

United Spinal Association has materials on accessibility that may help you when you are looking at a potential apartment, if you are newly disabled or dealing with a disability that has changed since you last had to find housing.

United Spinal Association
75-20 Astoria Blvd
East Elmhurst NY 11370
(718) 803-3782 or (800) 404-2898
www.unitedspinal.org

Accessibility Quick Tips

Doorways: In general, if you use a wheelchair or scooter or walker, know the width at the widest part of your chair. Then add about 2 inches and this will tell you about how wide a doorway will need to be for you to fit through it. This is especially important for bathrooms and kitchens which often have very narrow doorways. You will also need to consider whether or not you need to make a turn in your chair (turning radius). This is sometimes an issue when getting into a bedroom. The door may be wide enough, but you may have to make a sharp turn and go through a fairly narrow door and not have enough room to make the turn.

Kitchen: there may be things that you can do to make an apartment more usable if you are in a wheelchair, even if the layout is not ideal. For example, if can you get into the kitchen but you can't open the refrigerator, sometimes you can turn the door on the refrigerator around so that it opens in the other direction and this is all that is needed to solve the problem. If there is not enough room in the kitchen to get in and turn around, many people move the refrigerator outside the kitchen to a wall nearby in a hall or the living room and then use the space where the refrigerator was as a free space for turning around in, making the kitchen usable.

Bathroom: If there a cabinet under the bathroom sink so your footrests don't fit under it, it is often easy to have the cabinet under the sink taken out so your legs and footrests can fit under a bathroom sink. If a bathroom door is a little too narrow, you can take the door off and put up a curtain, or you can buy a set of offset hinges which add about 2 inches of space to the doorway and cost about \$29.95 per pair (see Maxi Aids and many other independent living catalogues information below).

Bathroom additions: Once you're sure you can get through the door, you may consider a variety of additions:

- Grab bars for the bath tub or shower. While there are many that need to be installed into the wall, there are some which clamp onto the side of the bathtub and require no tools for installation. This device can cost approximately \$40.00. This can be placed and removed so it can be taken with you from one apartment to another.
- Portable suction handgrips which can be used for extra balance on a wall or in the bath and cost approximately \$20.00, and Jumbo Suction Bar at approximately \$25.00 (but remember that these suction devices are usually recommended for balance and not intended to hold your total body weight. If in doubt, discuss with your occupational therapist).

- Low cost devices exist to help you rise from the toilet. They include raised toilet seats and also frames which provide bars and rails around the toilet for support. You can get these from many different suppliers. Cost ranges: Elevated Toilet Seat raises toilet seat 5 inches approximately \$25.00; Elevated Toilet Seat With Handles raises seat height 5 inches, approximately \$70.00. Cushioned Toilet Seat 2 inch height, approximately \$15.00, 4 inch height, approximately \$20.00.
- Rails made to fit around the toilet generally cost around \$50.00. Some people prefer to have grab bars in the wall near the toilet to help them with transfers and toileting. You can discuss this with your occupational therapist.
- If your bathroom does not have a roll-in shower, many people can use a bath chair or bath transfer bench. The bath/shower transfer can fit in the bathtub. The bath transfer bench has 2 feet which fit inside the tub and the other two feet outside the tub so that a wheelchair user can wheel up to the bench, transfer onto it, and slide across the bench and sit to bathe.
- A hand held shower head is then used by many people so they can direct the water where they need it to wash and shampoo most effectively. Hand held shower heads can be bought at most hardware stores, and cost around \$22.00.
- Some people who have mobility and/or balance problems but do not use a wheelchair will use a shower chair where all 4 legs fit inside the bathtub.
- Grab bars are often used (either installed on the walls or clamped to the side of the tub as previously described or both) to assist with getting onto the bath chair or bath bench (a bath bench is the same as a bath chair but has no back. You need really good sitting balance to use a bath bench).
- Bath benches and bath chairs are available from many sources and Medicaid does pay for them. Your doctor and/or occupational or physical therapist can assist with deciding which type is best for you. A very basic bath transfer bench costs around \$100.00. A bath bench, where the whole chair is in the shower or bath tub costs around \$65.00.

Sources for purchasing daily and independent living aids include but are not limited to:

- **Easy Comforts**
1-855-202-7391
www.easycomforts.com
- **Maxi Aids**
1-800-522-6294 - (To Order)
1-631-752-0521 - (For Information)
1-631-752-0738 - (TTY)
www.maxiaids.com
- **Able Data** does NOT sell products. They have a large listing of products to assist persons with disabilities you can go to and go to their products section. This is then divided into 20 categories including Aids For Daily Living and 19 other categories including environmental adaptations,

computers, etc. In each category they list different products to meet specific needs and where to purchase them.

Phone: 800-227-0216 or 703-356-8035.

Fax: 703-356-8314.

