Evaluating the Home Environment

Southern Maine Agency on Aging can provide you with information about resources for home safety assessments, help with paying for modifications, in-home assistance, and family caregiving. Contact a Resource Specialist or Family Caregiver Specialist at 1-800-427-7411 or send an email through the SMAA website (www.smaaa.org).

Use this worksheet to review safety in the home. Based on your responses, you may need to address hazards or inconveniences to improve safety and comfort. Not all items apply to all situations. It may be necessary to find a balance between optimal safety and the wishes of the person whose home is being assessed.

**Entryways, Hallways, Stairs**

- Are access doors typically locked? [ ] [ ]
- Is it necessary to climb stairs to gain entry to the home? [ ] [ ]
- Are entry doors easy to open and close? [ ] [ ]
- Are locks and door handles easy to manipulate? [ ] [ ]
- Can you view and/or speak to visitors without opening the door? [ ] [ ]
- Are entryways well lighted? [ ] [ ]
- Are light switches in hallways easy to locate and reach? [ ] [ ]
- Are hallway stairs and / or carpets in good condition? [ ] [ ]
- Are there thresholds in doorways that might cause tripping? [ ] [ ]
- Can screen doors, patio doors and balcony doors be locked? [ ] [ ]
- Are entryways and hallways free of clutter and obstacles? [ ] [ ]
- Do all steps and stairways have handrails? [ ] [ ]

**MODIFICATIONS:** Add non-slip rugs or rug pads; widen doorways; add access ramps; add hallway and stairway handrails; eliminate door thresholds; install accessible door knobs; add door or window locks for security; eliminate need for stairs (if possible); repair walkways or flooring

**Living Room, Dining Room, and Family Rooms**

- Does the arrangement of furniture allow for walkers or wheelchairs? [ ] [ ]
- Are there slippery floors or loose rugs that might cause tripping? [ ] [ ]
- Is the furniture sturdy? [ ] [ ]
- Can the phone be easily reached? [ ] [ ]
- Does the person carry a cell phone? [ ] [ ]
- Is there sufficient lighting? [ ] [ ]
- Might shadowy lighting or patterned carpeting cause tripping? [ ] [ ]

**MODIFICATIONS:** Adapt furniture or get easier-to-access furniture; add non-slip rugs or rug pads; add or change lighting; add phones/ get a cell phone; hire outside help for housekeeping

**Bedrooms**

- Are rugs and floor coverings secured? [ ] [ ]
- Are beds the right height for the person? [ ] [ ]
- Can the first floor accommodate a bedroom to avoid use of stairs? [ ] [ ]
- Are there night lights positioned between the bedroom and bathroom? [ ] [ ]
- Is there a phone (or cell phone) available in the bedroom? [ ] [ ]

**MODIFICATIONS**: add non-slip rugs or rug pads; add/ change lighting; modify furniture; add phones / get a cell phone; hire outside help for housekeeping

**Bathrooms**
- Is there a full bathroom that is accessible without climbing stairs? [ ] [ ]
- Are water faucets in sink and tub / shower easy to use? [ ] [ ]
- Is bathroom floor slippery when wet? [ ] [ ]
- Are there secure grab rails near the toilet, tub and shower? [ ] [ ]
- Is the person able to stand in the shower safely? [ ] [ ]
- If not, is there a shower seat available? [ ] [ ]
- Is the hot water heater set at less than 105 degrees so it won’t scald? [ ] [ ]
- Are grab bars or other safe supports available where needed? [ ] [ ]
- Can toilet paper be reached without twisting or turning? [ ] [ ]

**MODIFICATIONS**: Get a shower seat; get a hand-held shower; add bathtub/ toilet grab bars; add raised toilet seat (s) or handrails; add non-slip rugs or rug pads; secure towel and shower rods; lower the water temperature setting; change the location of the toilet paper holder; hire outside help for housekeeping

**Kitchen and Laundry**
- Are work surfaces easily reached? [ ] [ ]
- Is the floor surface smooth and free from obstacles? [ ] [ ]
- Is the floor slippery when wet? [ ] [ ]
- Is there work space where a person can sit down if needed? [ ] [ ]
- Are laundry facilities easily and safely accessible? [ ] [ ]
- Is storage arranged so there is no need to stoop, reach or use a ladder? [ ] [ ]
- Are electrical outlets grounded to avoid shocks and fire hazards? [ ] [ ]

**MODIFICATIONS**: Rearrange storage areas; switch to unbreakable dishes; change or modify cooking appliances; lower water temperature setting; change outside help for housekeeping, laundry and meal preparation

**Outdoors**
- Are sidewalks even and well drained? [ ] [ ]
- Are walkways to and from the garage, driveway or street well lighted? [ ] [ ]
- Do all steps have rails? [ ] [ ]
- Does the landscaping create blind spots or hazards? [ ] [ ]

**MODIFICATIONS**: repair sidewalks and walkways; add/ change lighting; add stairway handrails; trim hedges or plantings; hire outside help for yard work, home repairs and snow removal
Other

- Are there working smoke detectors in every room and hallway? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Is there a working carbon monoxide detector in the house? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Are emergency numbers easily available? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Can the thermostat be controlled easily and effectively? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Do windows open and close easily? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Are windows easily locked? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Are heating and cooling systems easy to use? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Are medications clearly labeled? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Can the person manage their medications safely? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- If not, is someone helping to manage medications? [ ] Yes [ ] No

MODIFICATIONS: Install smoke detectors; install a carbon monoxide detector; get and use an emergency response system; add phone / get a cell phone; simplify or get help with managing medications; install an automatic thermostat; find transportation and bill-paying alternatives

Other ideas:________________________________________________________________

Considerations for People with Memory Concerns

- Can access doors be secured from the inside to prevent wandering? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Does the arrangement of furniture allow for free movement? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Are there safety knobs and a shut-off switch on the stove? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Do appliances (i.e. coffee maker) have automatic shut-off features? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Are medications accessible to the person with memory concerns? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Are over-the-counter products (i.e. cough syrup) accessible? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Is alcohol accessible? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Are cleaning products and dangerous chemicals accessible? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Are poisonous plants accessible? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Are guns, knives and other weapons accessible? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Are gasoline cans/ other dangerous items in the garage accessible? [ ] Yes [ ] No

MODIFICATIONS: Install inside locks or alarms on access doors; remove or move furniture to allow free movement; add safety knobs/ shut-off features to appliances; lock up or remove medications, over-the-counter products, alcohol, cleaning products, poisonous plants, guns and other weapons, and gasoline cans/ other dangerous items in the garage or workshop; put signs (“Don’t Touch- Very Hot!”) near the stove and toaster oven

Other Considerations

If more help or easier access is needed, is the person willing to renovate, relocate or have someone move in? [ ] Yes [ ] No

If Yes, what alternative arrangements have been discussed?

[ ] Modify current home [ ] Live with adult children
[ ] Move to a more accessible home [ ] Live with another family member
[ ] Move to a more congregate setting [ ] Move to an assisted living facility
[ ] Other __________________________ [ ] Move to a nursing home
Is a new living arrangement financially feasible? [ ] Yes [ ] No
Will the person be able to contribute to the cost of his or her care? [ ] Yes [ ] No
If Yes, how much? $__________________
Will other people contribute to the cost of a new living arrangement? [ ] Yes [ ] No
If so, how much will be contributed? $__________________
Whose idea is it to relocate? [ ] Older Adult [ ] Adult Children [ ] Other

Updated 7-23-14