

The Pennsylvania Accessible Housing Program

Program Guidelines | August 2008

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Section I – General

A. Introduction

The Pennsylvania Accessible Housing Program (PAHP) is a combined effort between the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) and the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA). PAHP, formerly known as the Pennsylvania Access Grant Program, provides financial and technical resources to support the ability of low-and moderate-income persons of all ages with permanent, physical disabilities to live independently in accessible housing. Modifications to the home will prevent institutionalization and enable persons of all ages with permanent, physical disabilities to live in a community setting. Funding for modifications will also be available to people currently residing in nursing facilities and other institutions desiring to relocate from the institution into an accessible independent setting.

DCED is the agency responsible for administering this program in coordination with DPW and PHFA. Funding under this program is available through the Commonwealth's Accessible Housing Appropriation. The Department anticipates using DPW Medicaid funds to supplement the appropriation

This document provides guidelines for local units of government and private, nonprofit organizations seeking to implement PAHP in their community. PAHP offers a flexible source of funds that are intended to be used to leverage other home repair and/or modification resources.

In a state as large and diverse as Pennsylvania, the Department understands that no single approach or model can be optimal at all times for all communities. Therefore, the Department encourages communities to view these guidelines as suggesting an approach to structuring home modification efforts that has been generally successful. However, where communities have compelling reasons for alternative approaches, the Department will carefully evaluate these proposals and work with applicants to fashion a set of activities that meet the program's objectives. Communities pursuing alternative approaches are encouraged to contact Department staff in advance to discuss their proposed alternative approaches and obtain guidance through the application phase of their projects.

The Department will adhere to the applicable Commonwealth Keystone Principles for Growth, Investment & Resource Conservation when selecting and awarding projects. Additionally, all PAHP applicants are encouraged to incorporate the "Interagency Guidance on Home Adaptations and Assistive Technology Programs" into their operational procedures when administering this program. The Interagency Guidance is located in Appendix II of these guidelines. Every attempt will be made to make selections in a fair manner among geographic areas.

DCED strongly recommends interested applicants to contact their DCED Regional Office to discuss specific projects before submitting an application. The DCED Regional Offices are listed on page 20.

B. Keystone Principles for Growth, Investment and Resource Conservation

The Department will adhere to the Commonwealth's Keystone Principles for Growth, Investment and Resource Conservation when selecting projects and awarding contracts. Project selection will support either redevelopment or concentrated development, or both. Greater consideration will be given to projects that make efficient use of infrastructure, increase job opportunities, and/or foster sustainable businesses. Every attempt will be made to make funding selections in a fair manner among geographic areas.

C. Immigrant Communities

In an effort to welcome and to integrate immigrant communities with the revitalization efforts of the Commonwealth and its municipalities, DCED encourages local governments and community-based organizations to actively engage these communities. DCED will give special consideration to applications that either include activities or describe how their municipality or organization currently takes proactive steps to integrate immigrant communities in their revitalization efforts. Activities that promote the integration of immigrant communities include, but are not limited to, projects that:

- Support community leadership training and develop the capacity of community-based organizations for project management
- Encourage civic participation in local affairs and planning
- Support English language acquisition
- Support entrepreneurial assistance

Definition of Immigrant: For the purposes of this section, Immigrant shall also include US citizens whose native language is not English.

D. Program Description and Objectives

1. The PAHP provides grants to local entities to implement home modification programs that will enable low-and moderate-income persons of all ages with permanent, physical disabilities to make their home more accessible. The funds are intended to supplement, not to replace, existing federal, local or state programs.
2. Specific objectives of the PAHP include:
 - a. Expand living options for persons of all ages with permanent, physical disabilities to prevent institutionalization.
 - b. Support the relocation of people of all ages with permanent, physical disabilities moving from institutions, including nursing facilities and Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded (ICF-MR) to community settings, by providing needed home modifications.
 - c. Promote the health and safety of people with permanent, physical disabilities living independently in their community.
 - d. Increase the ability of people of all ages with permanent, physical disabilities to function effectively in their homes.
 - e. Serve people of all ages with permanent, physical disabilities requiring accessibility modifications to their residence.
 - f. Assist as many households as possible with the available funds.
 - g. Maximize geographic coverage throughout the Commonwealth.
 - h. Foster collaboration among existing housing and service organizations rather than creating new entities.
 - i. Promote consumer control of home modifications.
 - j. Educate the public regarding home modifications.

