

## Home Modification Ideas for Children with Down, Angelman and Prader-Willi Syndromes.



*Improve how you live with customized solutions to everyday problems at home.*

This is a list of ideas gathered from parents who have children with genetic syndromes such as Down Syndrome, Angelman Syndrome, and Prader-Willi Syndrome (and other similar disabilities).

Many ideas are useful for all people with disabilities, while others are disability specific. These ideas were freely shared with us, so we want to freely share them with others.

Please note that every child and every family is different, with unique needs. Every idea does not apply to every child or family. This list does not replace having a home modification assessment for your family; nor does it replace the need for a skilled OT to work in-person with you and your building team. All ideas are implemented at your own risk; please use caution and judgment.

Home modifications can greatly improve quality of life, but should be combined with the direct services of skilled professionals, such as therapists, doctors, and social workers.

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### IDEAS FOR EVERYONE

There are many common features of these genetic syndromes that may influence home modification needs:

#### Concern: Changing needs (childhood to adulthood)

- > Families report having to adjust to the specific needs at each age, size, and developmental stage of their child, with a need for frequent reassessments and modifications

#### Concern: Decreased motor skills (including low tone, ataxia, poor balance, decreased strength, and limited endurance)

- > Zero-step entry or wider/bigger steps at entry
- > Additional handrails or grab bars at entrances, toilet and bathing areas, stairs, and in hallways
- > Nonslip surfaces on stairs and steps (carpet may be safer)
- > Level yard areas and walkway to vehicles, including bus
- > Wider sidewalks, big enough for 2 people or adaptive equipment (walker or wheelchair)
- > Remove hazards in walking areas, such as rugs and screen doors
- > Clearly mark changes in walking surface to be easily visible
- > Bathing area ideas
  - Replace tub with shower or walk-in tub
  - Built-in or portable bath seat
  - Non-skid floor or mat
  - Water-resistant and slip resistant flooring in any potentially wet areas
- > Obesity- common in both childhood and adulthood
  - Need space for exercise indoors and outdoors
  - Bidet on toilet to help with cleaning after using the toilet
  - Larger shower spaces and/or seat in shower

#### Concern: Safety and ability during daily tasks.

- > Correct size toilet, with foot rest if needed (or squatty potty)
  - Seat: sometimes smaller or larger depending on personal size
  - Height: may be shorter or taller depending on personal size
- > Faucets that are easy to reach and turn on/off
- > Faucet extenders
- > Handheld shower (can help a lot with hair washing)
- > Easy to open fridge and storage areas in kitchen
- > Lever handles throughout the home on doors and faucets
- > Hooks to hang coats, bags, and towels
- > Creating a bathing space that is water-proof (or a "wet room")
- > Places to sit while dressing and while putting off/on shoes
- > Clear and accessible storage and organization in play areas, bedrooms, and for school work to support independence
- > Clear and accessible storage and organization in areas of daily care, such as closet and bathrooms

#### Concern: Positioning needs for alignment and support in daily tasks (such as spinal issues or low tone concerns)

- > Space for specialty seating equipment in dining, living, and bathing areas
- > Room for specialty beds or hospital beds
- > Temporary or permanent need for adaptive equipment, such as walkers or wheelchairs (see notes under Prader-Willi)
- > Room in home for larger furniture, such as chairs and beds

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### Concern: Intellectual impairment with concerns for judgement and safety and a variety of behavioral concerns

- > Control access to unsafe items with locking cupboards, drawers, cabinets, or closets (ex. cleaning supplies, chemicals, medications, and knives)
- > Restrict access to unsafe areas of the home with gates, locking doors, or dutch doors
- > Gate on stairs (top and bottom) (can be installed permanently with locks)
- > Scald-resistant faucets and shower heads (or turn down hot water heater)
- > Talking smoke detectors
- > Other safety features
  - Oven knob covers (or induction stove) and stove locks
  - Door knob covers
  - Fenced in yard
  - Alarms on windows/doors and video monitors throughout the house
  - Shatterproof windows and mirrors

