

Environmental Assessment case study

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Orientation and Mobility

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Environmental Assessment: Background

- The following recommendations are made for safety and ease of use for consumers who are visually impaired and/or blind. Recommendations are based upon the needs of those with visual impairments to equally and safely access those environments as detailed in the American Disabilities Act and specified in this code.
- The woman is moving to a new house in mid July. **The purpose of this report is to make alteration recommendations for her new home to maximize her environment to best suit her safety needs as he travels throughout his home.** The following recommendations are made for safety and ease of use for consumers who are visually impaired and/or blind.



This door *MUST* remain shut when not in use.

If left open she could topple down the stairs by mistake causing serious injury.

Rugs put her at a risk for falling

Any kind of rug or mat can cause a tripping hazard which could cause a fall:

- The rug may bunch up
- The rug may slide easily
- The lip could get caught under her foot
- The rug is slightly raised off the floor and may cause her to stumble and fall

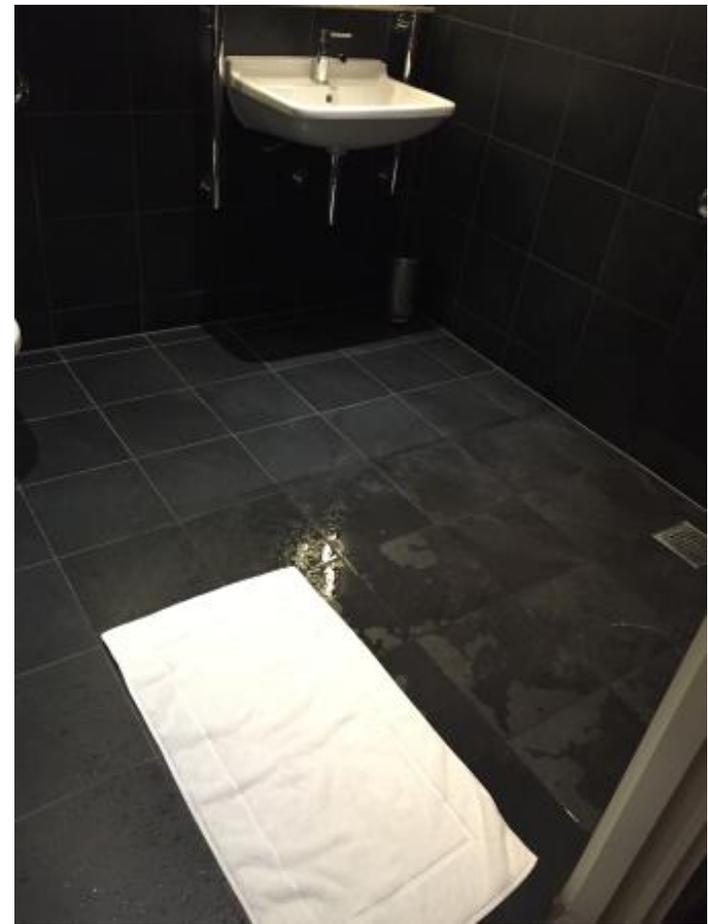
If a rug must remain in a certain area it should be taped down with carpet tape. It should not be able to slide or move once taped.

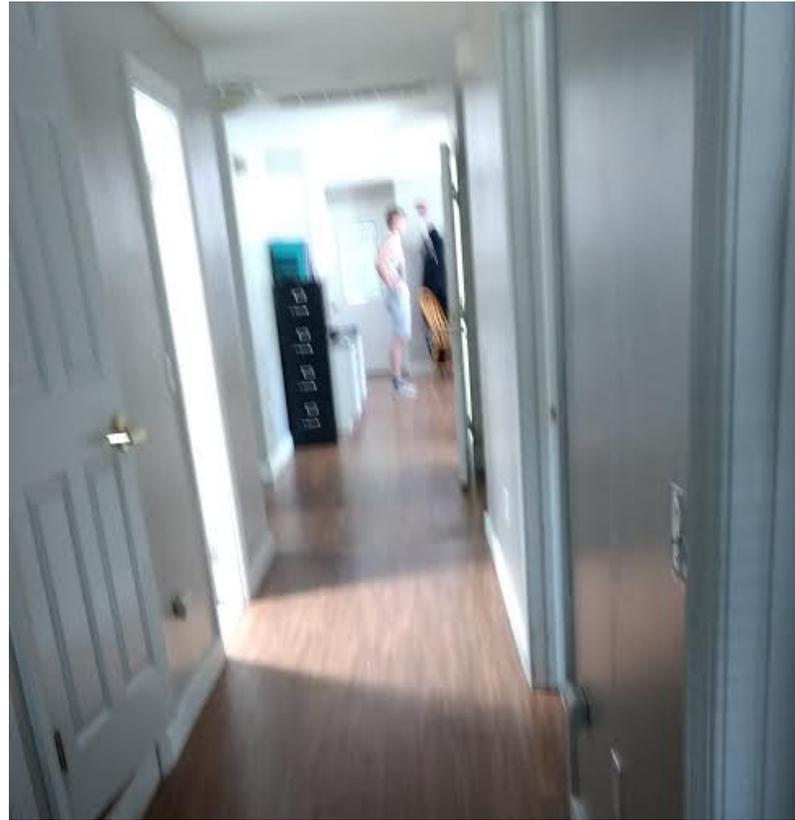


Shower: Mats right outside the shower are recommended for removal if they slide. However, when she is taking a shower the floor may become excessively wet without the mat. A wet floor also causes a risk for falls.

