

MAKING A HOME ACCESSIBLE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

It's important to create a safe, nurturing environment for any child. For a child with special needs, there are ways to adapt your existing home to create an accessible living space that will help your child thrive and maintain as much independence as possible while providing ways to include them in family activities.

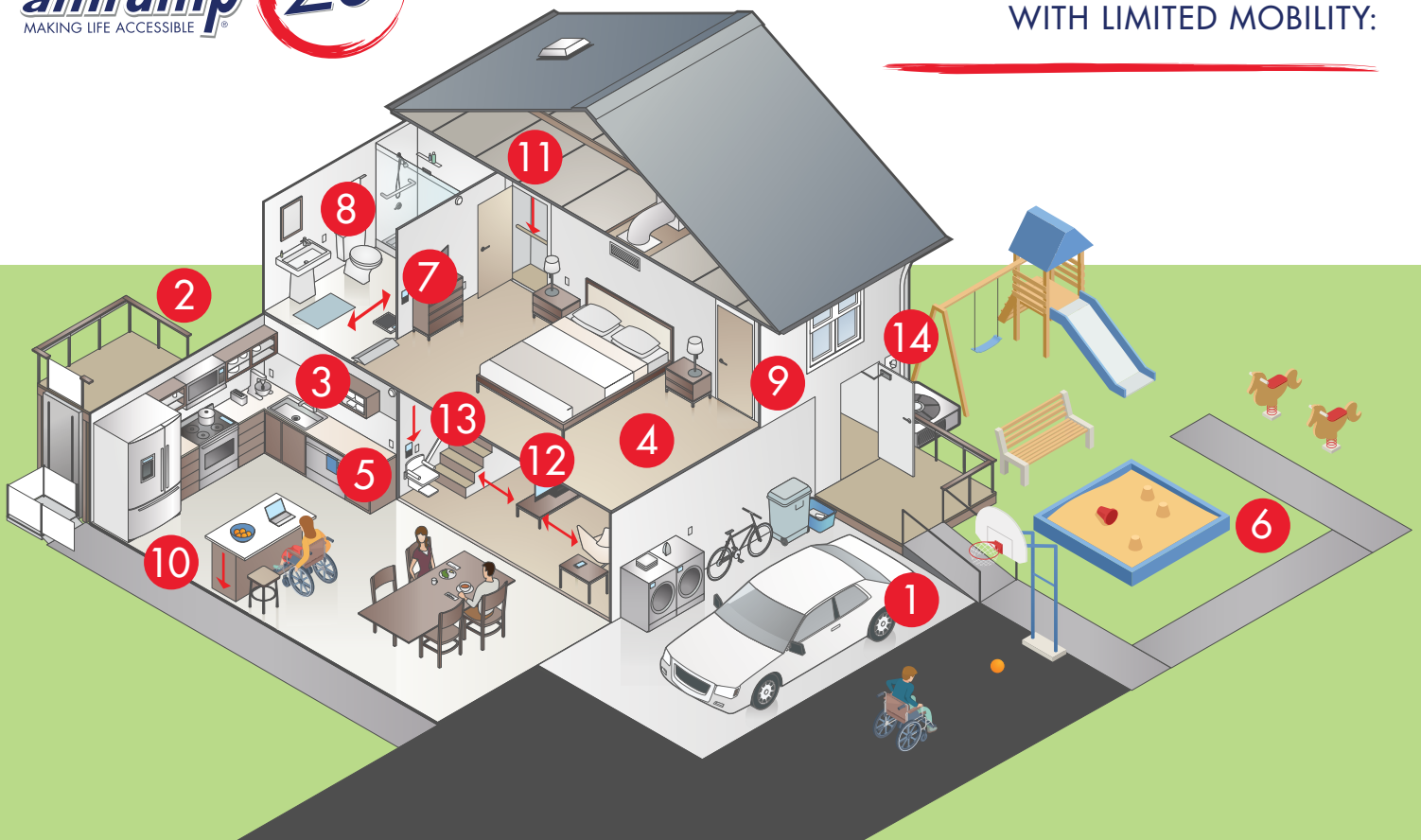
Don't forget to provide accessible indoor and outdoor play areas as well.

