

HIRING HOME ASSESSMENT AND CONSTRUCTION PROFESSIONALS

Assessment/Design

- ✓ Households comfortable with handling their own research and making all the decisions on which features and products to include in a project can:
 - ✓ Start by reviewing the resources and referrals on this website highlighting the basics of accessible, universal and visitable design; and web-based resources with information on key products and their manufacturers.
- ✓ For households that want to hire one or more professionals to provide advice and totally or partially guide the design process:
 - ✓ Occupational therapists, physical therapists and interior designers in particular are becoming specialists in providing home accessible/universal design assessments. First check with family, friends, co-workers or neighbors who've done similar project to find out if they can identify a person with whom they've successfully worked.
 - ✓ Also, go to [Twin Cities Accessibility Resource Network](#) listing found in this section of the website for assessment professionals based in the metro area.
 - ✓ Households in Greater Minnesota can contact these metro Twin Cities professionals to see if they'll provide assessment services in your part the state. Also check with local organizations in your area for referral leads, such as:
 - ✓ Regional or state chapters of trade associations for the three professions
 - ✓ Area hospital and nursing home discharge planners
 - ✓ A Center for Independent Living covering your region of the state
 - ✓ An area housing and redevelopment authority
 - ✓ Ask the assessment professionals you're considering hiring about their training and experience in the field. Some may have certifications from professional trade associations. Ask for specific information about the training's scope and length, and if they can provide referrals to other clients they've served. If an assessment professional teams up with a particular contractor, the next section contains recommendations about what kind of information to also gather on the contractor.

Construction

- ✓ Shop very carefully when hiring a contractor – home construction and remodeling are challenging enough to begin with, but require even greater attention when specialized, targeted features for disability/aging in place are involved.
- ✓ The goal is to find an individual or company with a track record of not only quality and creativity, but willingness to listen and learn about your household. The person or firm you choose additionally has to be flexible, because properly installing features may require revising original plans....more than once...
- ✓ Make sure the contractors you consider are licensed and bonded/insured. Contact the local Better Business Bureau to find out if there are any complaints on file against them.
- ✓ Ask family, friends, co-workers or neighbors for referrals to individuals or firms they've successfully worked with in the past.
- ✓ Check out exactly what's meant if a contractor says he/she has done "accessibility jobs" in the past and is familiar with "what's needed." Experience on public/ commercial projects doesn't necessarily transfer into an understanding of what's best for a unique person, household and home. Even when a contractor has done other home projects involving accessible/universal design, remember that what worked for previous clients may not fit your household's/ disabled member's situation and needs.
- ✓ Similarly, contractors may advertise that they're qualified to work on projects because they have a professional or trade association certification. Ask for very specific information about this training's content and length - some are only for a couple or a few days, and devote little time to vital design, products and disability issues.
- ✓ Unless you are really familiar with and comfortable in using a particular person or firm, interview more than one contractor. It's strongly recommended that you ask all the final candidates to prepare a written contract and bid, following the guidelines recommended in [Construction/Remodeling Contract Checklist](#) found in this section of the website.