E. Definitions

1. **Applicant:** The entity (a private, nonprofit corporation, a unit of local government or a redevelopment authority) that is applying for the PAHP funds.
2. **Beneficiary:** The person(s) who directly benefits from the home modification.
3. **Contractor:** The successful applicant or grantee that is awarded funding by DCED.
4. **Home Modification:** Improvements, adaptations, and physical changes to a housing unit that improve accessibility into and inside that unit for persons with permanent, physical disabilities.
5. **Program:** The PAHP's provision of home modification activities and delivery system as administered within a community or local service area by a contractor.

F. Eligible Applicants and Requirements

1. The Commonwealth seeks to promote an efficient local delivery system that minimizes administrative costs and duplication of effort within defined geographic areas. Eligible PAHP applicants include:
 - a. Private, nonprofit corporations (with operational capacity as defined below);
 - b. Redevelopment authorities;
 - c. Units of local government such as counties, cities, boroughs, townships, and home rule municipalities; and,
 - d. Nonprofit corporations that have the capacity to serve clients in areas of the state where no local entity is available to provide services.

Nonprofit corporation applicants must demonstrate operational capacity by having at least two years of satisfactory operational experience relevant to the experience required for this program. That capacity must also include previous management of funding levels greater than or equal to the amount of funding requested, as evidenced by two years of satisfactory audits and evidence of municipal support through an executed cooperation agreement, in order to apply for funds.

All applicants must demonstrate sufficient internal program management capacity to administer a high quality consumer-driven home modification program. Successful applicants must provide evidence of collaboration between local organizations that undertake housing improvements (housing rehabilitation, home repair/modification) and the local service delivery organizations that assist persons with physical disabilities.

2. Funding priority will be given to applications that demonstrate the following:
 - a. Preference over other program beneficiaries will be given to persons with permanent, physical disabilities at risk of becoming institutionalized, or persons of any age with permanent, physical disabilities moving from an institution into the community.
 - b. The applicant will serve an area that does not have an existing home modification program in place; therefore, applicants must document the availability of such programs in their area.
 - c. The program will make the best use of limited resources and leverage other resources.
 - d. The program is going to achieve an economy of scale by providing services in a multi-jurisdictional or regional area.

- e. The program will give preference to people with very low income, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Section 8 Income Guidelines, or those people below poverty level as defined by the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines, whichever is more advantageous to the beneficiary. These two standards include persons at or below 50% of the area median county income and persons at or below 100% of the Federal poverty level.
3. All applications will be evaluated on the quality of the proposed plan to provide home modifications, thoroughness of the scope of work, and capacity to do the job. Applications must include:
 - a. A description of how this program will address the needs of each program beneficiary.
 - b. A description of the service area for the program, including the location of the service area.
 - c. The anticipated number of persons with permanent, physical disabilities in the service area that will benefit from the program.
 - d. A description of the nature and extent of collaboration among existing local organizations in planning and implementing the program. Examples of such local organizations include, but are not limited to, housing and redevelopment authorities; disability service organizations, such as Centers for Independent Living, United Cerebral Palsy Associations, and HIV/AIDS Planning Coalitions; community development corporations; community action agencies; area agencies on aging; and other nonprofit organizations whose mission includes providing affordable housing and/or assisting persons with disabilities.
 - e. The names of participating organizations and an identification of the roles of each. The existing expertise of these organizations should be utilized in lieu of developing new organizations and planning groups.
 - f. Documentation of the mission of each participating organization.
 - g. Evidence that the organization has the capacity to administer such a program, as outlined under Section F, Eligible Applicants and Requirements.
 - h. An outreach component that provides information and promotes public awareness about the availability and use of programs that provide housing modifications to housing units in order to make housing accessible to persons with permanent, physical disabilities.
 - i. An identification of sources of funds to undertake other major home repairs that are not eligible under the PAHP (see Eligible Activities below), such as Act 137, HOME Investment Partnership, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), PHFA Renovate and Repair Loan, etc., and how those resources will be coordinated with PAHP.
 - j. A demonstration of local support and participation through the commitment of local funds and/or administrative support for the program.
 - k. A demonstration that the quality of life and the quality of housing for persons with permanent, physical disabilities will be maintained and improved.
 - l. A description of how the program will build capacity in the local community and relevant local organizations to plan and implement home modification programs.
 - m. A description of the follow-up measures that will be conducted to insure that appropriate modifications are properly installed and that the program beneficiary has been trained to utilize the modifications.

