

# Safety Tips to Remember When Designing Your Senior Center or Home

It is important for seniors to feel comfortable and safe in their home or while visiting their senior center, especially if they are hearing or vision impaired. Here are some adaptations to help organizations and seniors work together to achieve this goal.



## Color/Contrast

- Utilize different floor surfaces from room to room.
- Become aware of your home or center's color scheme. Yellow-oranges and reds are more easily distinguished by older adults.
- Use contrasting colors, for example, between doorways and walls, dishes and tablecloths, and the risers and flat surfaces of steps.

## Furniture/Décor

- Leave lots of open space to facilitate lines of vision and easier communication.
- Fabric window coverings reduce noise and echoes.
- Use upholstered furniture.
- Avoid hard, reflective surfaces.
- Avoid high ceilings.
- Sound proof as much as possible between walls, ceilings, and rooms.
- Wall-to-wall carpeting instead of hardwood floors.
- High quality microphones for podium/assistive listening device (FM or infrared technology) for meeting rooms.
- Utilize smaller round tables for seating.



## Lighting/Glare

- Increase light level in the home or center. Increase bulb wattage, add night lights, especially in hallways and near stairs, and add lights in all closets.
- Place lamps in reading/writing areas.
- Close blinds during course of day.
- Avoid using wax on floors.
- Direct light at speaker's face in group meeting areas to make lip-reading easier.



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## Elimination of Hazards

- Do not place furniture in hallways or places that get a lot of traffic.
- Place non-skid rubber mats under area rugs.
- Use white or reflecting tape to clearly mark changes in floor levels to prevent falls.
- Keep closet/cabinet doors closed.
- Pick up items from the floor that could be tripped over.
- Keep electrical cords taped down or out of the way.



## Organization

- Keep items used together on the same shelf, closet or box.
- Keep furniture in same places.

## Assistive/Alerting Devices

- Any emergency communication system, as well as telephone and doorbell should be equipped with a visual warning system.
- Use amplified telephone with enlarged buttons and caller ID, which allows sight- and/or hearing-impaired individuals to make and receive calls easily.
- A TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf) enables a person to communicate over the telephone.
  - If the Center does not have its own TDD, dial 711 for the Relay Service. For more information go to:  
[www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/711.html](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/711.html)
- Text messaging, e-mail and social networking sites can greatly increase communication between hearing-impaired people, their families and friends.

