



Assistive Technology, Environmental Modification, and Vehicle Modification

What is Environmental Modification (E-MOD OPWDD's Definition)

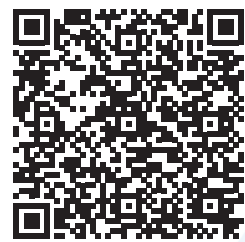
Physical adaptations to the individual's home that are necessary to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of the individual or that enable the individual to function with greater independence in the home without which institutionalization and /or a more restrictive and expensive living arrangement would be required.

Eligibility

- People who reside in a non-certified home may request OPWDD approval for modifications to the: home (E-MODs), or vehicles (V-MODs), or durable medical devices (Assistive Tech)
- The NYS Developmental Disabilities Regional Field Office (DDRFO) determines whether a person has qualifying diagnoses for HCBS 1915(c) waiver eligibility
- Requesting approval includes multiple steps that will lead to a **Notice of Decision (NOD)** from OPWDD.
- Any modification must be linked to the diagnosis which allows for Medicaid Waiver eligibility: intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, neurological impairment, familial dysautonomia, Prader-Willi syndrome, or autism.

*For the most current and official program guidance, please visit the **NYS OPWDD** website.*

The administrative memorandum from 2021 is available here:



Before Step 1, have a conversation that includes the person served and the care manager.

This conversation will explore barriers to accessibility and necessary improvements. Caregivers (friends, family, staff, etc.) can also contribute meaningful insights to this conversation if the person seeking modifications agrees. The Life Plan will provide detailed insights into the barriers that need to be addressed through modifications. For example, the Life Plan might state: "The door is so narrow that I cannot move from the living room to the bathroom without pinching my fingers."

The person and care manager together identify unmet need(s) that may require AT or E-Mod as part of the person-centered planning process.



STEP 1: Application

*The care manager submits the application to OPWDD.
During the application process, the care manager:*

- Refers the person for appropriate clinical assessment: occupational and physical therapists for mobility and accessibility assessments or behavioral intervention specialist for safe environment assessment
- Explores all other alternative funding options before submitting the application and records all correspondence related to funding options. (E-Mod is a funding source of last resort.)
- Completes the Funding Source Verification Form and supporting documentation.
- Ensures Section 1 of the Life Plan includes justification for specific items noted in the clinical justification.
- Forwards the request and supporting documentation to the DDRFO for review.

The DDRFO issues a Step 1 conceptual approval letter if the initial request is likely fundable.

STEP 2: Architect Specifications & Scope of Work

- The care manager refers the project to a waiver provider that offers project management services.
- The project manager will develop a written scope of work based on the clinical justification and consult an architect to create specifications if needed.
- The project manager submits the scope of work and architect specifications to the DDRFO for further review.

The DDRFO issues a Step 2 conceptual approval letter to proceed to Step 3.

After Work is Completed: Maintenance, Warranty of Work, etc.

- This funding is a one-time investment and does not provide for future costs, maintenance, or repairs.
- The recipient and caregivers must maintain the upkeep of the equipment or modification. In some circumstances, the care manager may pursue funding to repair broken equipment (e.g., a ceiling track motor or worn-out platform lift).
- If a previously completed modification no longer meets the Person's needs, the care manager can initiate a new application process. Based on the merits of the request, OPWDD may fund additional modifications.
- The owner must privately fund work that is a preexisting code violation that would otherwise prevent a building permit from being closed (e.g., smoke and carbon monoxide detectors)

STEP 3: Bid Procurement

- The Homeowner or Landlord must agree to the scope of work and modifications to the property. They can usually do this by signing a form letter.
- An E-Mod cannot address preexisting code violations or structural deficiencies in the home. Common code violations are insufficient smoke and Carbon Monoxide detectors.
- The project manager oversees a bid procurement process. Contractors may want to see the area for proposed modifications before giving a quote for the work.
- After enough bids have been received, the project manager forwards the funding request packet to the DDRFO for review.

The DDRFO issues a written NOD to approve or deny the request.

STEP 4: Contracts, Funding, & Construction

- The project manager notifies the vendor to confirm the ability to accept the work and to schedule a preconstruction meeting.
- During the preconstruction meeting, be sure to talk about timelines, permits, responsibilities, and expectations of the work to be completed for the project.
- The awarded vendor completes the agreed-upon scope of work.



Self-Direction Services

If OPWDD rejects E-Mod, V-Mod, or AT funding, talk with your broker and fiscal intermediary about Self-Direction Services. This may be a funding option.

Self-Direction Services may cover funding for maintenance for equipment funded through E-Mod. For example, a wheelchair lift installer may offer a maintenance contract. The broker or fiscal intermediary may be able to add this annual fee to the Self-Direction budget. Regular maintenance helps extend the life of equipment and reduces emergency repair calls and service. This is an important factor to increase independence and safety for people using accessibility modifications.

Thank you to People Inc. for providing information on the process of getting an E-Mod.

*Click This Link for Access to
the Latest Information about EMODS*

www.people-inc.org/emods

