

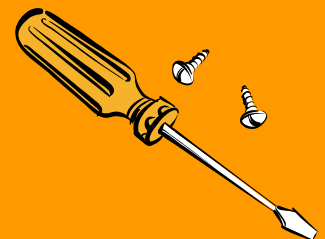


Planning Home Modifications

for people with accessibility needs

A Companion Guide to the Webinar Series
produced in 2009 by
The Wisconsin Department of Health Services
In conjunction with
Movin' Out, Inc.

Movin' Out
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Introduction

We wanted to be able to answer two questions:

“What do I need to know about home modifications before putting a hole in the wall or signing a contract I don’t understand?”

and

“How do I know when a request for a home modification is reasonable and necessary?”

We thought if we could answer these questions, it would go a long way toward preventing future misunderstandings and some very costly mistakes.

In the fall of 2009 the Department of Health Services in conjunction with [Movin' Out, Inc.](#) broadcast a series of six webinars designed to provide guidance to case managers and support brokers on home modifications, specifically

addressing the importance of planning and knowing what’s involved in the process.

Some of the material covered at the webinars is encapsulated here. Additionally there are materials and references that couldn’t be covered during the webinar.

The webcasts are archived and remain available online at [DHS Mediasite Catalog](#) where you need only ‘search’ for “Home Modifications” to view them.

We provided as many of the references as possible as direct links to the place on the internet where you can read more on the topic or find new information. Other suggestions can be found in reference boxes scattered throughout this publication and listed on the back page. This includes how to contact Movin’ Out, Inc. with any questions about the materials.

Underlined text is a link. Links to information about specific topics are generally made throughout the text. Click on them for more information.

For other references, a brown box will include websites of interest.

This is a reference box.



Webcast #1 - Getting Smart About Home Modifications:

The Department of Health Services sponsored an interactive series of webcasts for social workers and case managers who are responsible for approving, and often for overseeing, home and/or accessibility modifications.

Howard Mandeville and Amy McGrath from [Movin' Out, Inc.](#) presented the first webcast. They told us about their agency and "how to start a modification:"

What we learned...

Planning, Planning, Planning

There is a process one should go through when trying to determine whether or not a home modification should be added to a service plan for a person who has long term care needs. The process always begins with planning. The **planning always begins with questions:**

ASK WHY

Will it increase independence?

Will it decrease risk?

Will it improve care?

Will it save money?

Why this option?

Is it the most cost effective?

Is it the most likely to be effective long term?

ASK WHAT

What is the situation and how has it changed?

What will happen without the modification?

What are your options?

What has to happen to put the modification in place?

ASK HOW

How will you match the modification to the person's needs?

How will you assure it's done correctly?

How will you be sure it does what it's supposed to do?

How will you pay for it?

And more questions...

Never
ACT
Without a
PLAN



More Questions

ASK WHO

Who has to approve of the modification?

Who will do the modification(s)?

Who will determine if it's done right?

Who will pay?

ASK WHEN

When do you decide what will be done?

When do you involve others?

When do you need an architect?

When do you need a lawyer?

When do you start the job?

When do you need to be done?

The Most Important Questions

Does it meet the
Public Scrutiny Test?

(would you be willing to see
this story on the front page
of your local paper?)

Is the modification a
Good Investment
over the **Long Term?**

Does the
modification meet
Basic Housing
Standards?



Webcast #2 – Accessibility: Are There Regulations?

What we learned

We were surprised to learn there are NO laws, regulations, building codes or other requirements for accessibility additions to a one or two family dwelling.

Fair Housing Standards for accessibility, the [Americans With Disabilities Act](#) (ADA application to accessibility) and the Wisconsin Commercial Code (which incorporates ADA) apply only to multi family housing or commercial properties. The [Wisconsin 1 & 2 Family Dwelling Code \(UDC\)](#) does not contain any accessibility provisions. Nonetheless, you'll want to make certain your builder is familiar with and adheres to this code.

A local building inspector is knowledgeable about such things as Fair Housing and ADA standards but not required to enforce any of those standards as they apply to a unit of one or two family housing,

If you were to add a ramp or remodel a bathroom to a single family home, the builder you hire is under no obligation to know or comply with any accessibility codes to do the job "correctly." It is the responsibility of the person hiring workers to be specific about what s/he wants and how it is to be built.

