

HOME MODIFICATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

OCCUPATION OR PHYSICAL THERAPY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Q: Who pays for the OT/PT evaluation?

A: Waiver funds can be used to pay for the PT or OT evaluation. There is no rule saying that only waiver funds can be used for this, and sometimes families already have access to a report from an OT or PT recommending environmental modifications. Depending on the level of detail in that report, it is possible that no further report will be needed for this part of the information.

Q: What procedure code is used to authorize OT or PT evaluations for home modifications?

A: CIMOR procedure code **S5165 TC** is used to authorize all home modification evaluations performed by *either* an OT or a PT.

If a home modification provider also offers OT/PT assessments this code should be added to their contract. If the OT/PT provider is not affiliated with the home modification provider, this code should be added to their contract. In the event the code has not been added to a provider's contract, please speak with the local Regional Office Provider Relations team.

Q: Can waiver funding be used to pay for an OT/PT evaluation for an individual under the age of 21, since the Medicaid State Plan does not typically cover an OT/PT evaluation specifically for the sole purpose of getting a home modification completed?

A: Yes, an individual under 21 years of age can use waiver funding for the OT/ PT evaluation for the sole purpose of obtaining the necessary EAA. The CIMOR procedure code **S5165 TC** is used for all home modification evaluations regardless of the age of the individual. The code is used to authorize home modification evaluations performed by either an OT or a PT.

Q: How do I find an OT or PT who will perform these evaluations?

A: SC's can search by provider type through Data Central Reports. It can provide a list of all contracted individuals or companies in specific geographical areas. It could also be helpful to talk to other SC's or the TCM/TAC's for recommendations.

Q: What if the PT or OT's report does not recommend the home modification?

A: If there is no recommendation from an OT or PT for a modification, it will not be approved for Waiver funding.

Q: How is the OT/PT evaluation used?

A: The Support Coordinator will submit the OT/PT the documentation that will support the request for waiver funding. It also serves as the basis for the bids from the potential contractors.

Q: Does the OT or PT need a physician’s order to conduct the evaluation?

A: While PT’s and OT’s often need a physician’s orders to provide treatment services, they are not required for EAA (home modification) services. They can provide the evaluation as a part of their independent scope of practice.

Q: Can any OT or PT be used for this service?

A: Yes, however if receiving DMH funding for the evaluation, they must have a contract with the Division of DD. In addition, it is important to ensure the OT/PT has expertise in accessibility modifications.

Q: Can an OT or PT assistant complete the required OT/PT home modification evaluation?

A: A licensed OT/PT must complete the home modification evaluation. A certified OT or PT assistant may carry out the treatment of an OT or PT but not the evaluations, assessments or goal setting.

HOME MODIFICATION CONTRACTOR QUESTIONS

Q: What are the requirements to be a contracted home modification provider?

A: The companies providing the estimate and submitting a bid must have a Medicaid Waiver contract with Division of DD, be registered with the Missouri Secretary of State and follow all applicable, local building codes.

Q: What if we prefer the company with the higher bid? Do we always have to use the lowest bid?

A: The Utilization Review Committee will review all bids and recommend the lowest **and** best bid. Circumstances may exist where the higher bid is substantially better than other bids and thus would meet the criteria for “lowest **and** best”.

Q: Can a home modification service be split amongst multiple providers?

A bid is to be evaluated as a whole. The bid cannot be “split” with some aspects of the home modification awarded to one provider and other aspects awarded to another provider.

Q: If SME is required with a home modification service, are these always treated as one bid?

SME requested in conjunction with the home modification service will be considered separate from the home modification bid and *may* be awarded to a provider *other* than the provider approved for the home modification service.

Q: What if we can find only one home modification provider to give a bid?

A: The SC must document their good-faith effort to obtain additional bids. Even if only one qualified company is found who will agree to submit a bid, the efforts (including company name, contact information, date(s) contacted and the response from the alternative contractors) must be documented. Additionally, the SC may document contacts with Regional Office Provider Relations staff and/or Community Living Coordinator seeking to identify a second home modification provider.

Q: After we pick one company, can the other companies appeal our decision?

A: No, a decision to award a bid cannot be appealed by the other contractor.

Q: Is there a limit to how much money can be spent on environmental modifications?

A: The annual maximum allowed for this service through the waiver is \$7500 per year. If an individual’s need cannot be met with the limit, an exception may be approved by the Regional Director to exceed the limit if this will result in a decreased need of one of more other services. The exception process may raise the limit to \$10,000 per waiver year.

HOME MODIFICATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS NOT YET LIVING IN THE HOME

Q: Can environmental adaptations or modifications be made before the individual has moved into the home?

