



All About Aging-In-Place

If you're like the majority of Americans over the age of 45, you want to continue living in a familiar environment throughout your maturing years. According to AARP, older home owners overwhelmingly prefer to age in place, which means living in your home safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of age or ability level.

The NAHB Remodelers of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) in collaboration with Home Innovation Research Labs, NAHB 50+ Housing Council, and AARP developed the Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist (CAPS) program to address the growing number of consumers that will soon require these modifications. While most CAPS professionals are remodelers, an increasing number are general contractors, designers, architects, and health care consultants.

"I feel better about being able to stay in the familiar surroundings of my own home now that it has been fixed up by my CAPS contractor. The changes I made to my house — like grab bars and better lighting, were cheaper than moving to an assisted living apartment!" -Elsie Peterson, Houston, Texas

Questions to ask as you consider remodeling or modifying your home:

How should you modify your home to make it more comfortable?

To age-in-place you will probably need to modify your house as you mature to increase access and maneuverability. These modifications range from the installation of bath and shower grab bars and adjustment of countertop heights to the creation of multifunctional first floor master suites and the installation of private elevators.

Who can you rely on to modify your home?

CAPS professionals have the answers to your questions. They have been taught the strategies and techniques for designing and building aesthetically enriching, barrier-free living environments.

The CAPS program goes beyond design to address the codes and standards, common remodeling expenditures and projects, product ideas, and resources needed to provide comprehensive and practical aging-in-place solutions. CAPS graduates pledge to uphold a code of ethics and are required to maintain their designation by attending continuing education programs and participating in community service.

What is the CAPS designation?

A Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS) has been trained in:

- The unique needs of the older adult population
- Aging-in-place home modifications
- Common remodeling projects
- Solutions to common barriers

Keep in mind that when you hire a Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist, you are buying a service rather than a product. Each CAPS professional draws from a different knowledge base and will approach your project in a different way. No matter where you start in the process, you will eventually need to hire a professional remodeler to actually make the modifications to your home.

How should you choose a remodeler?

- Figure out how much money you have to spend on the home modification project.
- Seek referrals from friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, and others who have had similar work done.
- Contact trade associations such as your area's local home builders association or Remodelers™ Council.
- Check with your local or state office of consumer protection and the local Better Business Bureau.
- Verify the remodeler has the appropriate license(s) in your state.
- Look for professional designations such as CAPS, Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR), or Graduate Master Builder (GMB).
- Ask your professional remodeler for a written estimate of the work to be done based on a set of plans and specifications. Be prepared to pay for this package.
- Select a professional remodeler with plenty of experience with your type of project. Remember, lowest price does not ensure a successful remodeling project.

What information should you think about?

- Do I want to add a bathroom and possibly a bedroom to the main level?
- How can I make my kitchen more functional?
- Am I worried about preventing falls?
- How much money can I budget for this project?
- Will I need to get a home equity loan?
- Will other members of my family benefit from modifications?
- Will remodeling increase the energy efficiency of my home?
- Where do I find a professional I can consult with about my needs?

My mother was 80 years old and losing her vision. I had a CAPS remodeler build an addition onto my home. The barrier-free bathroom and the new, wide walls have made all the difference for her. The impact on my mother's life was profound. She became more self-sufficient, more confident and happier." - Roy Liard, Denver

When engaging a remodeler to make home modifications, consumers should check their references and look for specific home modification experience. A remodeler who is certified in home modifications is the best selection for an accessibility solution. Chuck Miller is a National Association of Home Builders Certified Aging In Place Specialist (CAPS), Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR), and Graduate Master Builder (GMB).

For additional information on Certified Aging-In-Place Specialists, visit

<https://www.nahb.org/education-and-events/education/designations/Certified-Aging-in-Place-Specialist-CAPS>