



What You Should Know About
Staying at Home:

**Safety, Security,
Modifications &
Repairs**

Part of an educational series
about long-term care choices in
Broome County.

Action
for **Older**
Persons

Information you can count on.
Assistance you can trust.

This Series of Real Choices Consumer Education Booklets includes the following titles:

- Paying for Long-Term Care: Understanding Your Choices
- Facility & Community Options: Understanding Levels of Long-Term Care
- Help at Home: Choices in Home Health Care & Support Services
- What You Should Know About Staying at Home: Safety, Security, Modifications & Repairs
- When You're the One Providing Care: Understanding Caregiver Support Services
- Advance Health Care Planning: Making Your Wishes Known
- Adults with Disabilities: Understanding Support Services
- Healthy Choices for Living Well

Caring for House & Home Options

As we age, our houses and homes are aging too. If you're like most Americans, you'll want to remain in your own home as long as possible despite any changing needs due to age or disability. That's why it's important to be aware of local services that can help you maintain and/or adapt your home to keep it functional and safe.

This booklet describes several options that can help you keep up with the demands of maintaining your own household. To learn about choices for personal and health care assistance that you might also need to stay in your own home, read the booklet in this series entitled, Help at Home: Choices in Home Health Care & Support Services.

Another valuable resource that acts as a comprehensive directory of services for midlife and older adults in our community is the *Broome County Elder Services Guide*. Pick up your free Guide at Action for Older Persons, Inc., 30 W. State Street, Binghamton, Broome County Office for Aging, or local senior centers while supplies last. Or, visit the online Guide at www.broomeelderservices.org.

Home Safety

It's worth taking some time to consider the safety of your home. Just a few preventive measures can help you avoid accidents, falls and fires. Look closely around your home and ask yourself these questions:

- ☑ Are rooms adequately lighted?
- ☑ Are walkways clear of throw rugs and other objects that can be tripped on?
- ☑ Are fire hazards minimized?
- ☑ Are electrical cords free from fraying? Are they positioned so that they can't be tripped over?
- ☑ Is your chimney in good repair?
- ☑ Do you have a fire extinguisher? Is it within easy reach?
- ☑ Is a carbon monoxide detector installed in your basement?
- ☑ Do you have smoke detector(s) with working batteries?

If you answered "No" to any of the above questions and you aren't sure how to fix the situation or need help to do so, call:

- The Senior Resource Line, Broome County Office for Aging
Phone: (607) 778-2411

Personal Security at Home

Your own personal safety and security are valuable considerations when living at home with an age-related impairment or a disability, especially if you live alone. Two important questions to ask yourself are:

- 1) How safe do you feel in your home?
- 2) How would you get emergency help quickly if you needed it?

Too often, older and disabled adults are targets for scams and mistreatment. Don't be a victim! Always be aware of your surroundings and report suspicious activities or persons to your local police department. You're off to a good start by considering the following questions:

- Do your doors and windows lock firmly?
- Do you have adequate exterior lighting?
- Do your exterior doors have view holes?
- Do you have a phone on every level of your home and near your bed?
- Do you have someone checking on you regularly if you live alone?

Again, if you need help to turn any "No" answers into "Yes" answers, call:

- The Senior Resource Line, Broome County Office for Aging
Phone: (607) 778-2411

Options below offer added protection and peace of mind that you'll receive immediate, appropriate care in an emergency:

Emergency Call Buttons & Personal Emergency Response Systems - Allow you to call for help at the push of a button. These life support devices are worn as pendants or wrist-bands. When you push the button, the company tries to call you by phone. If you don't answer, they'll notify a designated friend or relative to check on you. If necessary, they'll call police or an ambulance. Monthly service fees typically apply.

In addition to response systems offered by local home health care agencies and national non-profit organizations, some stores stock automatic, do-it-yourself phone dialers you may buy and program yourself. See the *Broome County Elder Services Guide's* "Help at Home" section for local programs.

