

Environmental Modifications

Definition: Environmental Modifications are internal and external physical adaptations to the home necessary to ensure the health, welfare and safety of the participant. These modifications enable the participant to function with greater independence and prevent institutionalization. Environmental modifications are not intended to provide financial assistance for any phase of new home construction or major home renovation projects. Resources are not available to provide luxurious bathrooms, elaborate decorative materials and fixtures or access to all areas of the home. Environmental Modifications will not be approved solely to meet the needs or convenience of caregivers or other occupants of the home. Modifications to publicly-funded group homes or other residential facilities are not permitted. Excluded from Environmental Modifications are repairs or improvements to the home which are of general utility such as maintenance of foundation, roof, siding repairs/replacement, gutter work, window repair/replacement, electrical, plumbing, heating/cooling systems, repair of water, termite, or other types of damage, provision of flooring/carpeting throughout a home, interior/exterior painting, and landscaping.

All services shall be provided in accordance with applicable State or local building codes. Environmental Modifications cannot be funded through SFCS at facilities that are owned or leased by Service Providers. Approval of a request for environmental modification is a multi-step process. The modification is initially determined by the Case Manager based on the participant's need as documented in the Support Plan. According to State procurement policy, bids for the modification are obtained. This information is reviewed by the DDSN Administration Division for programmatic integrity and cost effectiveness. The CM will assist in identifying all appropriate resources.

Examples of Environmental Modifications: The following are examples of possible adaptations that may be done as a part of Environmental Modifications (this list is not all inclusive):

- Installation of a ramp to facilitate safe and easy entry to and exit from the home. One ramp at one entrance to the home will be funded. SFCS will not fund multiple ramps at the same residence. Concrete ramps can only be approved if there is not a more cost-effective solution.
- Installation of grab-bars.
- Installation of a porch lift to facilitate safe and easy entry to and exit from the home (in certain situations a porch lift can be more feasible and cost effective than extensive ramping).
- Widening of doorways to allow functional entry to the home, bathroom, bedrooms, etc.
- Flooring modifications to facilitate easier propelling of a manual wheelchair (e.g. carpet is replaced with vinyl floor covering)
- Modification of bathroom facilities to provide a more accessible means of maintaining personal hygiene and better independence and safety in bathing and grooming (e.g. wider bathroom door with lever hardware, a roll-in shower with customized grab-bars, roll-under sink, etc.)
- Installation of specialized electrical and plumbing systems necessary to accommodate the medical equipment and supplies for the welfare of the participant.

Examples of Modifications that are not allowed:

- Elevators installed or integrated into the residential structure are not a cost-effective solution
- Major kitchen modifications/renovations; low-cost solutions such as reachers, adapted appliance switch handles, adapted cutting/eating utensils, and easily modifiable aids and devices can be requested through Assistive Technology
- Covered ramps
- Coverings for ramp landings
- Garages, carports, and coverings for spaces in a yard or driveway where participant uses lift-equipped vans and other vehicles routinely park
- Comprehensive modifications to an entire home (or every room throughout the home).

- Exercise equipment
- Spas, hot tubs, whirlpools, Jacuzzis, pools (and similar products)
- Decks or stairs
- Driveways or portions of driveways
- Washer/dryer connections
- Financial assistance with any phase of new home construction, major renovation and/or home addition projects

Providers:

Environmental Modification – Consultations can be provided by licensed Occupational or Physical Therapists, Rehabilitation Engineering Technologists, Assistive Technology Practitioners and Assistive Technology Suppliers certified by the Rehabilitation Engineering Society of North American (RESNA), Medicaid enrolled Environmental Access/Consultants/contractors certified by Professional Resource in Management (PRIME).

Environmental Modifications are provided by contractors licensed in the state of SC. It is the responsibility of the Case Manager to ensure contractors are licensed. Documentation of licensure must be obtained and maintained in the participant's file.