Staff may need to assist in wiping up floors **before** she gets out of the shower if the area becomes wet.

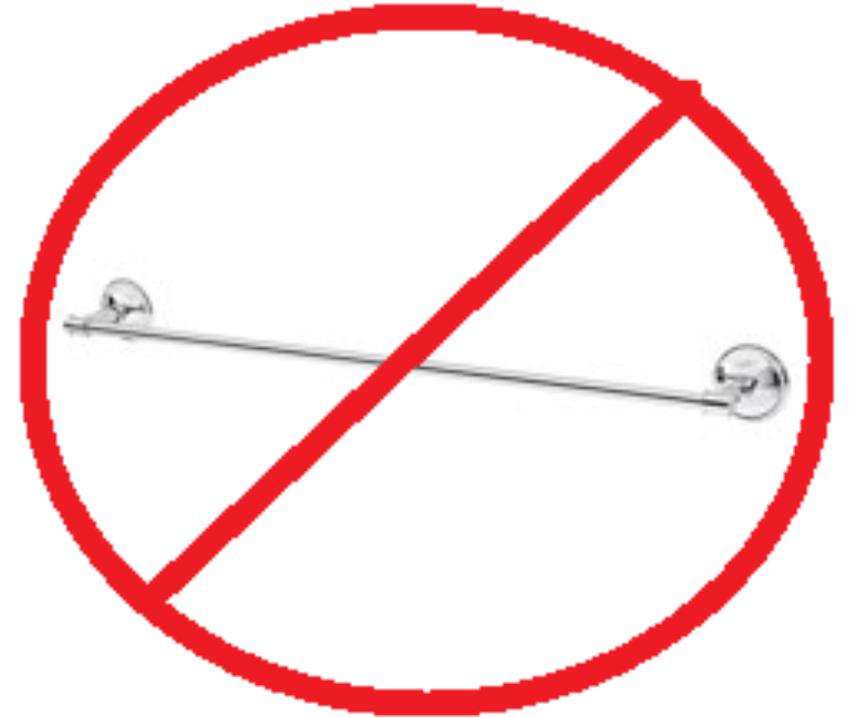
Towels can be left down and picked up **before** she gets out of the shower. **She should NOT walk on loose towels.**





She has an unsteady gait and would benefit from support railings added to the hallways.

All towel racks should be removed and replaced with grab bars.
She will likely use the towel rack as a support bar even if she should not.
Adding support bars will mean the bar will be able to support her weight if she does
decide to use it.



It is likely that she will grab onto this shelving unit for support when walking. This is unsafe as this unit is not meant to support her weight.

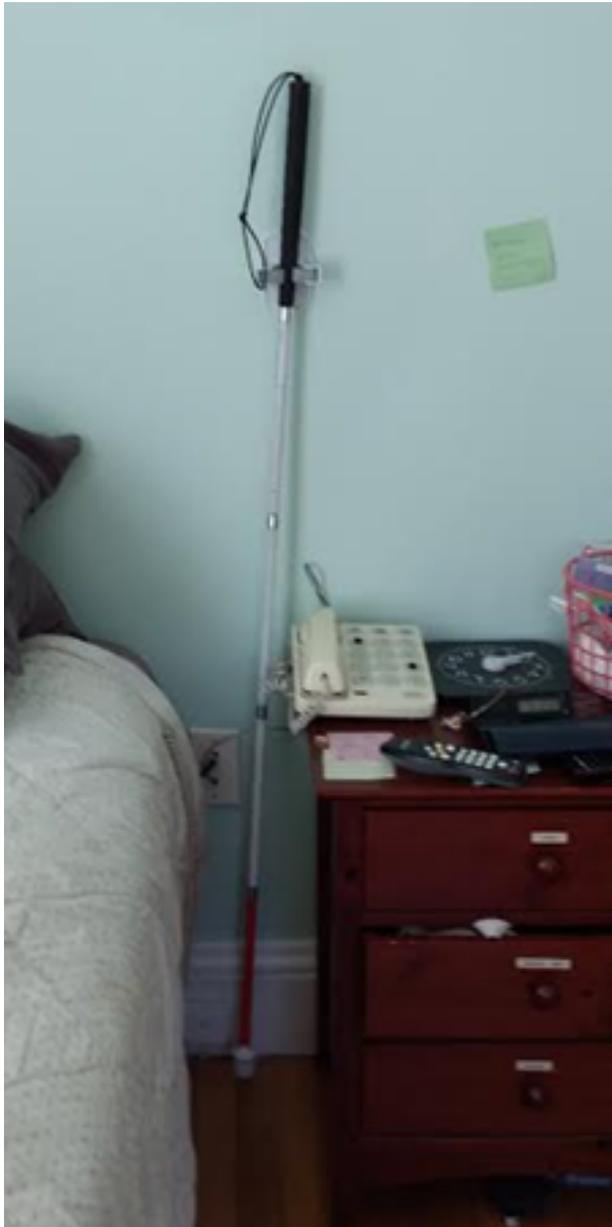
This shelving unit should be removed and a grab bar can be added in place of it.