[ANSI Standards](#) are the most commonly used and well known; they address typical housing and building modifications. They are guidelines, not requirements. For facilities using federal funds there are requirements known as UFAS (Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards). The UFAS standards were designed to be consistent with ANSI. But even when you are assured that a builder is adhering to ANSI Standards there is no certainty that

The American National Standards Institute, [ANSI](#), is a private non-profit, national organization that oversees the development of voluntary consensus standards for products, services, processes, systems, and personnel in the United States.

ANSI Standards contain the recommended design standards for typical accessibility modifications to single or two-family housing units as well as all other facilities.



the modification will be use-able by the person for whom it is being built.

Codes and standards can only apply to an “average” situation. Among all people with disabilities there will be many ways of doing a similar activity. Finding the right fit for a modification with a particular person can only be assured when there is a clear picture of the person’s skills, limitations, and plans for use.

Webcast #3 – Who can Help and How?

What we learned

To succeed with the home modification process, it requires the collaboration of people with various areas of expertise. Finding these folks in the community is the job of the care/case manager or support broker.

<i>Project Steps</i>	<i>Who is Involved</i>
1. Identify the accessibility problems to be overcome.	Case manager, funder, participant; family; friends; designer
2. Define a preliminary scope of the project.	<i>(This will help you decide who needs to be involved in the next steps)</i>
3. Establish a preliminary budget.	
4. Make initial judgment as to whether or not the project is feasible. (See questions on pages 3-4.)	
5. Identify who you need on your team.	



<i>Project Steps (as needed)</i>	<i>Potential Team Members</i>
Involve at Step #1 above, helping from the beginning.	Designer / Architect
Identify potential general contractor and/or remodeler	Contractor/remodelers/ builder(s)
Discuss details of budget, project	Human Services staff
Determine if the property is worth rehab or modification	Home Inspector
Establish feasibility of project as it pertains to the land/property	Engineer (environmental, structural, geotechnical)
Develop a contract with detailed scope of the job and contingencies	Lawyer
Determine where funds are coming from, if contracts are in place, is match required, terms of lending, etc.	Accountant
	Lenders/ Funders
Determine what the impact of changes will be on the property's value. (such as property taxes)	Appraiser
Survey property if any question of modification's location.	Surveyor
Know in advance what the zoning and building codes are for the type of modification you're planning.	Public approval bodies (building permits, zoning, etc.)
Get the kind of assistance you can't find elsewhere. Know what scope of services is available.	Housing agencies (for funding, technical assistance and contracting).



DESIGNER

A designer or architect can have a wealth of experience that informs the issues such as

- is the structure sound?
- what options are feasible?
- can the job be done economically?

Architect: licensed design professionals in Wisconsin Architects and Professional Engineers