G. Eligible Activities

1. Eligible activities include construction, renovation and/or installation of adaptations, including the cost to evaluate the beneficiary's need with regard to the installation of the proposed modification(s).
2. Eligible costs under this program may include, but are not limited to, any of the following:
 - a. Adaptive modifications, such as ramps, lifts, door-widening, visual door bells, audio phones, visual phone signalers, etc., that will improve the ability of a person with permanent, physical disabilities to enter and exit the home.
 - b. Adaptive modifications, such as widening hallways, lowering the kitchen counters, enlarging bathrooms, or adding grab bars, that will increase the ability of a person with permanent, physical disabilities to perform activities of daily living.
 - c. Other adaptive modifications that do not extend beyond the original footprint of the housing unit that will enable a person with a permanent, physical disability to remain in the home and prevent institutionalization.
 - d. Other items not included above may be considered eligible, but must be clearly delineated in the application in order to be accepted as eligible.
3. The property to be modified must be habitable and in structurally sound condition, preferably compliant with the Statewide Building Code or locally applicable code. If not code-compliant, the applicant must attempt to obtain funding from another source that will bring the property up to the Statewide Building Code or applicable local code standard. If funding is not available to bring the entire property up to code, funds may be utilized to bring the areas where the modification improvements will be installed up to code, provided the housing unit is structurally sound and in stable condition.
4. These funds may not be used to:
 - a. Modify units owned or operated by public housing authorities, or facilities licensed by the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) or the Department of Health (DOH).
 - b. For support services.
 - c. To correct code violations.
 - d. For relocation expenses.
 - e. For escrowing purposes to return the unit to its original condition.

H. Program Beneficiary Eligibility Criteria

1. All applications (private, nonprofit corporations, redevelopment authorities, units of local government) must insure that the program beneficiary meets the following criteria:
 - a. The program beneficiary must be a resident of Pennsylvania and the residential unit to be modified must be located in Pennsylvania.
 - b. Multiple persons living in the same household will be considered as one unit; therefore, their income must be combined when determining income eligibility.
 - c. The total household income of all persons residing in the unit may not exceed the current HUD Section 8 Income Guidelines for the county (80% of the area median income), or 235% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines, whichever is more advantageous to the beneficiaries. Deductions from gross income for extraordinary medical expenses and other costs will be allowed as approved by the applicant.

- d. The program beneficiary must be either the owner or renter (leaseholder) of the property to be modified, or a member of the owner's family, or listed on the lease of the property to be modified. If the beneficiary is a renter, the contractor must attempt to work with the property owner to keep the modifications in place for future tenants.
 - e. The program beneficiary must have a permanent, physical disability that limits access to, and limits use of the dwelling unit. The disability must be verified by a physician's statement or by a Social Security Disability Determination.
 - f. The program beneficiary must have a permanent, physical disability and may include minors with permanent, physical disabilities in the care of their parents or legal guardians. The program beneficiary's primary residence must be the home receiving the modification.
 - g. The program beneficiary must indicate on the application if he/she is eligible for **Medicaid** assistance, and if eligible, must provide his/her Access Card number.
2. The caretaker of a person of any age with a permanent, physical disability may apply for these funds, but must demonstrate that the person with the permanent, physical disability will directly benefit from any modifications made to the unit.

I. Contract Provisions/Program Requirements

1. DCED will review and award PAHP funds throughout the year.
2. Contractors awarded funding must carry out their projects expeditiously.
3. Contracts awarded for any fiscal year of grant assistance will generally be for a term of three years. This limitation will provide ample time to contract, perform the duties under the contract, and to close out the contract.
4. Major program changes must be approved by a contract amendment. Minor changes can be approved by a contract modification.
5. If the contractor does not spend all grant funds by the contract expiration date, the unspent funds must be returned to the Commonwealth. Budget change after contracting will require prior approval from the Comptroller's Office.
6. Contractors are responsible for compliance with the terms and conditions of the contract.
7. Contractors must comply with all applicable state statutes and regulations including, but not limited to, the Flood Plain Management Act, the Prevailing Wage Act, the Steel Products Procurement Act, etc.
8. The contractor will comply with state and federal laws and all regulations dealing with discrimination and environmental workplace issues, including the Americans with Disabilities Act.
9. Subsequent to the completion of all activities and the expenditure of all funds, a project audit is required for grants of \$100,000 or more. A fiscal status report is required for grants less than \$100,000.
10. Applications are expected to limit program administrative costs to 10% of the grant. Administrative costs in excess of 10% of the grant must include documentation that substantiates the need for those funds.

All grants are awarded on a competitive basis and are contingent upon General Assembly approval of an annual appropriation.

