



Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP)

Information for Providers about Home Modifications and Household Adaptive Appliances

Overview

This Factsheet outlines how veterans (and other entitled members of the veteran community) may obtain home modifications and household adaptive appliances if they have a clinical need.

What are home modifications?

The definition of home modifications is “partial changes to an existing dwelling that enables the entitled person to achieve an appropriate level of independence and safety”. If an entitled person has a clinical need DVA will pay for home modifications to assist them to live safely within their own home. An example of a home modification is the replacement of a bath with a hobless shower to allow safe, independent showering.

What is the Objective of the Home Modifications Program?

The objective of RAP home modifications is to enable the entitled person to remain in their home with:

- enhanced independence and safety;
- reduced dependency on carer(s);
- reduced likelihood of having to move residence and consequent dislocation from family, friends and community; and
- reduce the risk of falls.

What are household adaptive appliances?

Household adaptive appliances are items used to assist people who have difficulty with everyday tasks, for example turning a key in a lock or opening a jar. The RAP National Schedule of Equipment (<http://www.dva.gov.au/health/rap/rap.htm>) lists all such available items.

Who is eligible?

Veterans with a Gold Repatriation Health Card for All Conditions may be able to obtain equipment or home modifications where there is a clinical need.

Veterans with a White Repatriation Health Card for Specific Conditions may be able to obtain equipment or home modifications, where there is a clinical need, for a disability that has been accepted by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) as being war or service-caused.

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Note: items or home modifications where clinically required because of an accepted disability.

Home modifications are not provided to residents in residential aged care facilities, independent living units or retirement villages.

How do veterans get access to this service?

Where home modifications are required, the veteran's Local Medical Officer (LMO) and other GPs should refer them to an occupational therapist who will:

- assess their clinical need(s);
- provide information on available alternatives;
- seek prior financial authorisation from DVA if home modifications are required; and
- make recommendations to DVA in respect of the most appropriate modifications that meet the veteran's identified clinical need(s).

DVA will advise the veteran if the recommended modifications meet our guidelines and whether financial responsibility has been accepted.

What standards do modifications need to meet?

Any home modification should meet:

- Relevant state/local government regulations; and
- Applicable Australian standards for home modifications.

What else needs to be considered?

The condition of a veteran's home is also considered (ie must be structurally sound and suitable as living accommodation).

The veteran's prognosis is also taken into account. Home modifications may be disruptive and take considerable time to arrange and install.

What types of modifications are available?

A variety of modifications are available, all of which address safety and access issues, eg:

- internal and/or external rails;
- a ramp to enter the home; and
- the replacement of a bath with a hobless shower.

Note: DVA will not pay for the installation of basic utilities to homes (e.g. water, sewerage, lighting and heating) nor non-essential items such as additional toilets and spa baths.

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Are alternative options considered by DVA?

Alternative options are always explored before DVA pays for modifications. For example, a problem may be solved by:

- increased community support
- use of simpler options
- relocating to a different living or bedroom within the house
- provision of special equipment or safety education.

Will DVA fund the renovation of a veteran's home?

No. DVA will not fund the renovation of a veteran's home.

Can a veteran have modifications provided to more than one residence?

No. Home modifications are provided for one residence *only*.

If DVA has paid for modifications to a veteran's existing home and they choose to move to a less suitable home, the veteran and/or the owner of the new home will have to pay for any modifications.

Does a veteran have to own their own home to obtain modifications?

No. It is not necessary for a veteran to own their home but the owner of the home must confirm that the veteran will be a resident on a long-term basis. The owner must also agree in writing to the modifications, and that DVA will not restore the property to its former state once the modifications are no longer required.

Who can do the modifications?

DVA will only pay for home modifications done by licensed builders.

Will DVA pay for repairs and maintenance?

No. DVA will not pay for repairs and/or maintenance. DVA regards these as the responsibility of the home owner.

When will DVA *not* pay for home modifications?

DVA will not pay for home modifications if a veteran:

- has no clinical need
- was aware, at the time of moving into a house, of a condition that could make access to their home difficult in the future
- is in the process of, or has had, a compensation or insurance settlement in relation to the condition requiring the modification.

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Are there any Guidelines for Home Modifications?

Yes. Guidelines contain eligibility criteria and the direct order forms (<http://www.dva.gov.au/clientforms/default.htm>) explaining the assessment process. Click on the following link to access the guidelines for home modifications in the RAP National Guidelines (<http://www.dva.gov.au/health/rap/rap.htm>).

Other Factsheets

Other Factsheets related to this topic include:

- *Rehabilitation Appliances Program: HIP 72*
- *Veterans' Home Maintenance Helpline: HAC 03*
- *HomeFront: HAC 04*

More information

All DVA Factsheets are available on request from DVA offices, and on the DVA web site at www.dva.gov.au.

You can phone DVA for the cost of a local call on 133 254 or 1800 555 254 for country callers.

Use a normal landline phone if you can. Mobile phone calls may cost you more.

You can send an email to DVA at: generalenquiries@dva.gov.au

You can get more help from any DVA office