



Veterans Affairs Adapted Housing

Minimum Property Requirements & Recommended Adaptations

Helping Hands Living Solutions role with the Veteran's Health Administration is that of Builder and Architect/Designer. We will utilize the resources of the VA; our research concerning the various grants and benefits; as well as our experience providing mobility and aging in place solutions. By understanding our role, we can help shorten the approval process by recommending the various Minimum Property Requirements (MPRs) and Recommended Adaptations (RAs) that have been outlined as acceptable solutions by the VA.

The Minimum Property Requirements (MPR's) we will cover are absolute conditions specified under governing law for the VA Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant. Minimum adaptive housing standards are based on federal laws like the Fair Housing Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, along with the broader principles of Universal Design. These standards ensure that homes are accessible and can be modified to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Recommended Adaptations (RAs) are suggested modifications above and beyond the MPR's. These were developed over time by VA program experts who have gained an understanding of the residential needs of Veterans.

The information included in this paper is for reference only; specific standards can vary depending on the program, state, or regulation.

The Department of Veterans Affairs offers several housing grants and programs to help eligible service members and veterans with disabilities live more independently. **Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant**
This is the most extensive VA grant, designed for veterans with severe, permanent, and total service-connected disabilities. SAH has a total benefit of \$121,812 (FY 2025), and can be used up to six times throughout a veteran's lifetime, with unused funds carrying over.

Special Home Adaptation (SHA) grant
This grant is for veterans with certain permanent and total service-connected disabilities that are less severe than those for the SAH grant. SHA has a maximum amount of \$24,405, and can be used up to 6 times.

Temporary Residence Adaptation (TRA)
The TRA grant is for veterans who are eligible for either an SAH or SHA grant but are living temporarily in a family member's home. Use of a TRA grant counts as one of the six lifetime uses of the SAH or SHA grants. The FY 2025 maximum amount eligible for SAH is \$49,062, for the SHA \$8,760

Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) Benefit
This program provides grants for medically necessary home improvements and structural alterations to overcome a disability. It has a lifetime benefit amount of up to \$6,800 for service-connected disabilities and up to \$2,000 for non-service connected disabilities.

For SAH, SHA, and TRA grants, veterans can apply by submitting VA Form 26-4555. For the HISA grant, the process requires a VA medical prescription and submission of VA Form 10-0103.



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Veterans Affairs Adapted Housing

Minimum Property Requirements & Recommended Adaptations

In order to reach final grant approval, the contract, plans, and specifications for the proposed project must demonstrate compliance with the Minimum Property Requirements and Recommended Adaptations. The Veteran will engage the services of designer/builder. The VA is not a party to the construction agreement. The VA is, however, the final approving authority and construction may not begin until final approval is complete. The VA requires the contract, scope of work, building plans, and specifications from the builder to ensure program compliance.

Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program

If your VR&E plan includes major home adaptations, the process will work as follows:

- ❑ Evaluation by VR&E counselor: Your VR&E counselor will first evaluate your needs to determine if major structural modifications are necessary to help you achieve independence at home or meet a vocational goal.
- ❑ Referral to SAH program: If major adaptations are required, your counselor will refer the adaptation part of your plan to the SAH program through a "VR&E Housing Adaptation Grant" memo.
- ❑ SAH project management: The SAH program will then assign an agent to oversee the project and ensure it meets all required construction standards, including technical drawings and local permits.
- ❑ Funding and limits: The funding for adaptations made through this VR&E-SA process is based on the SAH grant's lifetime maximum amount. To apply use VA Form 28-1900

To increase flexibility in the program requirements and focus on areas that are deemed most critical, the Veterans Health Administration has established MPR's for three main areas:

- Points of ingress and egress
- Primary bathroom
- Primary bedroom / sleeping area

Ingress and Egress Requirements

An adapted housing unit must have a minimum of two ingress and egress points. At a minimum they must:

- Provide a means of emergency exit from the primary bedroom / sleeping area
- Be located at different locations within the house

All doorways that are adapted ingress and egress routes must have a minimum width of 36 inches, and a beveled threshold with a maximum height of ½ inch. There are several types of ingress and egress that satisfy MPRs such as no-step entry, vertical platform lift (VPL), elevator, and ramp or walkway.





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Ingress / Egress No-Step Entry

A no-step entry may be used for entries with less than 4 inches of rise; a threshold or transition can be used. This will eliminate the need for a ramp with 5 foot x 5 foot platform, as well as guardrails and handrails. The no-step entry must be:

- Immobile
- Constructed of durable material other than wood
- Provide unimpeded ingress/egress
- Complement the Veteran's condition and choice of mobility device

Ingress / Egress Vertical Platform Lift (VPL)

A Vertical Platform Lift is a mechanical device that provides a straight up and down lift in areas where a ramp is not a feasible solution. The VPL must:

- Have a platform with a minimal usable size of 36 inches x 48 inches
- Be provided with continuous power via generator or battery back-up

Ingress / Egress Elevators

An elevator must have the following:

- Minimum interior dimensions of 48 inches x 48 inches
- 36 inch wide entry door opening
- Be provided with continuous power via generator or battery back-up
- Be equipped with means of communication in case of emergency

A Veterans Health Administration Builder:

- Registered with the VA to work on housing adaptation projects.
- Responsible for the physical construction and building of the home to meet the specifications in the plans.
- Must work with the veteran to ensure their needs are met, sometimes even creating their own "Recommended Adaptations" that go beyond the basic requirements



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Ingress / Egress Ramps and Walkways

Ramps and walkways should be constructed of concrete, masonry, wood, metal, or composite material and must:

- Be permanently installed
- Minimum width 42 inches (existing) 48 inches (new)
- Be constructed in a manner that prevents slipping
- Have a slope of 8% or less (for every 1 inch of rise there is 12.5 inches of run)
- Have handrails:
 - Installed at height convenient for the veteran
 - Minimum diameter of 1 ½ inches
 - Clearance of 1 ½ to 2 inches from mount
 - Smooth continuous surface
 - On both sides, with 42 inches of clearance
- Have a platform:
 - Located at any wheelchair entrance
 - Provided at every 30 feet of ramp
 - Located at turns greater than 45 degrees
 - Minimum size 5 foot x 5 foot
 - Constructed of non-slip materials
 - Have a level surface

If the slope of the ramp/walkway is less than 5%, a handrail is not required. The ramp/walkway must have a low curb/guard rail on both sides with a minimum height of 5 inches, if the ramp/walkway is more than 4 inches above grade. This requirement can be avoided by backfilling soil along a walkway to provide a transition between the walkway and adjacent soil.

Veterans can receive mobility assistance through various programs, including the VA's Automobile Allowance and Adaptive Equipment program for vehicles and adaptive equipment, the Veterans Transportation Program for medical appointments, and the VA's Assistive Technology programs.

Automobile Allowance: The VA offers a one-time, tax-exempt payment to help eligible Veterans purchase a specially equipped vehicle

Adaptive Equipment Grant: This benefit can be paid multiple times over a Veteran's life to cover the cost of adaptive equipment for a vehicle.

Veteran Transportation Service (VTS): A VA program that arranges transportation for Veterans to and from VA health care appointments.





Veterans Affairs Adapted Housing

Minimum Property Requirements & Recommended Adaptations

Primary Bathroom Requirements

- **Roll-in Shower**
 - Minimum interior dimensions of 48 inches x 48 inches
 - Minimum opening of 36 inches
 - Non-slip flooring (COF of 0.60 or greater)
 - Maximum floor slope of ¼ inch to every 12 inches
 - At least one grab bar per wall
 - A handheld shower head
 - Water thermostatic controls
- **Accessible Sink** – The adapted bathroom must be equipped with at least one roll under, wall mounted, or pedestal sink that is accessible. The width, height, and depth should be convenient for the Veteran. Any exposed pipes must be wrapped or covered to avoid accidental contact.
- **Accessible Toilet**
 - Have a 48 inch clear front transfer space or a 36 inch side transfer space
 - Have a minimum of one grab bar
- **Accessible Floor Area**
 - Must allow for one clear area of 5 foot diameter for maneuvering
 - Be non-slip in both wet and dry conditions (COF of 0.60 or greater)
- **36-inch Entry Door** – The entry door must be a minimum of 36 inches wide, does not intrude on the accessible floor area, and not obstruct maneuvering when open.

Disabilities That Qualify: Service-connected disabilities will help you qualify, but non-service-connected disabilities may also be eligible if you have a 50% or higher disability rating from the VA. Medical issues that greatly reduce mobility are many times considered compensable disabilities. Working closely with the VA and your physician will help determine if your disabilities allow access to the various Home Adaptation Grants.



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Minimum Property Requirements & Recommended Adaptations

Primary Bedroom / Sleeping Area

At a minimum an adapted housing unit must have one bedroom/sleeping area that satisfies the minimum property requirements.

Bedroom Requirements

- **Entry Doors**
 - Minimum opening of 36 inches
 - Not obstruct wheelchair maneuvering when open
- **Sufficient Space**
 - Enough size to accommodate furniture while allowing the Veteran freedom of movement
- **Flooring**
 - Must not impede wheelchair maneuverability
 - Be low pile, closely woven and padded if carpeted
- **Emergency Egress**
 - Whenever possible, the area must be equipped with an emergency egress point
 - If the egress point is proximate rather than direct, the area must have a window sufficient to allow access.

(HISA) HOME IMPROVEMENT AND STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS PROGRAM

Under the HISA program, Veterans with service-connected and non-service-connected disabilities may receive assistance for home improvement necessary for the continuation of treatment, and disability access to essential bathroom and kitchen facilities.