Section II – The Application Process

A. General

1. Applicants must utilize the DCED Single Application.
 - a. The Single Application must be completed online by accessing <http://www.newpa.com/programFinder.aspx>.
 - b. Questions concerning the completion of the Single Application should be directed to the DCED Customer Service Center at 1-800-379-7448 or 717-787-3405, or e-mailing ra-dcedcs@state.pa.us.
 - c. Supplemental application information not attached to the Single Application should be mailed to the DCED Customer Service Center, Commonwealth Keystone Building, 400 North Street, 4th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17120-0225. Please reference the Web ID number or the Single Application Number on all supplemental information.
 - d. Applications may be submitted throughout the year at any time.
 - e. Please provide the appropriate regional office with a copy of the supplemental information when it is provided to the DCED Customer Service Center.
2. While not a requirement, potential applicants are strongly encouraged to communicate with the Department's applicable regional office (refer to page 20) about a proposed project prior to application submission. Interested participants may also contact the Center for Community Development, 400 North Street, 4th Floor, Commonwealth Keystone Building, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120-0225.
3. Applicants will benefit by contacting DCED prior to submission so that staff can offer technical assistance, including information about potential partnership opportunities. Contact with staff prior to preparing the application also alerts staff to pending Single Application submissions.
4. Applicants should carefully review the instructions contained in the Single Application Kit and submit documentation that addresses the objectives identified in these program guidelines.
 - a. The narrative section in the Single Application should be detailed.
 - b. The narrative should describe the project to the extent that DCED can understand and evaluate it.
5. The Single Application Kit is designed for all DCED programs. Therefore, some information on the form may not be applicable to your specific program and should not be answered. Please address only line items relevant to your proposal. DCED Regional Office staff is available to provide assistance if needed.
6. Please designate the PAHP as the program you have chosen for initial consideration. Designation of the PAHP will facilitate routing of the application to the Center for Community Development for consideration.
7. Applicants seeking PAHP funding must submit additional documentation that is not identified in the Single Application Kit. This additional documentation should be appended to the Single Application at the time of submission. The additional documentation includes:

- a. A resolution by the applicant that contains reference to the provision of any matching funds and the reimbursement of any expenses found to be ineligible by DCED. An example resolution is provided in Appendix I.
- b. Evidence of matching funds, if applicable, necessary to complete the project, such as letters from federal or state agencies, private funds commitments, financial institutions and local government commitments.
- c. Project maps with a detailed narrative describing the project location.
- d. A project timetable that tracks the key activities and the dates necessary to achieve the project's goals and objectives.
- e. Budget breakdown of administrative charges.
- f. Other information/documentation that DCED may identify.

B. Application Window/Application Review

1. Application Window - DCED's Single Application process permits applications to be submitted at any time.
2. DCED will make every effort to "package" creative financing proposals accessing all funding resources in the Department, as well as other potential local/state/federal sources of funds.

3. Funding decisions will be made subject to the availability of funds.
4. Applications not approved for funding will receive rejection letters.

Appendix I

Sample Applicant Resolution

Resolution of the _____ authorizing the filing of a proposal for funds with the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, the _____ is desirous of obtaining funds from the DCED in the amount of \$ _____ for The Pennsylvania Accessible Housing Program.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the _____ will assume the provision of the full local share of the project costs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the _____ will reimburse the Commonwealth for the DCED's share of any expenditures found by DCED to be ineligible.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of _____ is directed to execute a certificate attesting to the adoption of this resolution and to furnish a copy of the Resolution to the DCED.

ATTEST SEAL

Appendix II

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Interagency Guidance on Home Adaptations and Assistive Technology Programs

October 4, 2006

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to organizations that are involved in providing home adaptations and/or assistive technology across the Commonwealth. Such guidance is offered to improve the capacity of home adaptation programs, while respecting the rights of the individual seeking assistance, promoting good business practices, and providing standard information to new programs seeking to become providers.

It is the intention of this Commonwealth that residents in all 67 counties will have access to information about home adaptations and technology, including design and customization advice specific to their disability and their home. And also that low-income residents have access to financial assistance to help them pay for necessary home adaptations and technology. The information and financial assistance is intended to promote and sustain safe, community-based, living arrangements for Pennsylvanians with disabilities and who are elderly.

It is also PA's intention that all federal, state, and local funds used to pay for home adaptations and technology be administered through programs that are simple and easy for residents to contact; that coordinate with each other to provide a statewide network of comparable services regardless of geographic location; that consider home adaptations and technology to be as important as social and other services; that provide services within reasonable timeframes; and that respect consumer choice and privacy.

It is recommended that program administrators seeking governmental funds controlled by the Commonwealth are hereby directed to develop staff and organizational expertise to develop and manage their home adaptation and technology assistance programs in accordance with these Commonwealth intentions.