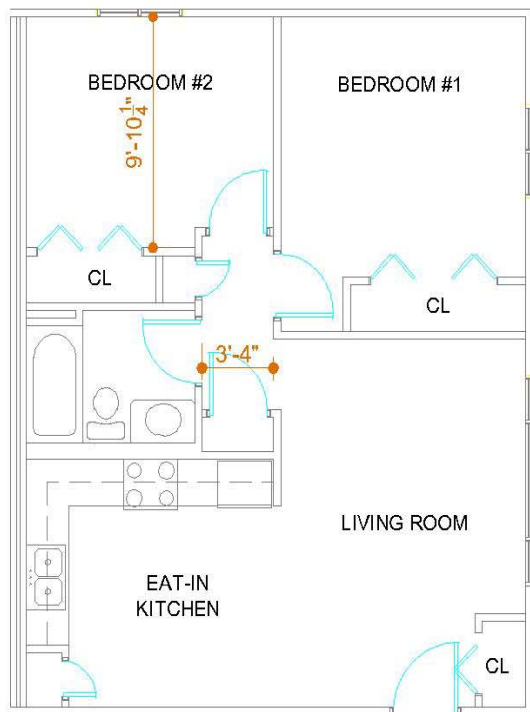
DESIGNER'S SCOPE OF WORK

An architect can help to

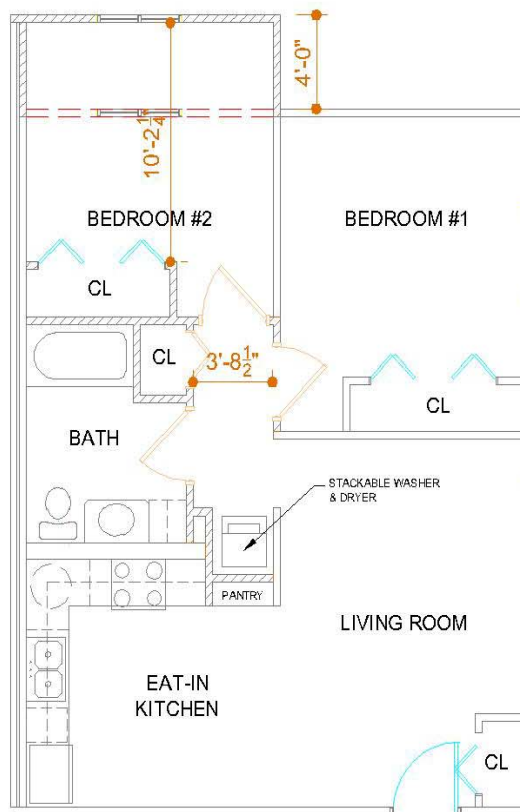
- define options
- communicate the desired outcome
- provide plans and specifications
- obtain permits
- hire trades people and
- monitor for quality and progress

Finding an Architect

Architect's drawings



PRIOR TO REHAB



AFTER REHAB



CONTRACTOR

Initial consultation should include:

- *listen to client's needs and provide practical solutions prior to entering into a design or construction contract*
- *determine client's expectations; can they be met?*
- *discuss entire process, design fees, and scheduling*
- *provide early budgeting using historical job cost data from other similar projects*
- *educate client on the "house as a system" approach*

CONTRACTOR'S SCOPE OF WORK

(Some or All)

- Initial consultation*
- Preliminary budgeting*
- Design*
- Project development*
- Full service remodeling/ construction*
- On-going maintenance and service*

If you decide to use a contractor to do design work, make certain s/he is qualified to write specifications and can provide scaled drawings in advance.

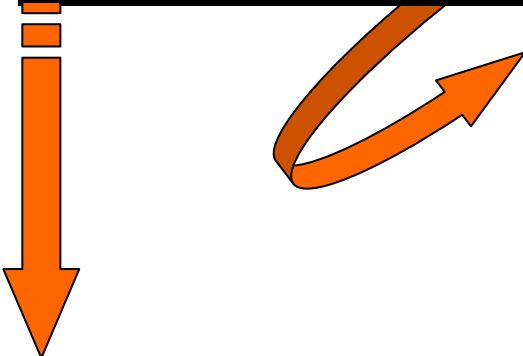
Identifying Reputable Contractors

1. Do they have a web site?
2. Are they affiliated with a builder's association?
3. Are staff certified through industry specific training programs?
4. Do their references check out?



Reference Check Questions

1. Were they respectful of home and property?
2. Did they provide and adhere to a schedule?
3. Did they communicate well?
4. Did the original contract price radically change without reasonable cause?
5. Would you hire them again?





Finding Your Contractor

Published by the National Association of Remodeling Industry, [NARI](#)

Timing and money are the most common questions a home improvement contractor hears, but during an interview with a homeowner when homeowners should be asking about credentials and verifying business practices what is often heard is, "When can you start? When will it be finished? How much will it cost?"

Here are some questions NARI members recommend you ask before signing a remodeling contract:

You can find a wealth of information at [NARI's web site](#), including more from this article and a brochure on choosing a remodeler.

ASK



- 1) How long have you been in business?
- 2) Who will be assigned as project supervisor for the job?
- 3) What is the time frame for starting the project?
- 4) What is your approach to a project of this scope?
- 5) How is your firm organized?
- 6) Is your company a full service or specialty firm?
- 7) Do you have design services available?
- 8) Does your company carry workers compensation and liability insurance?
- 9) Are any of your company's employees certified?
- 10) What percentage of your business is repeat or referral business?
- 11) How many projects like mine have you completed in the past 12 months?
- 12) Will we need a permit for this project?
- 13) May I have a list of your suppliers?
- 14) May I have a list of references for projects you have completed which are similar to mine?

