

Home Modification Service Delivery During COVID-19

Most older persons prefer to remain in their homes as long as possible. As more time is spent at home due to COVID-19, it is essential that the home environment support daily activities such as cooking and bathing. **Home Modification** - making changes to a home to support changing needs - can promote health, safety, and independence. Service providers' risk of exposure when delivering home modifications depends on many factors (e.g., the setting, client's health, the prevalence of COVID-19 in the community). Read on to consider what strategies and precautions could help to prioritize safety.



THREE LEVELS OF SERVICE

Initial contact should determine: a) the level of urgency and work to be done now versus in safer times; b) number of residents in the household and their needs while work takes place; and c) the physical set-up of the home in relation to logistics for addressing support and safety needs. Then, consider which of these levels of home modification service delivery may be most appropriate.

1. **No Contact/Low Tech:** Phone assessment plus photos of the home areas to be addressed; durable medical equipment mail delivery; telephone follow-up
2. **Minimal Contact:** Phone or video assessment of home areas and client performing related activities; minor modifications made during one visit; telephone follow-up
3. **Full Contact:** Phone or video assessment of home areas and client performing related activities; major modifications made during multiple visits; follow-up visit one month later to assess use

NOTE: Consider using a consent form related to media sharing

To minimize risk, consider the following general safety guidelines:

- Avoid touching your face, including eyes, nose, and mouth, until after you have thoroughly washed your hands upon completing work and/or removing Personal Protective Equipment.
- Wash your hands with soap and water when entering and leaving the home; when adjusting or putting on or off facemasks or cloth face covering; and before putting on and after taking off disposable gloves, if soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Monitor yourself for symptoms. Do not go to work or care for others if you develop symptoms.
- Review the Administration for Community Living COVID-19 [website](#) regularly for information as well COVID-19 guidelines of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

SAFETY ON THE JOB AND IN THE HOME

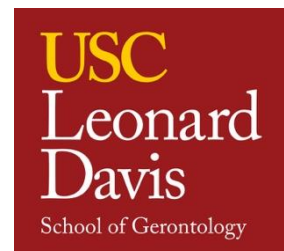
- **PRIOR TO VISIT:** Explain your COVID – 19 protocols thoroughly to the resident and describe the entire process. Discuss mutual expectations to increase trust and to ensure safety and comfort during the work.
- **GREETING:** Use alternatives to shaking hands upon entry.
- **PAYMENT:** Encourage electronic payment over handling credit cards or cash.
- **FACE COVERINGS:** Wear a cloth face covering when in the home. Encourage your client to do the same. Note: this may be difficult for people with sensory, cognitive, or behavioral issues. In these cases, it may be better for the person to leave the home during the work.
- **DISTANCE:** When possible, keep at least 6 feet of distance between yourself and others in the home. Household members should stay in another room during installation or be separated from you as much as possible.
- **GLOVES:** Wear disposable gloves when on the job, especially when touching the client (e.g., dressing, bathing, transferring, toileting, feeding) or handling household items. Safely dispose of gloves after use.
- **BARRIERS:** Use doors and walls as barriers to separate yourself from individuals under self-quarantine or who are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Use plastic sheeting when in specific areas of a home for an extended period.
- **AIR FLOW:** Ensure that shared spaces in the home have good air flow, such as by an air conditioner or opened windows, weather permitting.
- **CLOTHING:** Launder work clothes after each use with the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- **CLEAN AND DISINFECT:** 1) frequently touched objects and surfaces (e.g., counters, tabletops, doorknobs, phones, keyboards); 2) equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, canes, oxygen tanks and tubing, other assistive devices); and 3) frequently used tools and equipment on a regular basis. Avoid sharing tools with co-workers.

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Resources: The Fall Prevention Center of Excellence at the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology offers resources on how to make homes safe and where to find services, programs, and funding support in your area.

Visit: homemods.org



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