Principle 1 Consumer Direction

Consumer direction maintains that people with disabilities of all ages have the ability and the right to make decisions about services that affect their lives. Organizations applying to the Commonwealth for funding for home adaptations and technology funds must demonstrate that people with disabilities and who are elderly will have visible and effective methods to communicate their needs, suggestions, and concerns to program administrators.

1.1 Consumer Advisory Council

One acceptable method for demonstrating this commitment is the creation of a Consumer Advisory Council with membership that includes individuals who are disabled or elderly. In addition to communication with program administrators, Councils may also provide consumer education about home modifications and funding, offer dispute resolution services, participate in program development and evaluation, and determine when to make exceptions to program guidelines for expensive or nonstandard modification requests, among other functions.

1.2 Partnership Agreements between Delivery Organizations and Consumer Advocacy and Service Organizations

A second way of demonstrating commitment to Consumer Direction is through partnerships with consumer advocacy and service organizations, as long as these organizations' executive staff or boards of directors have members who have disabilities or are elderly. In addition, these organizations must demonstrate a broad focus on all individuals who may be eligible for home modifications and not just their own clientele.

Documentation

The following list reflects examples of documentation which may be offered to show the organizations practices in this area, Principle 1 Consumer Rights and Direction:

- Consumer Advisory Committee Minutes and Membership Profiles or similar documentation of meetings between program administrators and consumer advocacy and service organizations.
- Partnership documents between Delivery Organizations and Consumer Advocacy and Service Organizations
- Curriculum and attendance list of consumer training re home modifications
- Minutes of Dispute Resolution procedures; minutes of meetings where program exceptions are determined; etc.

Principle 2 Leadership

Leadership refers to the governance authority and management of organizations applying to the Commonwealth for funding to operate home modification and assistive technology programs. Organization Leaders must demonstrate commitment to administering their programs in a manner that helps keep people with disabilities or who are elderly living safely in their community and also facilitates returning to or moving to their community after stays in hospitals and nursing and rehabilitation centers. Leaders need to commit themselves and their programs to increasing program capacity over time due to the projected demand for more modification services in future years in Pennsylvania.

2.1 Progressive Implementation of Commonwealth Guidance Principles and Keys, and Continuous Improvement in Program Outcomes

Delivery organizations will build continuous improvement evaluations into their home modification programs in order to ensure that they are developing and expanding their home modification programs to meet the Commonwealth's ever increasing demand for these services as our population ages. Program Leaders commit to taking action to implement best practices and overcome deficiencies on an annual basis

2.2 Plans and Reports to the public

The Delivery Organization will make public its goals and intentions for home modification program funding and will also share with the public evaluations of program successes to date and areas that remain challenges.

2.3 Public Meetings

Organizations may also demonstrate their leadership's dedication to a successful home modification program by establishing annual public meetings or setting aside time at already-occurring meetings, such as Planning or Community Development Committee Hearings, to publicly discuss home modification program goals and outcomes.

The following list reflects examples of documentation which may be offered to show the organizations practices in this area.

- Partnerships and Referral Agreements
- Cultural Competence Plan and Action reports
- Board Membership: reflects the cultures of people served, includes consumers or consumer advocates/representatives
- Announcements of public meetings
- Reports on public meetings which may include: number attending, agenda, materials offered/disseminated or used in the meeting
- Plans to inform the public about modification program
- Brochures, annual reports, fact sheets or other materials about the modification program

Principle 3 Organizational Practices and Ethics

Organizational Practices and Ethics describe the overall way in which the organization carries out its mission. The Commonwealth's expectation is that Organizational Leaders will commit to implementing and maintaining best business and consumer practices.

The written plans called for in this, and subsequent, Principles and Keys, are to serve as sufficient guidance to program administrators and as verifiable program descriptions to outside reviewers. They are not to be so detailed or lengthy as to be onerous to develop, maintain or use daily.

3.1 Fiscal Management

The organization will maintain written records of grants received; disbursements for services, construction, and administrative costs; and all related expenditures in a professional manner that allows for clean program and financial reviews.

Vendor payment timeframes will be reasonable and every effort will be made to keep these timeframes similar to private sector payment speeds so that program participation by competent contractors is maximized. Written policies and procedures shall be established and updated as necessary to promote compliance with all funding requirements.

3.2 Human Resources

Delivery organizations will maintain sufficient qualified personnel through employment or contracted services to meet the needs of consumers.

3.3 Ethics

The Delivery Organization will have and maintain a written code of ethics which defines its expectations for professional conduct by staff, contract employees, and construction contractors, as well as addresses potential conflicts of interest, marketing practices and includes a "no reprisal" system for reporting suspected questionable behaviors or practices.