Arranging for the Service:

When modifications are thought to be needed but before proceeding with bid requests, the *Environmental Modifications Fact Sheet for Those Who Live in Privately Owned or Rented Homes* must be given to the participant and/or representative and signature acknowledging receipt obtained used the *State Funded Community Supports (EM 1)*.

Once the participant's specific need has been identified and documented in the Plan and it is determined that Environmental Modification is the appropriate service to meet the need, the scope of the work/specifications must be determined. This should be done in consultation with the participant / representative and home owner and should define the expected modification as clearly as possible. There are two ways to accomplish this task:

1. You can define the expected modifications by meeting with the participant/representative/home owner in the home, reviewing the modifications that are needed, and developing some parameters in writing to provide to the contractors submitting bids. This is a crucial step to ensure that all requested contractor bids are based on similar expectations (e.g. for someone who cannot access their bathroom, the contractor would need to take into account the dimensions of the participant's wheelchair).

OR

2. The expected modifications can also be defined by obtaining an Environmental Modification Consultation by using part of the annual cost limit. An Environmental Modification Consultation is highly recommended when multiple modifications are needed and the participant / representative / homeowner is unsure how to proceed or unable to clearly articulate the specifications. (The cost for the consultation will count against the annual cost limit)

The written specifications must be provided to DDSN-SURB when the Authorization / Request for Environmental Modifications form is completed.

Arranging for the Service:

If the project specifications will be determined using a professional, Environmental Modifications - Consultation should be secured by offering the participant / representative s choice of providers and issuing the ***SFCS Authorization – Environmental Modification (DDSN billed)*** form which instructs the provider to bill the DDSN for services provided. The cost of a consultation will vary but would not be expected to exceed \$600.00 per consultation. See billing procedures in SFCS manual for more information.

When Environmental Modifications – Installation is needed, the ***Authorization – Environmental Modification (DDSN billed)*** form should be used. The specifications for the project must be noted. If a consultation has been secured, the specification from the consultant should be attached. The MAXIMUM amount allowed for the Environmental Modification must be included. The Case Manager and the participant / representative will secure bids if needed.

The maximum amount allowed for the modification must be added to the State Funded Community Supports Budget Calculator. Under no circumstances may the annual cost limit of the State Funded Community Supports be exceeded.

The **Environmental Modification Project Agreement (EM 2)** must be provided to the home owner and signature agreeing to its terms obtained.

Please note: If the participant/representative or home owner desires Environmental Modifications above the SFCS maximum amount allowed, they can **privately** contract with and pay the same professional/contractor who is completing the SFCS project. Any additional work funded by the family or other outside resources cannot be a part of the Authorization/Request for Environmental Modifications. It must be a separate contract between the family and their chosen provider.

The need for the service must be documented in the Support Plan and the plan must be approved by DDSN before services can be authorized. The cost of services must be added to the ***State Funded Community Supports Budget Calculator***. Under no circumstances may the annual cost limit of the State Funded Community Supports be exceeded.

The SFCS Authorization Environmental Modification/Consultation (DDSN billed) must be used to authorize the service. The authorization instructs the provider to bill DDSN for services rendered. See billing procedures in the SFCS Manual, section 7 for additional information. The authorization will remain in effect until a new authorization is issued or a ***Notice of Reduction or Termination Form (SFCS Form 4)*** is issued.

Monitoring: The plan, which includes Environmental Modifications, should be monitored in accordance with DDSN Case Management Standards.

Reduction or Termination of Services: When the Environmental Modification service is being reduced or terminated the **Notice of Reduction or Termination (SFCS Form 4)** must be used to notify the participant/representative, the provider and DDSN-SURB.