Applying for a HISA Grant

In order to receive a HISA grant, the Veteran must first have a prescription from a VA or fee-basis physician. This must include:

- Specific improvement items required
- The diagnosis with medical justification
- The Veteran's name, address, SSN and phone number(s)

To apply, the Veteran must first provide:

- A completed VA Form 10-0103, Veterans Application for Assistance in Acquiring Home Improvement and Structural Alterations
- If a leased or rented property, written permission from the owner
- Quotes from at least 3 contractors
- Plans and Drawings
- An itemized list of materials cost and labor costs
- All permits required
- A picture of the work site prior to construction

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Minimum Property Requirements & Recommended Adaptations

Recommended Adaptations (RAs) are suggested modifications above and beyond Minimum Property Requirements (MPRs). They are not required to obtain grant approval. RAs were developed over time by VA program experts who have gained an understanding of the residential needs of Veterans while administering VA programs. Recommended Adaptations are not considered until all MPRs are met, or VA waived.

Recommended Adaptations

Doorways and Hallways

- Ingress/Egress minimum of 36 inches wide
- Interior minimum of 32 inches wide
- Thresholds beveled and less than ½ inch
- Ingress/Egress protection from weather
- New hallways minimum 48 inches wide
- Existing hallways minimum 42 inches wide

Garages, Carports, and Passageways

- A single-car garage or carport that is at least 14 ½ feet by 24 feet
- A double-car garage or carport that is at least 24 feet by 24 feet
- The door height or an existing garage that is 7 feet (new garage 8 feet)
- Width sufficient for 5 feet of unrestricted maneuverability with ample space to park a vehicle
- If detached, you may install a connecting ramp/walkway, covered if possible

There is a need for flexibility and the exercise of judgement based on the physical capabilities and limitations of each Veteran. Equally important is the need to anticipate the Veteran's future needs. RAs should be chosen by the Veteran on an as needed basis once the MPRs have been satisfied.

The RAs Helping Hands Living Solutions present are not absolute or complete. They should be adhered to when possible as they represent adaptations that have been field tested. Although the purpose of creating RAs is to introduce flexibility in the VA Grant programs, it is important to remember that the grant funds must be used for adaptations that benefit the Veteran and will improve the Veteran's quality of life.



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Builder Certification

The builder must provide a VA builder certification that is signed and dated by a qualified individual and contains the following language: "I certify that the construction exhibits for (property address) meet all local code requirements and are in substantial conformity with VA MPRs, RAs, and all building standards as required by the Veterans Health Administration."

Recommended Adaptations

Driveways and Walkways

- Hard surface driveways constructed to not impede wheelchair, in a manner to prevent slipping, have a slope of 8% or less
- Installation of hard-surface walkways

Bathrooms

- Accessible medicine cabinet and mirror
- Accessible cabinets with pull-out shelving and/or sliding doors
- Closet with accessible shelving
- Single-lever faucets
- Grab bars and shower bench
- Comfort height toilets
- Accessible tub with transfer platform, single lever faucet, sufficient clearance

Recommended Adaptations

Bedrooms

- 5 foot clear area for maneuvering
- 4 foot clear access in front of the closet
- 4 feet between the end of the bed and the opposing wall
- Accessible closet with a minimum 36 inch opening and appropriate height shelving

Kitchens

- 5 foot clear area for maneuvering
- Roll-under work counter
- Roll-under sink with single lever faucets
- Accessible cabinets and closets with pull-out shelving and/or sliding doors
- Electrical outlets and switches that are within reach
- Accessible dishwasher
- Side-by-side refrigerator
- Roll under cooktop with front control
- Accessible built-in oven

The VHA recommends that builders use durable, maintenance free materials.

Examples include:

- Vinyl or composite siding
- Clad windows
- Composite exterior doors
- Wood composite for decks and porches





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Recommended Adaptations

Heating and Air Conditioning

- Adequate and meet building code
- Designed to meet Veteran's needs
- Accessible thermostat controls

Electrical Equipment

- Accessible wall switches and electrical outlets
- Electrical boxes with unobstructed access
- Accessible appliance and garage door controls

Security and Emergency Equipment

- Smoke and CO2 sensors to local code
- Alarm systems, security cameras
- Intercom systems
- Flood/security lights with motion sensors
- Privacy fencing
- Keyless entry
- Automatic door openers/closers
- Fire suppression system
- Storm shelter area access

Windows

- Durable, low maintenance, energy efficient
- Accessible – if using a wheelchair maximum sill height of 2 feet 9 inches
- Located for maximum visibility
- Accessible locks

Flooring Materials

- Durable, low-maintenance
- Non-slip at Ingress/Egress
- New floor covering cannot impede maneuverability
- Carpeted floor coverings should be low pile, closely woven, and padded

Laundry Room

- 5 foot clear area for maneuvering
- Front-loading washer and dryer
- Washer and dryer stands, if necessary

Special Equipment

- Elevators, Vertical Platform Lifts, Stairlifts
- Ceiling track systems
- Quality of Life adaptive equipment

Helping Hands Living Solutions Final Thoughts

As with everything we do here, this paper is our best effort to take our research and share it to the best of our ability. We encourage all Veterans to perform their own research and your feedback is always welcome.

We will continue to do what we do. Contact us and we will meet with you in your home to understand first-hand your situation. We will discuss possible solutions as well as anticipate the solutions you may need in the future.



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