3.4 Dispute Management

Delivery organizations will have a written policy on dispute management so that consumers who disagree with program determinations know how such disputes will be handled. The ability to default to a neutral external mediator or arbitration service to control cost, promote healthy relationships and speed resolutions is strongly recommended.

3.5 Information Management

The Delivery Organization will provide systems for information sharing and management sufficient to meet internal performance monitoring and external reporting requirements. Case files on individual consumers will be maintained.

3.6 Marketing and Communications (further clarified in 5.11)

Delivery organizations will create and maintain a written marketing and communication plan which describes the home modification program and how program information will be disseminated to potential consumers. This plan will also specify how consumers who may be deaf and/or blind, who may need personal assistance in understanding program information, and who may need sensitivity due to language and/or cultural barriers will receive information. The plan will specify the reading level at which written communication will be provided so that the majority of consumers can comprehend these materials.

3.7 Quality Improvement (further clarified in 5.12 and 5.13)

The Delivery Organization will commit to implementing and updating a written, plan for program evaluation, which includes ongoing assessment of consumer satisfaction with the process and outcomes, and uses the information to improve the quality of its programs.

Principle 3 Business Practices

The following list reflects examples of documentation which may be offered to show the organizations practices in this area.

- Policies and Procedures
- Board Conflict of Interest Policy
- Copies of Contracts and subcontracts
- Written Code of Ethics
- Compliance Policy
- Compliance reports including results of investigations
- HR Manuals
- Agency Brochures and Documents
- Personnel files reflecting credentials of staff(training, experience etc)
- Communication and Marketing Plans and annual reports on these activities
- Lists of software used and how
- Written program evaluation plan
- Financial audits, as required by program funders

Principle 4: Consumer Access to the Home Adaptation Program

The following keys explain how individuals will learn about modification and related social and human service program options.

4.1 Individual inquiry to find services and financial support

Delivery organizations shall provide toll-free access to intake staff for all people in their specified service area, including accessibility to people who are deaf and/or blind. Program administrators will also be prepared to have staff visit potential consumers who are unable to leave their residences (including private homes and institutional settings). Delivery organizations will commit to developing systems that allow them to assist as many people who have limited English-language proficiency as possible.

4.2. Uniform application

Delivery organizations will develop a simple written application for home modification services.

4.3 Self Pay participants

Delivery organizations will staff their programs sufficiently to provide home assessment and contractor referral services to individuals who do not qualify for financial assistance for home modifications. Reasonable fees may be charged for these services, unless prohibited by specific funders.

4.4 Individual consumer notifications

Consumers will be notified in writing that they have been approved to receive program assistance. This notice will disclose any and all requirements of the consumer, commitments or risks they undertake by receiving program services.

Consumer notices will include the need for contractors to access the consumers' home, hours of required access, any financial participation expected of the consumer, any limitations on the consumers' ability to access future services, among other items.

Notices provided to renters must clarify legitimate expectations that the landlord may have of the tenant regarding returning the home to its previous condition when the tenant plans to move out, and whether the modifications or assistive technology are considered the tenants' for reuse at a new residence or will become part of the landlords' property.

4.5 Waiting List

If delivery organizations have insufficient funds to provide services to all potential consumers, program administrators will seek additional funding for their programs from both their current funder and other potential funders. If funds are still insufficient to serve all potential consumers, the organization will develop a Wait List for services that is shared with their program funders. Wait listed consumers will be given information about where they are on the list and the expected wait until services can be provided, as well as information about other sources of funding who may be able to help them more quickly.

4.6 Single Point of Contact (a "Navigator")

The Delivery Organization will provide one staff or contract employee who will be the single point of contact (or Navigator) for the consumer from the time of their application until after the home modification is completed. When staff serving as Navigators leave this position, their consumer case load will be transferred to new staff members who will have access to the consumer's case file to ensure continuity of services. Delivery organizations commit to making this case transfer and a discussion of file contents a prominent part of the new Navigator's training.

Principle #4 Documentation

The following list reflects examples of documentation which may be offered to show the organizations practices in this area.

- Policy and procedure manual
- Flow charts of services processes
- Job descriptions
- Copy of service application and other forms used
- Copies of forms and letters used
- Waiting list and attendance actions
- Consumer case files with uniform contents and a checklist to ensure that appropriate information is collected on each consumer.

Principle 5 Standards and Expectations for Home Adaptation & Assistive Technology Programs

These standards describe the expectations regarding home adaptation programs. These standards provide for a consistency of program practices which will promote a standard of high quality service throughout the Commonwealth.

5.1 Program Navigator - connection between consumer and program

Navigators will be the "human face" to consumers embarking on home modification education and home modification construction. They will be trained to be professional in the conduct of their duties, and provided with ongoing professional development opportunities so that they may grow in their capacity to help consumers.