TTY: 703-992-8313.

www.abledata.com

Larger Accessibility Modifications:

If the apartment you are thinking of moving into needs more things done to make it accessible to you (such as a ramp put in because there are several steps to get into the building), or a bathroom doorway needs to be widened more than a few inches by removing the door or installing offset hinges, raising/lowering sinks, installing multiple grab bars, there are several programs that can help pay for these modifications.

If you are part of a TBI or NHTD waiver program or receive OPWDD services, discuss environmental modifications with your service coordinator.

The following programs assist individuals with disabilities with funds for home modifications. They are grant dependent and or time limited to its enrollment application process. So when funds run out or the deadline passes for applications, and will not be available until the next rounds of grants or open enrollment period is announced. Contact these agencies regularly to find out when new funds or open enrollment periods arrive. Submission of an application does not guarantee acceptance.

I. Access to Home Program

- a) United Cerebral Palsy (UCP):** provides Access to Home as a grant-funded program that enables individuals with disabilities to apply for home modifications that will allow them greater mobility within their own homes.

Contact information:

Website: http://www.ucpnyc.org/site/c.buIWJcNSKnL6G/b.6605997/k.8018/Access_to_Home.htm

Call: 1-877-827-266-6328 to make an appointment to review your request and complete an application.

Modifications:

- Modifications such as ramps, lifts, automatic door openers, window protections, and bathroom and kitchen alterations

Eligibility:

- Available to eligible individuals and families from the Bronx, Brooklyn and Staten Island.
- There are limitations on the amount of money that can be spent per project, as well as income guidelines to determine eligibility.
- The occupant is physically disabled or has substantial difficulty with an activity of daily living because of aging; the dwelling unit is a permanent residence.
- Total household income does not exceed 80 percent of area median income, or 120% of area median income if person in need of modifications is a disabled veteran. (Proof that person was disabled due to service is required.)

Funding Limitations:

- Loans to homeowners will be up to 100% of the total cost of the adaptations to a maximum of \$25,000.
- Loans will be at 0% interest with payments deferred on the condition the customer resides in the modified residence.
- The entire loan will be forgiven at the end of a regulatory period of up to five years.

b) Rebuilding Together NYC: provides home accessibility modifications for the elderly and/or disabled. They install grab bars, wheelchair ramps, chair and stair lifts, as well as accessible bathrooms and hallways.

Contact information: (718) 488-8840 or info@rebuildingtogethernyc.org

II. Doorways to Independence

Doorways to Independence is a grant program run by United Cerebral Palsy (UCP). The grant will allow UCP of NYC to conduct much needed home modifications for people with Medicaid to support them to remain in their home and prevent unnecessary hospital, nursing home, or other residential placement.

All NYC residents with Medicaid and a qualifying health condition that limits them from fully accessing their home are eligible to apply.

To apply for this program you must meet the eligibility guidelines, complete the enclosed BIP application, and submit all required documentation.

Contact information:

Contact UCP Project Connect at 1-877-827-2666 or projectconnect@ucpnyc.org

Eligibility Requirements

- Must be a Medicaid Recipient
- The modified unit must be the permanent residence of the recipient
- Must have a qualifying health condition that limits in-home accessibility or substantial difficulty with activities of daily living

Application Priorities

- Medicaid recipients with disabilities who are ready for discharge from out of home placement pending home modifications
- Medicaid recipients with disabilities who are immediately threatened with out of home placement because of architectural barriers
- Medicaid recipients who have substantial difficulty with activities of daily living due to aging

Required Documents

- Completed and signed application
- Photo Release form provided by UCP of NYC (signed by homeowner, landlord or authorized managing agent)
- Proof of Medicaid status
- Proof of disability (documentation from licensed medical practitioner, social worker or current psychological evaluation)
- Proof of property ownership
- Submit all original documents

III. Project Open House

Website: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/html/poh/poh.shtml>

Project Open House is administered by Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) and the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), and provides for the removal of readily achievable residential barriers that do not require obtaining a permit from the NYC Department of Buildings and do not require the professional services of a NYS Licensed Architect.

- Eligible candidates must have a permanent disability and meet Section 8 Income Guidelines.
- Project Open House has time frames for submitting applications. For example, the 2015 season started July 1, 2015 and September 15, 2015.
- This program is on a first come, first served basis.

- Late applications will not be accepted, and submission of an application does not guarantee acceptance.

For more information: contact 311.

Examples of work covered:

- Widening doorways within non-structural partitions;
- Conversion of steps into ramps no greater than 18" in height;
- Replacing existing plumbing fixtures with accessible fixtures;
- Removal of sink base cabinets to provide an accessible work surface and/or a sink;
- Installation of accessible amenities such as grab bars, door openers, accessible door handles, accessible height shelving;
- Installing accessible railings;
- Installation / conversion of residential doorbell and/or smoke and carbon monoxide detectors when an audible or visual system is needed; and
- Other barrier removals that may be required by individuals with disabilities subject to review by MOPD.

Complaints about accessibility:

New York City Human Rights Commission can help if you are having accessibility problems related to housing, you can call the NYC Human Rights Commission (212) 306-7330 and ask to speak to Ted Finklestein.