

General Information about SAH Recommended Adaptations

Recommended Adaptations (RAs) are suggested modifications above and beyond the MPRs. They are not required to obtain grant approval. RAs were developed over time by SAH program experts who have gained an understanding of the residential needs of Veterans eligible for the SAH grant.

The following RAs are considered reasonably necessary in SAH cases:

- doorways,
- hallways,
- garages, carports, and passageways,
- driveways and exterior walkways,
- bathrooms,
- bedrooms,
- kitchens,
- maintenance free materials,
- heating and air conditioning,
- electrical equipment,
- security and emergency equipment,
- windows,
- flooring materials, and
- laundry room.

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

It is not a requirement that every RA be incorporated into the design of each room, or area, being adapted. Veterans have freedom of choice and may select individual features.

The specifications provided for each RA in this section are not absolute. However, they should be adhered to when possible as they represent adaptations that have been field tested. RLCs have flexibility in approving minor variations in the specifications provided in this section. A formal approval process is not required for minor variations in RAs. However, RLCs should exercise sound judgment in determining which variations are acceptable. If the variation is significant, RLCs should question whether it is appropriate to spend grant funds on the modification.

Although the purpose of creating RAs is to introduce greater flexibility to the SAH Grant program, it is important to remember that grant funds must only be used for adaptations that benefit the Veteran. VA Central Office (CO) may consider exceptions to this rule if it is determined that the proposed adaptations are necessary for the Veteran's caregiver and will improve the Veteran's quality of life. The request must be submitted by the Veteran, along with justification for the adaptation. The RLC must submit this request along with a recommendation to CO for approval.

Important: Grant funds must not be used to cure deferred maintenance.

Doorways & Hallways

To ensure freedom of movement and convenience throughout an adapted housing unit, the following doorway and hallway specifications are considered reasonable:

- New interior and exterior doorways that are a minimum of 36 inches wide
- Existing interior doorways that are a minimum of 32 inches wide
- Thresholds that are beveled with a maximum height of ½ inch
- Provide protection from inclement weather at ingress and egress points using a stoop, canopy, or overhang
- New hallways that are a minimum of 48 inches wide
- Existing hallways that are a minimum 42 inches wide

Garages, Carports & Passageways

The following garage specifications are considered reasonable:

- 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 of an existing garage that is 7 feet
- The door height of a new garage that is 8 feet
- The width of the garage should be sufficient to include:
 - 5 feet of unrestricted, wheelchair maneuverability on at least one side of the vehicle, and
 - ample space to park specially equipped vehicles and operate a device, such as a mobile lift or vehicle ramp, that provides the Veteran with access to the vehicle.

If the garage or carport is detached, it is acceptable to install a connecting ramp/walkway that adheres to the ramp/walkway specifications outlined in the MPR section of Appendix A, Section 2. If possible, it should be covered to protect the Veteran from exposure to inclement weather.

Driveways & Walkways

Hard surface driveways are considered to be a reasonable adaptation and should:

- Be constructed of a material that does not impede wheelchair maneuverability
- Be constructed in a manner that prevents slipping in wet or icy conditions (broom finish for concrete surfaces)
- Have a slope of 8 percent or less (i.e. for every 1 inch of rise there is 12 ½ inches of run or more)

In some cases, site topography will inhibit the ability to construct a driveway that meets the 8 percent slope requirement. In cases such as this, the driveway should:

- Terminate at a reasonably level parking pad of sufficient size to accommodate the Veteran's vehicle and ingress/egress from the vehicle
- Be equipped with a safety barrier, such as curb or speed hump, to prevent unintended access to the steeply sloping portion of the driveway

Installation of hard surface, non-egress walkways is also considered reasonable and the specifications outlined in Section 2 of this Appendix should be adhered to as closely as possible.

