



**2013 Annual Awards Entry Form**  
(Complete one for each entry.)

Entry Name VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Program

HFA Virginia Housing Development Authority

Submission Contact Brian Matt

Phone (804) 343-5520 Email Brian.Matt@vhda.com

Program Contact Llew Anderson

Phone (804) 343-5812 Email Llewellyn.Anderson@vhda.com

Entry form with description, check(s), and visual aids (optional) must be received by NCSHA by **Monday, July 1, 2013.**

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page.

HFA Virginia Housing Development Authority

Entry Name VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Program

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report <input type="checkbox"/> Promotional Materials and Newsletters <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Empowering New Buyers <input type="checkbox"/> Home Improvement and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> State Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
<input type="checkbox"/> Multifamily Management <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Combating Homelessness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Housing for Persons with Special Needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Achievement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

## Virginia Housing Development Authority VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Program

---

*“One young lady who came to us had already talked to a dozen agencies about getting accessibility help. Everyone said no. When she was approved for VHDA’s grant, it was almost like a miracle for her.”*

*Juan Martinez, Peninsula Center for Independent Living*

### **Brief Description of the VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Program**

The Virginia Housing Development Authority recognized the need for affordable and accessible housing options that promote independence and dignity for people with disabilities. VHDA’s Accessibility Modification Grant Program has funding available to assist individuals for the payment of modification work needed on rental units to make them accessible for a specific tenant. Financial support is provided by VHDA’s Resources Enabling Affordable Community Housing (REACH) Program.

VHDA’s Accessibility Modification Grant Program provides financial assistance to make modifications to rental units occupied by the elderly, adults with disabilities, and families with children with disabilities earning 80 percent or less of the area median income (AMI). Applicants are eligible for grant assistance up to \$2,000 per rental unit. Applications must be submitted by approved agents who include Centers for Independent Living, Local Housing Authorities, rehabilitation hospitals that have patients needing modification work on a unit prior to discharge, or landlords in need of specific modifications for a tenant.

Grant funds may be used to widen doorways, lower countertops, install wheelchair ramps, grab bars, shower chairs, visual smoke detectors and other modifications that improve home accessibility and safety. A contractor is selected by the agent and applicant under the terms of the grant program. VHDA does not choose contractors to do the work, but can provide some resources and guidance towards finding and selecting a contractor.

The Accessibility Modification Grant Program began as an outreach effort between VHDA and Christopher Reeve Foundation in 2003. Partnerships, from the beginning to end, are necessary to make this strategic initiative successful. The program’s webpage can be seen [here](#).

### **Why it was Undertaken**

A statewide Housing Needs Assessment conducted jointly by VHDA and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) clearly identified a gap in housing options for the disabled. The assessment notes that: *“Disabled residents who earn 80% or less of the (AMI) Area Median Income continue to lack adequate access to affordable, accessible housing, and to assistance in making needed rental unit modifications.”*

In addition, Virginia’s statewide housing policy framework reflects the need to ensure there is a wide range of housing options to meet the housing needs of people with disabilities. Therefore, the Accessibility Modification Grant aligns with the priorities of the state. This grant not only facilitates an increase in the overall number of accessible dwellings in the Commonwealth, but also opens up opportunities for people with special needs to live where they want.

## **Virginia Housing Development Authority VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Program**

---

### **What the Accessibility Modification Grant Program has accomplished**

To date, the VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Program has helped 579 households make necessary modifications to their rental units. The program has issued a total grant amount in excess of \$760,000. Through VHDA's community outreach program, a number of organizations – including local housing authorities, Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and rehabilitation hospitals – have become more aware of this opportunity.

### **Why the Accessibility Modification Grant Program is Meritorious and Meets NCSHA Judging Criteria**

#### **Innovative**

VHDA is one of the few, if not the only HFA that has a grant program addressing the accessibility modification needs of renters. Most similar programs require ownership of a home in order to qualify. VHDA recognizes that as you get older or disabilities become more challenging, home ownership becomes less favorable. This grant program allows people with disabilities that are renting to make simple modifications for easier living. In addition, a unique feature of the Accessibility Modification Grant Program is that it provides assistance to landlords when the time comes to undo the modification, if necessary.