KNOW if you want a [Builder or Remodeler](#). In most cases a remodeler will have more experience with adaptations inside a home.



Working with a contractor can go one of two ways :
The smooth running project or
The project from hell

Features of each:

The smooth running project

- Mutual trust and respect
- Setting and meeting expectations
- Open line of communication
- Well written contract, project specifications and detailed drawings
- Making 100% of product decisions prior to starting construction-
“An allowance is merely a delayed decision.”
- Timeline schedules (regularly updated); one for design and one for construction
- When things go wrong (and they will), immediate action from both parties is essential.

The project from Hell

- Substantial investment in a design that can't be built for budget because of inadequate site analysis or research
- “Bidding Out” a project without working drawings expecting an “apples to apples” comparison between competing contractors
- Being fooled by the price of the “lowest bidder” only to find that the final cost is greater than all of the other bids from reputable contractors.
- Poorly written contracts
- Being too anxious to start construction before all “ducks are in a row”
- Poor or no dust control
- Disappearing contractors!

To avoid a project from hell, we still need to know something about getting bids, using contracts and having those “ducks in a row. “





Webcast #4 – Getting a Fair Price and Assuring Accountability

Understanding What You're Buying

REMODELING VS. CONSTRUCTION



In today's economy some builders are adding home remodeling to their business. While **construction and remodeling** have some things in common, they are actually quite different. Homebuilders (who may also be used for home additions) are essentially contractors that work with raw land and are able to

build and control all aspects of the project by hiring specific construction crews to perform specific trades. There are usually few 'unknowns' throughout the course of the project.

Remodeling contractors usually work on a house where people are living and they need to concern themselves with the safety and well-being of the homeowner's family, pets, and property. A good **home improvement contractor** needs to know about the possibility of hazardous materials such as lead paint, asbestos, or mold and how to safely and properly handle them.

Be cautious of companies that do not have the experience, knowledge or correct know-how to execute a quality remodeling job.

Click on any of the following useful remodeling resources:

[NAARI of Madison, Inc.](#)

[Better Business Bureau](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Trade and Consumer Protection](#)



GETTING A FAIR PRICE

How do you determine the cost of a project to know you're getting a fair price? One way is to make certain the same specifications for the project are provided to every bidder. (Make certain you get at least two bids!) Another method is to review resources, available on the internet and/or local library, that provide average costs of remodeling, such as [Remodeling Magazine](#). There are also places on the web to get free cost estimates from builders in your area. Once you have names, you can begin to ask the questions we covered earlier in the guide.

GET IT IN WRITING



Bad Contract:
"I'll build a garage like we said."

WHY HAVE A WRITTEN CONTRACT?

- 1) to measure performance
- 2) to assign responsibilities
- 3) to allocate risk

CONTRACT PROBLEMS

What to do if a contractor won't sign the contract or can't agree to a provision:

- 1) Identify and try to work out the issue(s).
- 2) Find another contractor!

WHAT IS IN A CONTRACT?

- 1) parties involved
- 2) project description
- 3) price
- 4) timing—start and completion
- 5) payment procedure
- 6) insurance
- 7) procedure for changes in the project
- 8) dispute resolution
- 9) default and termination provisions

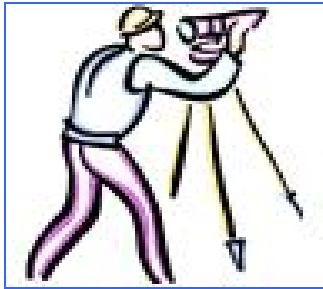
COST OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Local Bar Association
(request names of individuals or firms that offer low cost or pro bono services)

Charitable Organizations
(a lawyer on their board?)

Law Firms
(speak with directly regarding pro bono work)

Webcast #5 – Zoning, Codes and Permits



ZONING

Definition:

Zoning is the division of lands into areas or zones to specify allowable land uses and size restrictions.

Why:

Zoning is a tool used by government to help manage how the land within its borders is used. Each area allows for a type of land use and has requirements for that area. It is done to help guide and control development, to implement long-range planning goals and objectives, and to address specific development issues that are important to the community. Not ALL units of government use zoning but they have the legal right to do so.