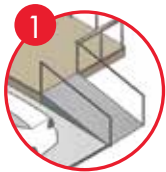
Children of all abilities love to play. Playtime helps all children release some energy and is an important part of their development.

Indoor and outdoor play areas should be available, accessible and inclusive to allow interaction with children of all abilities. Indoor play areas should be easy to maneuver in a wheelchair and have accessible benches, tables and chairs for drawing, board games, reading, studying, homework, etc. Creating an outdoor space that is accessible for children with special needs allows them access to fresh air, sunshine, nature and possibly some sort of exercise depending upon their abilities.

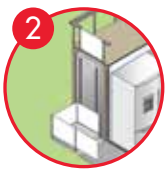


HERE ARE 14 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR HOME MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR A CHILD WITH LIMITED MOBILITY:





1 If your child uses a wheelchair, walker or just struggles with stairs, at least one entrance to the home should be equipped with a ramp and railings or a zero-step entrance. In most instances it would be the front entrance, however, access can be provided for garage, patio, deck or rear entrances as well. Ramps are not just for people in wheelchairs. A ramp provides a safe entry and exit over stairs for caregivers, older family members and guests, too, especially during the winter months.



2 Some properties don't have enough space for a safe ramp. An outdoor stairlift or platform lift may provide a solution that will allow ground level access to the front entrance, deck, patio or terrace.



3 Make sure threshold transitions are smooth between rooms as well as entrances to outdoor decks or patios.



4 Hard flooring inside the home, instead of carpeting, allows for easier navigation for a wheelchair or walker from room to room.



5 An indoor stairlift can provide independent access to the upper and/or lower levels of the home.



6 Don't forget the outdoor areas as well. The pathways should be smooth and level, without grass, pavers, sand, wood chips or pebbles, to be able to maneuver walkers and wheelchairs to a yard, play area or pool. A 5-foot square level space should be available to the entryway for a wheelchair to maneuver and turn around.



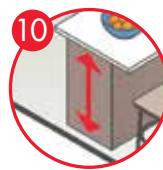
7 Widen the doorways and hallways to accommodate walkers, scooters or wheelchairs.



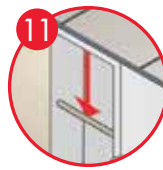
8 Safety rails and grab bars in the bathroom will make bathing and grooming safer and easier. Consider raising or lowering the height of the toilet as well. Walk-in showers and tubs, as well as adaptive shower and bathtub aids, are available to make bathing easier.



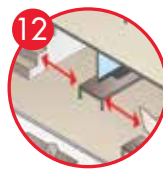
9 Lever handles on doors, cabinets and faucets make for easier opening.



10 Raise or lower the countertops in the kitchen, bathroom and play areas for a wheelchair to fit easily under the counter.



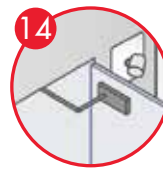
11 Make bedroom closets accessible by lowering hanging rods and shelves, adding drop down hangers and pull out shelving.



12 Remove carpeting and re-arrange furniture to make it easier to get around and free from obstacles.



13 Lower light switches and security keypads so your child has easier access or install Smart Home devices that allow someone to use and manage devices with voice controls - turning lights and televisions on and off, adjusting the thermostat, etc.



14 Install automatic door openers that unlatch, open and close interior and exterior doors automatically.

When you are ready to start your project, look for a company with accessibility experience that is familiar with the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as local zoning laws. Certified Aging in Place Specialists (CAPS) are trained by the National Association of Home Builders on remodeling and retrofitting existing homes for special needs.

Amramp's accessibility experts are CAPS certified and have training and experience on adapting homes for children with special needs. Amramp offers a free evaluation for your home to determine what changes are needed to provide a nurturing and accessible living space for your whole family.