Navigators will make home visits as appropriate. Program Administrators will make staffing or other arrangements to ensure that Navigators who cannot personally visit inaccessible homes will still be able to serve their clients.

Navigators will be knowledgeable about their agency's home modification program, other programs within the Commonwealth, and local and state social and human services programs.

5.2 Coordination with other resources

Delivery organizations will educate consumers about and help them make connections to other home modification services as well as social and human services funding and organizations so that the consumer has the best possible chance of remaining in their home in the community for as long as possible. These resources may include, but are not limited to, weatherization, LIHEAP, meals services, attendant care, other Medicaid/Medicare waiver eligible services, and medical and public assistance.

5.3 Consumer Files

An individual case file will be kept on all consumers, self-pay and program funded, who receive home modification services. This file will contain, at a minimum, the name of the consumer's navigator and a record of any previous navigators; case notes describing all contact with the consumer and all associated vendors, advocates, and other individuals. In addition, information documenting consumers' eligibility for services and/or financial assistance paying for their modifications, all agreements with consumers and with vendors, records of vendor payments, dispute resolution notes and information pertaining to warranties and maintenance.

5.4 Home Evaluation

Delivery Organizations will provide consumers with a home evaluation that addresses the suitability of their home for their needs. The evaluation will review accessibility, safety, and code violations within the residence. The consumer will participate as much as possible in this evaluation process in order to ensure that any planned modifications meet the person's current and future needs, if their disability is of a progressive or degenerative nature.

The philosophy of the home evaluation is that a person's home is a private space and needs to be modified in a way that makes the consumer feel as safe and as independent as possible. Delivery organizations are not to substitute adherence to national or state accessibility guidance for consumer choice of modifications unless funder guidelines require adherence to any specific standards.

Consumers must approve in writing the construction specifications derived from the home evaluation prior to contractor bidding.

5.5 Consumer Education and Assistance regarding Home Modification Choices

Consumers need to be fully informed of the choices to be made in modifying their residence. Program administrators will provide professional guidance to consumers that may include consultations with any of the following trained people:

- a. consumers and consumer advocates who have successfully chosen modifications, and guided others through the process, and who demonstrate knowledge of the array of modifications and assistive technology devices available.
- b. housing professionals educated about the nexus between human health and limitations, and housing structures, including experienced home modification managers, builders, architects and housing rehabilitation specialists.
- c. medical professionals who are acceptable to the consumer, including occupational therapists, medical rehabilitation specialists, physicians and other medical staff who are educated about the nexus between human health and limitations, and housing structures.

5.6 Specifications and Time frames

Home evaluations will result in clear specifications which can be given to vendors for negotiation of a fair price for the home modification work. Evaluations will also specify the time frame in which the consumer needs the work to be completed and any other construction related needs the consumer may have (for example, extra dust control measures due to a respiratory condition).

5.7 Construction Management

Delivery Organizations will provide construction management services which include assessment of the work during construction, site inspections for safety and compliance with terms of the contract, dispute resolution, troubleshooting, final inspection, and processing of payment requests.

5.8 Purchasing and Bidding Policies

Delivery organizations will use purchasing and bidding policies that promote participation and retention of competent contractors and other vendors. It is expected that program leaders will make every effort to remove internal barriers to meeting this objective. Items of special concern are initial deposits to contractors, progress/flexible payments, also known as payments at agreed-upon job milestones, and a timely (within 30 days) payment following job completion. Final payment shall include a mutual agreement of the program and consumer that the work is complete.

Suggestions for vendor selection:

Delivery organizations will commit to providing home modifications in a timely manner. Timely is defined by the consumer's needs to be safely living in the community setting of his/her choosing. Programs routinely requiring three bids regardless of the impact on the consumer are unlikely to meet this objective. Therefore the following recommendation is strongly suggested as a best practice by every delivery organization in Pennsylvania offering home modifications:

1. The delivery organization will issue a call for vendors who wish to be placed on a bidders' list. For this call, the delivery organization will create a sample list of likely modifications with a range of possible specifications, and will provide information about the normal payment terms and expectations of working on the home modification program's jobs, including speed of payment after final inspection of completed work, and conditions of participation including the following:
 - a. Willingness to provide proof of insurance
 - b. Agreement not to charge for further estimates
 - c. Provide the minimum of a 12 month written guarantee on all work performed which includes the number to call for consumer complaints
 - d. Knowledge and experience with home adaptation, design or modification
 - e. Knowledge of local building codes and inspection processes.
 - f. Basic requirements such as:

In the event that a home mod involves changes to a bathroom, the contractor must leave access to a flushing commode at the end of every work day

Delivery organizations may require vendors to obtain a recognized building credential in home modifications and are encouraged to assist vendors by making referrals to such programs and holding seminars or information sessions on such credentials. It is suggested that vendors be credentialed in home modifications and that this credentialing be made easily accessible. Contractors may need an incentive to obtain such a credential which may be access to inclusion on bidding lists in large cities. Such a requirement may be burdensome in rural areas.