A: Yes, if it is certain the individual will move into the home soon and by a specific date. If the individual does not end up moving to the modified home, then the provider will not be paid for the modification.

For example, an individual living at a Habilitation Center may require specific changes to the location in the community to which he or she will move, and those changes must be in place for the person to be able to live there. This situation could also occur if an individual is already living in the

community but is anticipating a move to another home (Example – an individual currently living with parents but wants to move to an apartment in the community to increase his/her independence).

Q: Can a provider be paid before the individual moves into the home?

The home modification service is not considered “delivered” to the individual *until* they reside at the modified location. This means while the construction or installation occurs *before* the person resides in the home, the contractor cannot be reimbursed before the individual moves in. The OT or PT evaluation *can be reimbursed* before the individual moves to the new home because the product delivered is the evaluation itself, not the modified home.

HOME MODIFICATIONS IN POORLY MAINTAINED OR POORLY CONSTRUCTED HOMES

Q: What to do if a home is in poor condition, poorly constructed or generally substandard?

A: There are times when the SC, family, Regional Office or other people involved in a home modification project could have serious concerns about the wisdom of modifying a home that is (or is perceived to be) of poor structural quality. Clearly, RO staff and Support Coordinators do not have (nor are expected to have), the expertise to determine the structural ability and integrity of a home. This becomes a serious issue when there is the inaccurate expectation that waiver funds could be used for the needed repairs.

Mobile homes: There is often an assumption that the term “mobile home” or “trailer” equals poor quality of construction. That assumption is sometimes accurate, but there are also mobile homes constructed to standards equal or higher than stick-built homes. When considering a modification to a mobile home it would be wise to bring up in conversation the possibility that construction methods of a mobile homes could pose barriers to modifications. We owe it to the individual and family to be up front about this from the beginning.

Older homes: Homes built before current standards or homes built in areas without comprehensive building requirements can also be an issue. Narrow doors, tight turns, out-of-date wiring, improper venting, general disrepair, etc. are challenges found in many old homes. Keep in mind: waiver funds cannot be used to remedy these issues, even if they pose health and safety risk to the individual. In some cases, the poor condition of the home prevents the modification from being done. Generally, decisions about feasibility of modifications should be made by the professional home modification provider. The SC and RO should assure service definition requirements pertaining to adherence to codes, permits, licenses, etc. are followed as they set standards for proper and safe construction.

Complicating matters further, a contractor may begin a modification then discover rot, termites or other unforeseen damage that halts the project until remedied. Because the areas of a home most vulnerable to unseen damage by termites or rot from leaking roof, windows or kitchen and laundry appliances are not normally involved in the type of modifications funded by the Division (door widening and bath modifications) this issue is not common. If the problem is minor, such as a few 2x4’s or small section of subfloor damaged from a leak in a bathroom, the provider may make the

repair for no additional cost. Providers are not obligated to do this so clear communication and careful evaluation of the area to be modified before the job starts is important. The homeowner could also arrange for these problems to be fixed, if the provider was agreeable to the plan and the waiver funds are not used for the repair.

Whether an older home or a mobile or manufactured home, it could be a good idea to ask permission to take some pictures of the home, particularly of the area of the proposed modifications. These photos can help potential contractors determine whether this is a project they might consider. This may also be a situation where a neutral third party with experience, such as Mo Housing, could come in and provide some recommendations. Once again, these situations call for careful planning, investigation, and clear communication.

CLARIFICATION ABOUT SPECIFIC MODIFICATIONS

Q: Can a home modification include a backup generator?

A: Purchase of an appropriately-sized emergency generator to provide backup power for life-sustaining medical equipment is permissible, if justified within the plan and otherwise consistent with the SME service definition requirements including the requirement to exhaust state plan DME services prior to utilizing waiver services. In general, a whole house, automatic generator would be extremely difficult to justify. In most instances, a smaller, removable generator would be considered Specialized Medical Equipment (SME) and the installation of specialized, appropriate electrical connections would be considered the home modification.

Q: Can the waiver be used to offset the value of a lift or other vehicle modification already installed on a new or used vehicle?

A: No. Waiver funds can only be used to add new modifications to a vehicle.

Q: Can families assist with supplementing the cost of an environmental accessibility adaptation project?

A: Families may fund upgrades or costs that exceed the waiver cap. Alternatively, the planning team can take steps to reduce costs such that the expense is less than the cap. If the individual, their family or others in the individual's life decide to supplement a part of the project (e.g. – asking for brushed nickel fixtures instead of basic chrome fixtures), the support coordinator must document this in the individual's plan/plan amendment to clearly show who is paying for which part of the project.

