

### **ID the need**

There will be times during the conversations between individuals, their families and guardians, and Support Coordinators when it becomes apparent that an individual would be safer, more independent, and/or healthier if there was a modification to the home. This resource guide has been developed to assist those who work in the Division of Developmental Disabilities system to understand the process, expectations and limitations of the Waiver-funded Environmental Accessibility Adaptations service, commonly referred to as “Home Mods.”

### **Get a formal evaluation**

Unlike many other services funded through the Waivers, Home Mods require a formal evaluation of need from a certified or licensed Occupational or Physical Therapist. This needs to be completed before we go ask a contractor to weigh in with a bid because this evaluation will lay out the scope of the project. This evaluation is made up of three primary parts:

- A description of the physical or other limitations which could be reduced through Home Mods
- A description of the current state of the structure targeted for modification
- An explanation of what specific things need to change in the environment to improve the function of the individual

There is an “OT/PT Home Mod Worksheet” that includes an explanation of the purpose of the evaluation and provides some structure for the written report. The OT or PT isn’t required to use this form or format, but they would be expected to address those three topics in their report whether or not they used the recommended form. Support Coordinators are expected to review the report they receive from the OT/PT and to ask for clarification on any points that seem to be missing.

How do SC’s find an OT/PT to do the evaluation? The best case scenario is that the SC would have worked with a therapist or therapists in the past and would contact them, or would be working with a SC who has such experience and who could give recommendations, but that’s not always the case. Sometimes there is already a report out there that would work; the individual has been to a therapist who already has made specific recommendations for changes in the home, and these can be acted upon. More often, though, the SC will have to help the family locate therapists who have a contract with DMH to provide waiver services. The local Provider Relations staff at the Regional Office can provide a list of local, contracted OT’s and PT’s from which the individual or family can choose. Just like with all other waiver services, individuals and guardians have the right or provider choice.

While the waivers can be used to fund this assessment, there is no requirement that would keep other sources of funding from working. Children, particularly, could have the OT or PT paid for through regular state plan Medicaid. In some cases, particularly those who are seeking the MOCDDS (Lopez) waiver, even private insurance could pay for the evaluation.

If the intent is to have the Waiver fund the evaluation, then the SC would be expected to complete an initial or amended ISP that requests the funding, and then would submit it through the regular UR and

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Regional Office approval process. In those cases, then, the actual request for the construction would be made through another ISP amendment.

*An aside: It's important that individuals, families, SC's and UR understand the difference between Home Mods and Durable Medical Equipment. The rule of thumb is this: if it is nailed, screwed, or glued to the home then it's a home mod. If you could pick it up and take it somewhere else, then it's DME. So, a shower chair is DME, and the grab bar inside the shower would be a Home Mod. Since the process for getting home mods approved is more complicated than getting DME approved it makes sense to pay attention to what is actually being asked for, and then take the easiest path to getting there.*

There are additional FAQ's about this topic and an example of one of these reports in the addendum to this resource guide.

### **Prepare the Home Mod plan for UR**

Getting Bids: At this point the SC has obtained the OT/PT eval and determined that it sufficiently explains what is missing from the environment and the recommendations to fix it. The next step is to obtain bids from Home Mod providers. We can only use companies that have a contract with DMH to provide Waiver services. This contracting process can take months, so when possible, the SC will be better off using providers with existing contracts. As with OT's and PT's, the Regional Office PR staff can assist on coming up with a list of contracted Home Mod providers in the area. While the individual and guardian have to right to choose the provider they want to make the bids, but the approval will go to the bidder with the "best" bid, which translates to "lowest" bid, all things being equal.

In order to make sure that "all things are equal", there are certain requirements for the bid itself. These bids are often the subject of questioning by the UR Committee and Regional Office Director, and also by external auditors, so there is a need to get into a high level of detail.

- An outline of costs associated with each major component of the Home Mod (for example; if the recommendation is for the widening of a door, a wheelchair accessible sink, and a ramp into the home, we need the bid broken down by each.)
- The list of materials has to be sufficiently detailed for an outside reader to understand what is being purchased. For example, if the bid is for grab bars, you would expect that the length, type of material, and weight rating for the bar would be included. For changes to a door opening, you would expect to see that how much would be needed for lumber, hardware, finishes, disposal of waste, and labor. The idea is that someone can see what was recommended by the OT/PT, and then make sure that the bid meets those specifications.
- Labor costs including subcontracting description, permits, fees, etc.
- Estimated completion date.
- Maintenance, follow up activities, product warranties - plus costs
- Proposed lifespan of the EAA assuming normal use

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Plans have trouble getting approved when the expectations of the individual and SC's isn't the same as the expectations of the UR Committee and RO Director. Similarly, negative audit findings occur when the approved services don't meet the expectations of the auditors. At its core, there is no difference in the general requirements for Home Mods than other services (justify a need that can only be funded through the waiver), but more detail is expected and, therefore, more scrutiny is likely to take place. Before the SC send the plan in for review, it is important to review the plan to make sure it documents:

1. **A description of the situation.** What environmental barrier exists that is standing in the way of what goal? The ISP will be expected to spell that out, and the OT/PT eval will be key in making the case for the request. Home Mods will be expected to accomplish one or more of these goals:
  - a. Increasing independence in the home;
  - b. Improving the ability of the individual to access activities in the community
  - c. Improving health and safety;
  - d. Reducing the risk of injury to the individual and/or his or her caregiver(s)
2. **Describe the proposed solution.** Again, the OT/PT eval is important here, but so is the way in which the bids are described.
3. **Document the desire of the individual for the service.** As with any service described in the person-centered plan, there must be documentation that the individual wants the Home Mod to be completed and agrees that the Home Mods will be of benefit.
4. **Document any other Home Mod proposals/bids considered** and why these were not included.
5. **Describe other resources pursued** to fully or partly fund the service. If other federal, state, and local community resources were researched and considered, document this and describe the result of the effort.

### Getting the project done

Once the ISP or amendment authorizing the Home Mod has been approved, the SC will contact the selected bidder. Contact with the individual/guardian will be important to make sure all parties understand what progress has been made and what the completion date is anticipated to be.

### Monitor the service delivery

Following the completion of the modification, the SC will review the project with the individual and family, etc. A visit to the home is also recommended.