2. Interested vendors will supply the following documents according the request:
 - a. No less than three references which will be verified by the delivery organizations,
 - b. A proposal which specified materials costs, labor costs and time to complete each of the requested modifications.
3. The delivery organizations will assess the responses and create a vendor list including all vendors who meet expectations for quality and price for the sample modification specifications.
4. Subsequently, the vendor may elect to bid on specific jobs and the delivery organization is free to negotiate the unique terms of the work with any vendor on the designated list.
5. Delivery organizations must also maintain the flexibility to work with other vendors so that they can meet the needs of all potential consumers in their service areas.

5.9 Maintenance of Equipment and Extended Warranties

Delivery organizations are encouraged to fund maintenance or extended warranties for equipment since funding repairs is likely to be difficult for consumers. Copies of agreements and warranties must be maintained in the consumers' file.

5.10 Sensitivity expectations for vendors and contractors

Delivery organizations will commit to providing information to vendors and contractors which promotes respect for people with disabilities, and informs them about the Commonwealth's and the Home Modification program's dedication to consumer direction.

5.11 Communications

Delivery organizations will design and implement a communications plan aimed at potential consumers and consumer advocates/representatives. This plan shall consider a diverse approach to conveying information and may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Speakers Bureau
- Newspaper ads
- Public Service Announcements
- Presentations at: rehab centers, senior expos, schools, Is, Pediatric Rehab Centers, Churches, Neighborhood Revitalization Groups
- Mass mailings
- Posters: in Public Libraries,

The program shall provide reports on the following:

1. Number of applicants
2. Number who chose to participate
3. Number who declined and why
4. Number who were referred and to where
5. Satisfaction and Outcome reports
6. Results on internal and external audits

Communication plans will explain and give examples of home modifications and assistive technology and educate consumers about the supports for community living that are available to people with disabilities and who are aging.

5.12 Program cost outcome assessment

Delivery organizations will commit to annual assessments of the costs and outcomes associated with their programs and will communicate this information to their funders. It is the Commonwealth's intention to have comparable information about home modification outcomes for all federally and state funded home modification initiatives.

5.13 Program Satisfaction

Delivery organizations commit to conducting consumer satisfaction assessments with each consumer. Consumer input will be gathered upon first contact, at time of work completion, and prior to warranty expirations.

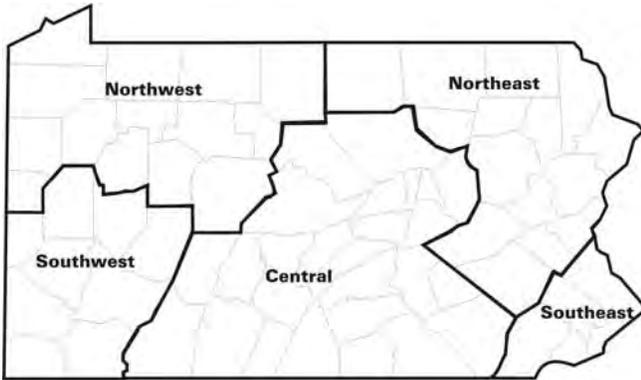
Principle #5 Documentation

The following list reflects examples of documentation which may be offered to show the organizations practices in this area.

- Resource materials regarding other services in the community
- Job descriptions
- Assessment tools and report formats
- Forms, letters and processes used to assure consumer driven choices
- Policies and Procedure Manuals
- Home modification guides, resource catalogs, videos or other materials which can inform consumer of choices/opportunities
- Notice to contractors re sensitivity expected or other materials which convey the organizations philosophy
- Consumer files which show record of choices, dissemination of materials re modifications offered , follow up visit report, suggestions regarding additional services which the consumer may wish to pursue
- Consumer satisfaction survey tools and reports
- Action plans to improve service based on feedback
- Evidence of communication activities: reports, summaries, newspaper clippings etc

Regional Offices

Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development



Southeast

Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties

Department of Community and Economic Development
Toni Crawford-Major, Director
Philadelphia State Office Building
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Northeast

Berks, Bradford, Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Wayne and Wyoming counties

Department of Community and Economic Development
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409 Lackawanna Avenue
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Central

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