Telephone Reassurance Programs - Many communities offer at least one program through which frail and vulnerable residents may sign up to receive a brief, daily phone call to assure they are okay. Often, these programs train volunteers to make daily calls from their own homes. They follow standard, emergency protocol in the event you do not answer the phone or show signs of difficulty when you do answer. To learn about the local program, "Good Morning, Broome!" call:

- Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP of Broome County)
230 Main Street, Binghamton, NY 13905
Phone: 798-9396

Home Modifications

Staying in your own home can be quite a challenge if it doesn't support your needs. An ideal, "barrier-free" home has no physical obstructions to limit your mobility. It allows you to move easily to and from all rooms; and lets you turn appliances on/off, get in and out of the bath and use the toilet with minimal or no help.

Many changes can be relatively simple to make: replace round door knobs with levers; substitute traditional light switches with larger ones that turn on/off with a slight touch; install grab bars in places where you must step up/down. Buy easy-to-find items that can ease the stress of daily life: kitchen utensils with extended or large handles, talking clocks, cordless phones, and phones with large numbers.

Most Independent Living Centers (ILCs) have "experts" on staff who can visit your home to assess ways it could be modified to meet your needs. They may also know about new technologies that could help.

In Broome County, contact:

- Southern Tier Independence Center
24 Prospect Ave
Binghamton, NY 13901
Phone: 724-2111

The *Broome County Elder Services Guide's* "Health Information & Support" section lists disease specific associations that offer loan closets, limited financial aid, and/or self-help or support groups that can inform you about creative home solutions.

Be aware that larger home modification projects like building a handicap accessible ramp can be costly. Sometimes an agency that provides free consultations can cover labor costs if you provide the materials. If you can't afford the materials, however, you might be able to find another agency, grant, or low-interest loan to help.

Small Home Repairs

If you reside in an apartment, townhouse or condominium, any home repair needs you face could be your landlord's responsibility. If you're a homeowner living in your own house, however, the task of fixing a leaky faucet, changing a light bulb, or re-placing a broken window is up to you.

When these tasks become too daunting to do yourself, take the safe approach and seek some help. The *Broome County Elder Services Guide's* "Home Repair, Adaptation and Weatherization" section lists programs that help older and/or

disabled adults with minor household repairs including safety and security measures already mentioned.

For initial guidance and help identifying appropriate programs to contact for the types of assistance you're seeking, call the Senior Resource Line (778-2411) or Southern Tier Independence Center (724-2111).

In addition to preparing for the likelihood of home repair needs, you should have a safe, supportive plan in place for:

Seasonal Maintenance & Upkeep - Routine tasks like lawn mowing, raking leaves and shoveling snow can be difficult for older and/or disabled adults. Various community groups and volunteers offer help. Call your local Office for Aging to learn about services and financial assistance such as the **Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)** that provides seasonal help with fuel or utility costs for income-eligible renters and homeowners.

Weatherization - Protecting your home against extreme weather conditions can help keep you comfortable and reduce your utility bills year-round. Programs exist that can help you properly maintain your heating and cooling systems while reducing associated costs through insulating, furnace cleaning and related repairs. Call your local Office for Aging to find out about programs like "**WRAP**" that help eligible older and/or disabled adults apply for programs to reduce heating costs.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Disabled and older adults have more care options than ever before. While having many choices is important, the long-term care system may seem complicated or overwhelming at times. That's why CARE volunteers are here to offer free guidance and support to help you meet your needs.

CARE Volunteers can help!

Community

Advocacy

Referral

Empowerment

Call today to have a CARE Volunteer help make the long-term care system work for you.

607-722-1251



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All information herein is accurate as of January 2005. However changes in agencies and services occur frequently. For the most current information, the reader is encouraged to directly contact agencies, the Broome County Office for Aging at (607)778-2411 or the Broome County Online Elder Services Guide at:
www.broomeelderservices.org.

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