Waiver funding covers what is a medical or habilitative cost. Any costs associated with aesthetics or convenience are not covered through waiver funding.

OTHER FAQ's

Q: Can an individual or family be reimbursed for a home modification they already made?

A: No waiver funded service is to be provided without prior approval. This means that the waiver cannot be used to reimburse anyone for an environmental modification that already been planned and purchased before the approval of the Division of DD.

Q: Can providers use waiver funds to make their facilities more accessible for individuals with disabilities?

A: No, these funds are limited to use in the individual's residence.

Q: Can we use waiver funds to build an addition to our home?

A: Adaptations that add to the total square footage of the home are excluded from this benefit except when necessary to complete an adaptation.

Q: Can we use waiver funds to make changes to property we are renting, or do we have to own our own home?

A: Adaptations may be approved for living arrangements (houses, apartments, etc.) where the individual lives, owned or leased by the individual, their family or legal guardian. These modifications can be to the individual's home. Home accessibility adaptations may not be furnished to adapt living arrangements that are owned or leased by providers of waiver services.

Q: Is there a rule of thumb to help us understand the difference between home modifications and specialized medical equipment?

A: If the item is attached to the home, then it would be considered a home modification (or EAA) and not specialized medical equipment (SME). For example, a grab bar is attached to the home structure, and so would be EAA. A portable shower chair, though, is not attached to the home and would be considered SME.

Q: Can we use these funds to make repairs to the home, such as fixing a leaky roof or repairing a heating system or worn carpet?

A: No, the definition for this service specifically excludes those types of general changes to a home. There are other specific exclusions to the types of modification that can be funded through the waiver.

Q: Can Waiver funds be used to remove Home Mods when the individual leaves that home?

A: It depends. The restoration of the home or apartment to the condition prior to the home modifications is specifically excluded. Examples of this would be returning a door widened for access to a narrow door; removing a zero-entry shower installed for access and replacing it with a bathtub or removing a wood or concrete ramp and replacing it with a sidewalk and steps. None of these restorations are of direct remedial benefit to the individual and therefore, not eligible for waiver funding. They are instead, strictly for the benefit of the property owner.

However, there are instances where the argument can be made that the removal of a modification does provide a direct remedial benefit to the individual. Examples of these scenarios might include the removal of a track lift system when an individual moves so it can be relocated to a new setting. Another example might be the removal of a stair lift or platform lift for similar reasons.

Q: Can we choose the style and appearance of the modification to match our home?

A: Generally, no. The waiver *typically* pays only for “builder grade” materials. You might have choices within builder grade materials depending on the situation. You can discuss the choices, if any, with the provider. Cost above the builder grade materials may be met by the person or family, including additional cost necessary to meet requirements of a home owner association or historic district. The purpose of waiver funded home modifications is to improve access, independence and/or safety in the residence, not the appearance of the home.

Q: Can waiver funds be used to modify Shared Living homes?

A: Home modifications *may* be provided for individuals residing in a Companion Home setting as the home is owned or leased by the individual.

Home modifications *may not* be provided for individuals residing in a Host Home setting as it is considered a provider-owned / provider-controlled home.

Q: What do you do when there are two individuals (both of whom are waiver eligible) in the same home who would both benefit from waiver funded environmental modifications?

A: Situations such as these require clear and consistent communication between the Support Coordinators. Both individuals will require separate OT/PT evaluations and reports. If a specific modification benefits only one of the individuals, the funding for that modification can only relate to that individual’s plan. For modifications that could benefit either individual, the Support Coordinators must discuss the situation and may divide the changes and associated costs between the individuals.

Q: Can home modification funds be used to offset the costs of new construction?

A: No, home modification funding is intended for modification of existing homes or vehicles. Just as with the prohibition on the use of these funds for new vehicle purchase, the waiver cannot be used to cover costs associated with new home construction. The home modification service is not a “grant” that can be used for anything associated with mobility and accessing an individual’s environment. Instead, it is a specific service targeted at a specific problem – existing homes or vehicles that require modification to improve independence and access to the community. This *does not* apply to SME requested for use in a newly constructed home or a home under construction.

Q: Can EAA funds be used to rent equipment for a short period of time?

A: EAA is intended to be a long term, essentially permanent change to the home or vehicle. A possible option would be to use the Specialized Medical Equipment service to fund rental of portable equipment that is not intended for long term use.

Q: Do funds for home modification follow the individual’s plan year?

A: No, it follows the waiver year which is from July 1-June 30.