#### **Replicable**

The administration of the Accessibility Modification Grant Program is simple and was written with sustainability in mind. The maximum grant amount (\$2,000) is fairly low, but still effective, and allows the HFA to assist many individuals with a relatively small amount of funds.

#### **Responds to an important state housing need**

The Housing Policy Framework of the Commonwealth of Virginia (EO Number 10) calls for a housing policy that promotes a range of housing options that meets the needs of people with disabilities. The Accessibility Grant Program provides an opportunity to renovate a home based on an individual's needs, thus increasing the number of accessible units VHDA can serve. In addition, this program supports Virginia's affordable housing efforts by serving persons earning 80% or less of the area median income.

#### **Demonstrates measurable benefits to HFA targeted customers**

The Accessibility Modification Grant program has been extremely successful. In just a few years, VHDA has been able to improve the lives of 579 households by making their rental accommodations more comfortable, less challenging, and simply more like home.

#### **Proven track record of success in the marketplace**

In the last four years, the number of grants provided by this program has increased by nearly 50%. To VHDA, this is a clear indicator that the program not only addresses a need but is also well-administered and the grants are easy to obtain. VHDA believes these factors are the main reasons for the success of the program.

#### **Provide benefits that outweigh costs**

Landlords are required by fair housing laws to permit modifications to an apartment to make it barrier-free. However, tenants usually bear the cost of these modifications. Simple modifications such as ramps, railings, or remote entry devices can create independence or easier living for a person with special needs. It also provides more opportunities for those with disabilities to live in locations that may not have adequate or ample accessible housing.

## **Virginia Housing Development Authority VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Program**

---

### **Demonstrates effective use of resources**

As mentioned previously, the program's maximum grant amount is \$2,000. However, VHDA has been able to assist 579 households with special needs with only \$762,344. In some of these households, there were multiple members with special needs, thereby optimizing the modifications.

### **Effectively employs partnerships**

Applications for the grants are made by acceptable agents on behalf of the tenant. Examples of approved agents include: Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Local Housing Authorities, rehab hospitals for patients needing modification work on a rental unit prior to discharge, or landlords in need of accessibility modifications to a rental unit for a specific tenant. In recognition of the agent's assistance, an administrative stipend of \$200 is awarded.

### **Achieve strategic objectives**

One of VHDA's core goals is to increase housing opportunities for underserved markets, specifically low- and moderate- income households, minority populations, and people with disabilities. The Accessibility Modification Grant Program provides a unique opportunity for tenants to modify their house to accommodate their specific needs. This increases housing options for people with special needs by taking a unit that is not accessible and making moderate renovations to meet these needs, which in turn increases the accessible housing inventory.

### **Conclusion**

For Virginians getting older or who have special needs, finding accessible housing can be challenging. The current market place is ill-prepared to provide the types of features that are needed to make rental units accessible for every type of disability.

With the help of VHDA's Accessibility Modification Grant Program, persons with disabilities earning 80% of AMI can receive grant assistance of up to \$2,000 per rental unit for modifications. To date, the program has helped 579 households make necessary modifications to their rental units, and has issued a total grant amount in excess of \$760,000.

Perhaps most importantly, this program helps create more accessible rental units in the marketplace, thereby increasing the opportunity for citizens with special needs to find housing in a location of their choice.

**Please see the attachments below: VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Brochure**

# Virginia Housing Development Authority VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Program



## Improving Daily Living for People with Disabilities.


Each of us is born with a desire for independence. When physical disabilities threaten that independence, improved accessibility is one key to restoring it. However, improving accessibility — especially in rental housing — is often easier said than done.

Landlords are required by fair housing laws to permit modifications to an apartment to make it barrier-free. However, tenants usually bear the cost of these modifications which can be substantial. Fortunately, help is available in the form of accessibility grants administered through VHDA and our Accessible Rental Housing program. Some of the accessibility enhancements our grants pay for include:

- Ramps
- Railings
- Tub cuts
- Grab bars
- Remote entry devices
- ADA toilets
- Accessible cabinets



Virginia Housing Development Authority  
601 South Belvidere Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23220

VHDA Main Number	877-VHDA-123
Southwest Virginia Office	800-447-5145
Español	877-843-2123
 Virginia Relay	711 (in Virginia) 800-828-1140
VHDA Website	<a href="http://vhda.com">vhda.com</a>

VHDA is a self-supporting, not-for-profit organization created by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1972, to help Virginians attain quality, affordable housing. VHDA provides mortgages, primarily for first-time homebuyers and developers of quality rental housing. We use no state taxpayer dollars, but raise money in the capital markets to fund our loans. We also teach free homeownership classes, and help people with disabilities and the elderly make their homes more livable. VHDA works with lenders, developers, local governments, community service organizations and others to help put quality housing within the reach of every Virginian.



The Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, familial status or disability.

The information contained herein (including but not limited to any description of VHDA and its lending programs and products, eligibility criteria, interest rates, fees and all other loan terms) is subject to change without notice.

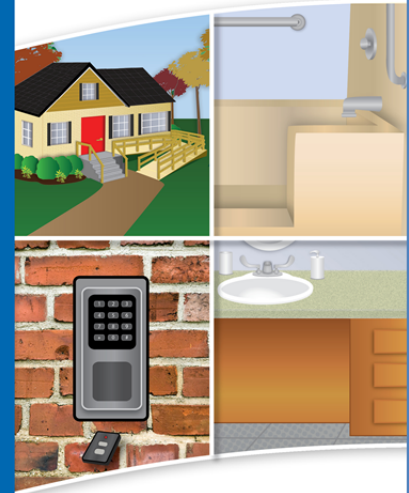


Mixed  
Sources  
FSC C01 141 159 000 000 000 0 1000 100

426 • 5/12

## VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant

Making Rental Housing  
More User-friendly



# Virginia Housing Development Authority VHDA Accessibility Modification Grant Program

## Who is Eligible?

Tenants with disabilities who earn 80 percent or less of the area median income (AMI) may be eligible for grant assistance up to \$2,000\* per rental unit. For more information on income eligibility, visit [vhda.com](http://vhda.com) and enter "Search Income and Rent Limits" in the search box.

## Application Process

All applications must be made through accepted agents. Our accessibility grant funds can assist agents in leveraging local grant funding to further extend their services to those who need them most. These agents include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Centers for independent living (CILs). (See [accessva.org](http://accessva.org) for a listing.)
- Local housing authorities. (See [vhda.com](http://vhda.com) and click on Virginia Housing Directory under Business Resources for this information.)
- Rehab hospitals (for patients who require modification work to their living quarters before discharge).
- Landlords in need of accessibility modifications for a specific tenant.

\* Costs associated with some modifications may exceed the \$2,000 grant limit and would require additional funding. See agent for more information.

## Notification and Disbursement

In order to request funds through an agent, applicants will need to supply the agent with the following:

- Completed application.
- Contractor's estimate, tax information (W-9), and business license.
- Current income verification (Supplemental Security Income (SSI) form or pay stubs).
- Written proof signed by the landlord and tenant that the landlord has approved the work to be done.

VHDA can only provide funding to eligible applicants. Upon approval of the application, VHDA will issue the agent a grant confirmation form allowing four months to have the work completed.

## How to Get Started

To view a copy of the grant application which must be submitted by the agent, visit VHDA's website at [vhda.com](http://vhda.com), and enter "Accessible Rental Housing" in the search box. Funding is available on a first come/first served basis. For more information, please call us at 804-343-5579 or toll free at 877-VHDA-123.

*"Improving accessibility definitely increases the ability of individuals to remain active and participate in life."*

Karen Michalski-Karney, Executive Director  
Blue Ridge Independent Living Center, Inc.

*"Grants from this program have helped customers to live independently in their homes and has provided them with the ability to access their communities."*

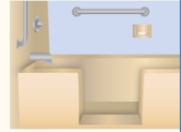
Keith Jenkins, Community  
Integration Specialist  
disAbility Resource Center - Fredericksburg

*"There are many programs that provide services for homeowners. However, it is extremely difficult to meet the needs of the renters. This program has allowed us to provide portable aluminum ramps to families in great need."*

Howard Evergreen, Executive Director  
Fluvanna/Louisa Housing Foundation



Wooden Ramps



Tub Cut & Grab Bars



Accessible Cabinets



Remote Entry Devices



Portable Ramps