What to do:

Find out what the zoning is in the neighborhood where



CODES

Definition:

The building code is a “minimum standard” that insures that all projects are safe.

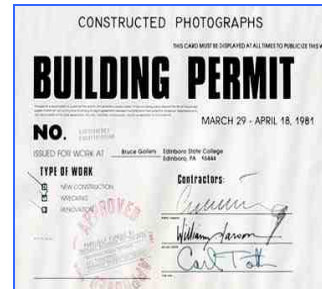
Code:

Wisconsin has what is called the Uniform Dwelling Code (UDC) for all 1 and 2 family homes. Individual communities can be MORE restrictive, if they choose.

Enforcement:

The UDC is required to be enforced for homes built after 1980. Any enforcement of code for homes built prior to 1980 is up to each municipality.

Larger municipalities have building inspectors. They issue permits and make inspections. But some hire private firms and others choose not to enforce code at all. In those cases the State



PERMITS

Definition:

Authority to carry out building plans once they have been reviewed for compliance with local building code.

Process:

- 1) Plan your project
- 2) Draw up plans
Plans should be drawn to scale; showing door sizes, dimensions and all structural information.
example– for a ramp you typically need a floor plan, cross-section, elevation and site plan.
- 3) Meet with staff who do permitting, providing the drawings for their review. (There is no uniform fee for acquiring a permit.)
- 4) Permit staff will determine what inspections will need



you want to remodel. Go meet your zoning administrator in your community if you have one. If not, find out who assumes responsibility for zoning. You wouldn't want to add a caregiver unit to a home if zoning prohibits 2-unit housing.

ZONING

will do it.
Codes and Permits
In order to carry out a building project, a local building permit is required to assure that what you plan to build will be in compliance with building codes. That is done by securing a permit before you start your project!

CODES

to occur.
Remember:
There is no such thing as a uniform process so the municipality where you are working could be quite different. Meet your building/permit staff before starting a project so you will know what is required.

PERMITS

Finding Who to Work With

- Each municipality should have some sort of "building department." Ask the city, village, township or county administrative office.
- If you can't figure out who/what the building department is in the municipality where you want to do a project, contact:

State of Wisconsin
Department of Commerce, Safety and Buildings Division
(608) 266-3151

What We Learned

- Know who to talk with BEFORE you start the project.
- Always check on zoning and permit before starting; most of the time a permit IS required.
- Plans/drawings are required to get a permit.
- Working without a permit can result in fines and/or reconstruction of the project.
- Accessibility codes for 1 and 2 family homes are very minimal. DO NOT rely on building codes or permits or inspections to assume your project will work for the person who will be using it. *Ramps require frost footings 48 inches below ground level (this is frequently missed).*



NOTES to self:

*Know the law,
read fine print,
don't sign
anything until
you understand
it.*

Insurance Requirements:

- Worker's Comp
- Surety Bonds
- Payment and Performance Bonds
- General Liability
- Builder's Risk

PROBLEM SOLVE

When a walker is too wide for a doorway, change the walker, not the doorway.

After replacing the lock three times due to keys breaking off inside them, replacement with a touch pad solved the problem.

*Set up
meeting
with permit*

*Don't let
design interfere
with efficiencies
of care giving!*

*Review designs.
Only you have
knowledge of the
person who is going
to benefit from the
modification.*

REVIEW

[Wisconsin Consumer Protection Law](#)

Additional Resources



WEBINARS: [DHS Mediasite Catalog](#)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HOME MODIFICATIONS: *Wisconsin Requirements, Rights and Recourse*

[Wisconsin Consumer Protection Law](#)

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY LAWS

ANSI Standards 117.1-1986; Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS)

www.access-board.gov/ufas

Fair Housing Act Accessibility Guidelines

www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/disabilities/fhefhag.com

ADA Standards for Accessibility Design

www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada

AARP Certified Aging in Place Specialist Program

www.aarp.org

ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES

[Easter Seals Housing Adaptability Checklist](#)

[Center for Universal Design](#)

See their publication, "*Residential Rehabilitation, Remodeling and Universal Design.*"

[Concrete Change](#)

ASSOCIATIONS

[American Institute of Architects](#)

[Wisconsin Builders Association](#)

[NARI - find a remodeling professional](#)

Questions or Comments?

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