogue with the tenant to determine if there is another solution or alternative accommodation that will meet the tenant's needs.

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Complaints and Legal Help

~60% of Fair Housing complaints per year involve denial of reasonable accommodation requests by persons with disabilities

- [File a complaint with HUD](#)
- [PA Human Relations Commission](#)
- [Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network](#)
- [PaLawHelp](#)
- [Fair Housing Law Center](#)
- [Housing Equality Center of PA](#)



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Navigating Resources



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Use Professional Guidance

- Referral/prescription from Primary Care Provider for Occupational or Physical Therapist, Social Worker, etc.
- Insurance provider
- Independent Living Specialist from the Center for Independent Living (CIL)
- Area Agency on Aging

These choices should always be made with input from person with a disability or older adult.

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Find Funding

46% of extremely low-income renter households in the U.S. are seniors or a householder with a disability.

Start with Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF):

- [Funding Your Assistive Technology](#)
- [Top 5 Funding Resources in PA](#)

Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA): [Access Home Modification Program](#)

Pennsylvania Department of Aging: [Help at Home \(OPTIONS\)](#)

[Technology for Our Whole Lives \(TechOwl\)](#)

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SDHP's Home Modification Program

15 projects underway across the Commonwealth

PAHP provides home modifications to increase accessibility and independence for eligible individuals with disabilities in PA

Eligibility criteria at-a-glance:

- Income levels must not exceed 120% of area median income (AMI)
- Priority given to individuals residing in counties not receiving financial assistance through other programs
- Applicant cannot be a part of any Community Health Choices(CHC) managed care organizations (MCOs)

Applications are now being accepted!

- Please call (610) 873-9595 or email Beth at beth.mckeown@inglis.org



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Finding a Home Modification Provider

- Get recommendations from family, friends, and neighbors
- Ask for a reference list
- Ask if they have done similar projects in the past
- Be specific, get a written agreement, ask for small down payment with full payment after
- Search for a local provider
 - [Better Business Bureau](#)
 - [Homemods.org](#)
 - [Certified Aging in Place Specialist](#)



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Advocacy & Next Steps



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Advocacy

- **Visitability:** the belief that including basic architectural access features in all new homes is a civil and human right.
[Click here to learn more.](#)
- **Universal Design:** is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people.
[Click here to learn more.](#)

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Create Your Own Program

[Funding Resources for Families and Professionals: \(Funding to create your own\)](#)

[How to Develop a Home Modification Initiative: \(Guide to create your own\)](#)

Programs that are working elsewhere

[Example of Successful Local Initiative](#): A local senior and disabled housing complex will be granted \$700,000 in funding from the state's Community Development Block Grant to improve its facilities

[CAPABLE](#): Occupational therapist, nurse, and a handyman help person stay in home

[Bath Housing- Comfortably Home Program](#): Partnership between housing authority, healthcare provider, Habitat for Humanity, Foundation for funding, and an evaluation partner (John's Hopkins in this case)



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Questions

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www.inglis.org/sdhp