Any additional shelving that is added should be sturdy just in case she uses it for support. However, she should be discouraged from putting her weight on it.





She has trouble keeping balance on uneven surfaces. Surfaces should be as level and smooth as possible. The cracks in the ramp pictured here could be smoothed over.



A hook is installed near her bed at her current home so she can store her cane unfolded and access it quickly during the night if there is a fire alarm.

She previously had trouble locating her cane during fire drills at night. Staff report that since she has used the hook for her cane, her egress time for evacuations at night during drills has decreased.

A hook should be installed near her bed in her new home so she can store it unfolded.

She should be prompted to put her cane in the hook every night before she goes to bed.

Hazards to be aware of:



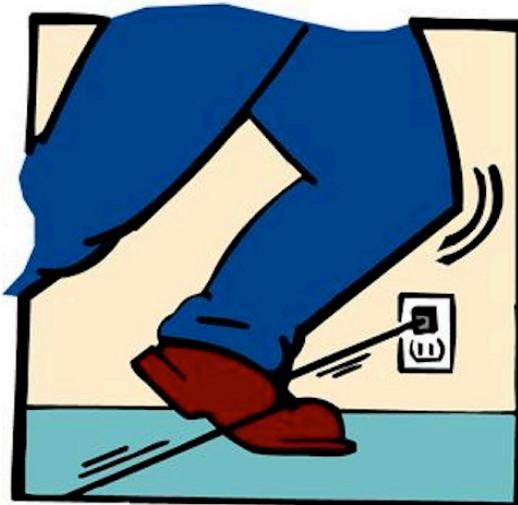
Open Cabinets

She cannot detect what is higher than her waist when using a cane. She is likely to hit her head if a cabinet is left open.



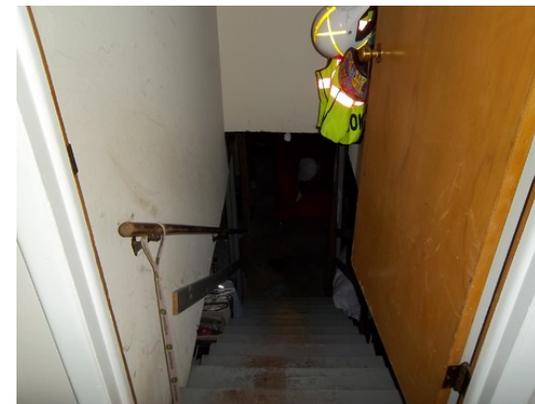
Open Dishwasher

She does not always use her cane in her house. If the dishwasher is left open she may trip on it. When staff has the dishwasher open, be aware if she is in the vicinity.



Electrical Cords

Watch for electrical cords in walking paths. These are tripping hazards. Staff: before you plug in your cell phone, make sure you have a plan of how to keep it out of any walking paths.



Drop Offs

Be aware of any drop offs in the environment. There are doors that lead to stairs, please verbally remind her the stairs are there before she opens the door.

Hazards to be aware of:



Shoes/Clutter

In this photo there is clutter in the form of an umbrella and shoes. **Shoes left by the door are especially problematic** as they move each time the person wears them and are in a new spot when they return—even if ever so slightly of a different spot. She is unable to visually monitor changes in the placement of shoes left by the door.



Laundry

She does not always put her laundry in her bin, but instead leaves it on the floor. Staff should remove the item from the floor or prompt her to put in the bin. She could trip on it and fall.

Furniture should remain fixed

Furniture should remain where it is. If it is moved even an inch, she must be informed of its new location. Anything that is different about her environment must be described to her before entering the room.



Clutter

Clutter can be extremely dangerous for a person with a Visual Impairment. Please pick up after yourself and don't leave items on the floor for her to trip on.

Summary of Recommendations

- Doors leading to drop offs (i.e. stairs) **MUST** remain closed at all times.
- There are a few rugs in the house and if possible they should all be removed to make sure the walking surfaces are free of unnecessary tripping hazards. However, if a rug or mat is necessary, it should be fixed down to the floor so it does not slide, bunch up, or become warped upward at the edges.
- If the floor by the shower becomes drenched, staff should assist her by wiping up the water BEFORE she gets out of the shower to prevent slipping.
- Furniture should remain fixed, electrical cords should be tucked away out of walking paths, and items should not be on the floor.
- Her hook for her cane should be installed near her bed. You can buy a hook on amazon, target, and many other places. It's labeled as a "broom gripper."
- All uneven surfaces should be smoothed over, as possible.
- Railings should be added to the hallways that she frequents for support.
- Any place a towel rack is installed should be replaced by a support bar.
- The shelf in the bathroom should be removed and a support bar should be added. Any new shelving must be sturdy.