Bathrooms

Most of the bathroom adaptations are contained in Section 3. In addition, the following adaptations are deemed reasonably necessary:

- An accessible medicine cabinet placed at a convenient height
- A mirror placed at a height that provides adequate visibility
- Cabinets with pull-out shelving and/or sliding doors
- Closets with accessible shelving
- Single-lever faucets
- Additional grab bars
- Built-in or folding shower benches
- Comfort height toilets with a bidet seat or a separate bidet unit
- Accessible tubs with:
 - a transfer platform,
 - an accessible, single lever faucet that is thermostatic or pressure balance controlled to prevent sudden water temperature changes,
 - grab bars in convenient locations, and
 - sufficient clearance to allow for unobstructed access.

Bedrooms

Reasonably necessary bedroom adaptations include:

- One clear area for maneuvering with a minimum diameter of 5 feet
- A minimum 4-foot clear access area in front of the closet
- A clear space of 4 feet between the end of the bed and opposing wall
- An accessible closet with a minimum 36-inch opening and shelving installed at a height that can be reached from a seated position.

Kitchen

The kitchen layout should allow for adequate maneuvering room for the Veteran and have a turning area with a minimum 5-foot diameter. The following kitchen adaptations are considered to be reasonably necessary:

- Roll-under work counter with a width and height that is convenient
- Roll-under sink with a width and height that is convenient
- 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
- Built-in, roll-under cooktop with front control
- Built-in oven installed at a convenient height
- Free standing range with front controls.

Maintenance-Free Materials

The use of durable, maintenance-free materials is desired. Examples include:

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

Note: When a new addition is constructed, it is acceptable, within reason, to install maintenance free materials on the existing home to match the new addition.

Heating & Air Conditioning

Heating and air conditioning systems should:

- meet or exceed building code requirements;
- be adequate for healthful and comfortable living;
- be designed to meet the Veteran's needs (zoned, individual units, etc.); and
- be equipped with a thermostat or controls that are accessible by the Veteran.

Electrical Equipment

Wall switches and electrical outlets should be located in positions that are unobstructed and at heights that are convenient to the Veteran. Typically, they are located 18 inches (minimum) to 48 inches (maximum) from the floor in an adapted housing unit. Electrical utility boxes should be located so the Veteran has unobstructed access from a wheelchair. Typically, they are located near an egress point with a maximum height of 48 inches to the top breaker. Other utility controls, including appliance controls and garage door openers, should be located in positions that are unobstructed and convenient for the Veteran.

Security & Emergency Equipment

Smoke detectors should be installed according to local building code requirements. Usually, this requires that smoke detectors be installed in the main portion of each living area, on each level of the house, and at the entrance to each bedroom. Other acceptable security and emergency equipment includes:

- alarm systems,
- security cameras,
- intercom systems (excluding whole house audio systems),
- flood lights/security lights with motion sensors,
- privacy fencing,
- carbon monoxide detectors,
- keyless entry,
- automatic door openers/closers,
- fire sprinkler systems, and
- storm shelters installed to local building code requirements.

Windows

Windows should be durable, low maintenance, and energy efficient. They should also:

- be operable from a wheelchair in a seated position;

- have a maximum sill height of 2 feet 9 inches;
- be located so the Veteran has maximum visibility; and
- have locks that are operable from a wheelchair in a seated position.

Flooring Materials

It is reasonable to replace floor coverings in rooms the Veteran accesses; however, the type of floor covering used must not impede maneuverability. When possible, floor coverings should be durable and low maintenance (e.g. hardwood, ceramic tile or vinyl). Interior floor coverings at ingress and egress points should be of non-slip materials under both wet and dry conditions. Carpeted floor coverings should be low pile, closely woven, and padded with a durable fiber type.

Note: Replacing older, worn carpet that impedes wheelchair maneuverability is acceptable. but the carpet installed must be low pile, closely woven and padded with a durable fiber pad. Use of the grant is not intended to replace older, worn carpet simply for aesthetic purposes.

Laundry Room

An adapted laundry room should have:

- a clear area for maneuvering with a minimum diameter of 5 feet,
- a front loading washer and dryer, and
- washer and dryer stands, if necessary.