South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
State Funded Community Supports
Environmental Modifications
Fact Sheet for Those Who Live in Privately Owned or Rented Homes

- Environmental modifications for people served through the SCDDSN’s State Funded Community Supports program are available when there is an assessed need and when the cost of the modification and other services do not exceed the State Fiscal Year cost limit of the State Funded Community Supports program.
- SCDDSN’s policy entitled “Procurement Requirements for Local DSN Boards and Contacted Service Providers” [250-08-DD] must be followed.
- To be eligible for modifications, a privately owned or rented house or apartment must be sanitary, safe, adequately maintained, and architecturally feasible for cost-effective modification methods.
- Routine home maintenance such as cleaning, painting, roof repair/replacement, gutter clearing, pest control, plumbing repairs, water damage repairs, floor repairs, appliance repairs, and yard work are not provided as environmental modifications. These issues are the responsibility of the homeowner or landlord/tenant.
- Modifications are provided only to improve the participant’s safety and functional independence in his/her home. Requests will only be considered for essential modifications, such as an entrance/exit ramp, widening of selected exterior/interior doorways, flooring to facilitate wheelchair movement, alterations to make a bathroom accessible, etc. Environmental modifications may also include consultation and assessment to determine the specific needs and follow-up inspections upon completion of the project.
- Home additions (addition of square footage) are not allowed.
- Should modifications to a bathroom be required, due to significant differences in the framework and flooring support structures used in mobile homes and manufactured housing, conventional ceramic tile showers/floors cannot be provided. The most appropriate and cost-effective solution is a prefabricated accessible shower unit.
- Upgraded and expensive materials and fixtures, such as decorative marble or tile flooring/walls, brass faucets, wallpaper, etc. are not permitted.
- When modifications are not feasible because of architectural, sanitary, or other basic habitability considerations, alternatives such as assistance in securing accessible public housing or another rental dwelling may be offered. After relocating, if there remains a need for modifications, three new written bids must be obtained.
- All (participant, family, others) who live in the home or would otherwise be affected by the completed modification must be in full agreement on what work will be done before the request can be approved. Therefore, the participant (or his/her representative) and other homeowner/landlord must sign an agreement about the modifications before modifications will begin.
- Environmental modifications must be completed by a licensed contractor and comply with all local building ordinances. Three or more written bids must be obtained and the lowest used.
- If unforeseen structural problems or damage are discovered after a modification project has started that resulted from preexisting maintenance neglect, plumbing leaks, improper drainage, or termites, it will be the responsibility of the homeowner/landlord to correct the structural problems or damage before the modifications will continue.
- If any of the outlined specifications cannot be met due to architectural designs, you must notify the Case Manager immediately.

SC DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS
STATE FUNDED COMMUNITY SUPPORTS
ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATIONS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Participant's Name: _____

DOB: _____

The SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, State Funded Community Supports, "Environmental Modifications Fact Sheet for Those Who Live in Privately Owned or Rented Homes" document has been provided to me as the State Funded Community Supports program participant or his/her representative. I have been offered the opportunity to ask questions about the information provided and know that I may contact the Case Management Agency should I have any additional questions.

Signature of Participant or Representative

Date

Printed name of signatory

Relationship to Participant

Signature of Witness

Date

Environmental Modifications Project Agreement

Participant's Name: _____ **DOB:** _____

Terms:

I understand that the requested environmental modification(s) is/ are being funded with public money.

I have seen and agreed to the specifications for the environmental modification(s).

I understand that only the listed specifications will be provided and funded as part of this project.

I understand that under South Carolina State Procurement Law, if the requested environmental modification project costs more than \$2500.00, the project must be awarded to the lowest qualified bidder.

I agree that I will not request or instruct the provider to change any of the approved specifications after the project is awarded.

I understand that any additional work performed by the provider and/or any work separately negotiated with the provider will solely be my financial responsibility as the home owner.

I agree to work cooperatively with the provider to insure a positive working relationship during the course of the project.

I agree to make the location available during the project should the provider need to take measurements or ask questions to insure modifications will be correct and beneficial.

I understand that I must notify the participant's Case Manager immediately if any problems occur during the project.

I, _____, as owner of the home/location to be modified, have read, understand, and agree to each of the above terms. I also understand that the requested environmental modification project cannot proceed without my signature below.

Signature of Home Owner: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name of Witness: _____

Signature of Witness: _____ **Date:** _____