



Western Reserve

Area Agency on Aging

Safe and Affordable Housing for Older Adults and Individuals Living with Disabilities

Affordable and accessible housing is not just a matter of convenience; it is the cornerstone of a fair and inclusive society. For older adults and individuals living with disabilities, the significance of such housing options cannot be overstated.

Affordable housing ensures that individuals and families can secure shelter without compromising other basic needs. For older adults on fixed incomes or individuals living with disabilities facing additional healthcare costs, the financial burden of housing can be overwhelming. Affordable housing options alleviate this stress, allowing individuals to allocate resources to healthcare, nutrition, and other essentials. Without affordable housing, these individuals may face the risk of homelessness or inadequate living conditions, exacerbating their health challenges and diminishing their overall quality of life.

In addition to affordable housing, **accessible** housing is paramount for older adults and those living with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in their communities. Improving accessibility in someone's home can mean making changes—big or small—to make the home safer. Simple modifications such as wheelchair ramps, grab bars in bathrooms, wider doorways, and lever-style door handles can make a world of difference in ensuring that individuals with mobility impairments can move safely within their homes. Accessible housing not only enhances physical mobility but also fosters a sense of dignity and autonomy, empowering individuals to maintain their independence and remain engaged in their communities.

Beyond the immediate benefits to individuals, affordable and accessible housing also has broader societal advantages. By enabling older adults and people with disabilities to live independently, these housing options reduce reliance on costly institutional care (nursing homes, assisted living, etc.), lowering healthcare expenditures and costs to individuals and families. Additionally, when individuals can age in place or live in integrated communities, it fosters social cohesion and combats social isolation—an issue that has gained notice since the COVID-19 pandemic. In inclusive neighborhoods, where people of all ages and abilities reside side-by-side, friendships are formed, support networks are strengthened, and stereotypes are challenged, leading to a more cohesive and compassionate society.

The Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging (WRAAA) recognizes the housing challenges consumers in our counties face. WRAAA's Aging and Disability Resource Center can point consumers in the right direction when it comes to questions about housing, providing information for various affordable housing choices and emergency home repair programs. And, this past year, WRAAA received grant funding to support two innovative programs, *WRAAA Nails It* and *WRAAA Works!*, that provide ADA-accessible features ranging from grab bars to ADA-compliant toilets and showers. These home improvement projects may seem small, but the impact they make often significantly improves the safety and independence of the recipients. If you or someone you know would benefit from one of these programs, visit our website, areaagingsolutions.org or call 800-626-7277.

Advocacy. Assistance. Answers on Aging and Disabilities.