### Concern: Visual impairments

- > Increase lighting on stairs and any dark areas (such as hallways or closets)
- > Clear and simple environments (avoid patterns in carpet and on walls)
- > Use of organization strategies to decrease visual stimulation

### Concern: Sensory processing disorders

- > Play area on a table, rather than the floor for easier access
- > Indoor sensory-motor space- slides, swings, trampolines, mirrors, area for wheeled toys, ball pit, sensory play areas, crash pads, treadmill, bean bags, rocking chairs, therapy balls...)
  - Plan for adult-sized play and exercise equipment
  - Often need more room; re-purpose spaces such as a basement, closet, or convert a garage to make room for equipment
- > Creating "safe" spaces, using a closet space or other enclosed space
- > Outdoor play areas with easy to access play opportunities

### Concern: Caregiver needs

- > Additional washer and dryer to keep up with laundry needs
- > Clear sight lines in floor plan for supervision
- > Clear sight lines to outdoor play area for supervision
- > Sufficient space for caregiver to provide care while using good body mechanics
- > Keypad for access to home for adults and staff
- > Respite space for parents and siblings
- > Durable, easy to clean surfaces in home

### ANGELMAN SYNDROME

#### Concern: Fascination with water

- > Turn off water faucets using shut-offs
- > Use automatic faucets or other variations that turn off water automatically
- > Turn water heater down and/or anti-scald faucets (or thermostat controlled faucets)
- > Remove drain plugs to prevent child filling sink or tubs
- > Create a water resistant play area inside/outside
- > Swimming pool

#### Concern: Ataxic gait pattern

- > Ensure a place for hands to hold (ex. handrail) at all steps, stairs, or uneven surfaces, as well as at places that challenge balance such as getting into the tub or off the toilet

#### Concern: Sleep disorders

- > Video monitors in bedroom
- > Room for specialty bed if needed

#### Concern: Seizures

- > Avoid sharp corners or edges, use rounded corners
- > Remove stone around fireplaces, or padded covers
- > Remove locks on doors and have door open outward for safety, especially in bathroom

### DOWN SYNDROME

#### Concern: Short stature

- > Lowered storage, closet rods, towel rods, coat hooks, and mirrors
- > Lower or second handrail
- > Faucet extenders and automatic faucets
- > Leave room for step next to sinks, storage, couch, and bed if needed
- > Install a pull out stool at kick plate in kitchen areas
- > Lower countertop heights in kitchen and bathroom
- > Lower mirror in bathroom

#### Concern: Scoliosis

- > Plan for room for equipment as needed, such as supported seating and specialty beds
- > Plan for occasional surgeries and short-term wheelchair or walker use at home (main floor bedroom and bathroom, room in bathroom for wheelchair, wider doorways, zero-step entry or minimal steps that can be covered with a portable ramp)

#### Concern: Body Temperature Regulation

- > Air conditioning in main living and sleeping areas
- > Ceiling fans
- > UV reflective window coatings
- > Window shades (can be insulated)
- > Update windows and doors for more stable indoor air temperatures
- > Update HVAC system, zoned heating and cooling may be beneficial
- > Covered car parking (heated garage may be beneficial in cold climates)

### PRADER-WILLI SYNDROME

#### Concern: Food craving

- > Fridge locks (either specific locks for fridge or a chain and bike lock)
- > Locks on food storage areas- can be a door to a pantry with key or keypad or magnetic locks
- > Control access to whole kitchen with doors or gates that can be locked
- > Specific fridge in locked area
- > Alarms or monitors to notify adults of nighttime movement
- > Locks on storage areas for items not safe to consume, such as cleaning supplies

*Have an idea that was missed? Email us at [beyondaccessibility@paigehays.net](mailto:beyondaccessibility@paigehays.net) to contribute. When we reach 25 new ideas, we will update this handout for everyone.*