**Note:** This publication and template was updated by [Washington Medical-Legal Partnership](https://washingtonmlp.org/) (“MLP”) attorneys in February 2023 and is current as of that date. It provides general information only and may not be applicable to your patient’s unique circumstances. Additional information about reasonable accommodations can be found at [www.washingtonlawhelp.org/resource/reasonable-accommodations-modifications-a-guide-for-residents-with-disabilities](http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/resource/reasonable-accommodations-modifications-a-guide-for-residents-with-disabilities).

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the MLP program coordinator at [contact@washingtonmlp.org](mailto:contact@washingtonmlp.org).

This disclaimer is for your information and does not need to accompany the letter (sample below).

**Instruction on Use**: Helping a Patient with a Reasonable Accommodation Letter

Under fair housing laws, landlords have a responsibility to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing. Landlords must generally agree to reasonable accommodations requested by a tenant with disabilities or allow tenants to make needed modifications to accommodate their disabilities.

**What is a Reasonable Accommodation?**

A reasonable accommodation is a change, exception or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice or service. The Fair Housing Act makes it unlawful to refuse to make reasonable accommodations when necessary to give people with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling and public and common use areas.

Some examples of reasonable accommodations are:

* Assigning a tenant a parking spot close to their unit
* Giving a tenant priority to move to a first floor unit
* Allowing a tenant to have a service animal living with them

Housing providers may not require people with disabilities to pay extra fees or deposits or place any other special conditions or requirements as a condition of receiving a reasonable accommodation.

**What is a Reasonable Modification?**

A reasonable modification is a structural change made to a resident's living space or to the common areas of a community that enables the resident with a disability to have full use of and enjoyment of the housing. Reasonable modifications can include structural changes to interiors and exteriors of dwellings, and to common and public use areas.

Some examples of reasonable modifications are:

* Putting in a wheelchair ramp
* Putting in safety rails in a bathtub or other area on the unit

Tenants must usually pay for reasonable modifications.

**What Is Considered a Disability Under Fair Housing Laws?**

Fair housing laws define a disability as:

* a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities,
* a record of such an impairment, or
* being regarded as having such an impairment.

The Washington State Law Against Discrimination defines disability to include conditions that are temporary or permanent, common or uncommon, mitigated or unmitigated.

**How Can I Help a Patient Make a Reasonable Accommodation or Modification Request?**

If an individual with a disability needs a reasonable accommodation or modification, the first step is to submit a request to the housing provider. The person with a disability or another person/entity (parent, advocacy organization or other representative) can make the request. It is best to make reasonable accommodation requests in writing.

If the patient prefers, the request does not need to disclose the nature of the disability. However, it is helpful, if possible, to provide information explaining how the need for the requested accommodation is related to the person’s disability.

***Example****: A patient finds it increasingly difficult to climb up stairs to an apartment on the second floor because of a progressive neurological condition. You do not have to name the condition, but you could explain the need more generally. “Mr. X has a medical condition that impairs his ability to climb stairs. For this reason, Mr. X requests that he be allowed to move into the next available apartment on the first floor as a reasonable accommodation.”*

**Sample letter requesting reasonable accommodations**

**Print on Letterhead**

[Date]

[Landlord/Manager/Company Name]

[Address]

[Phone]

[Fax]

Re: [Patient]

[Patient Address]

Dear [Landlord/Manager/Company Name]:

I am writing to you on behalf of my patient [NAME], who is your tenant. [NAME] suffers from [medical condition (*can be general description of the condition*)]. As a result of this condition, she/he/they need [explain accommodation requested and relationship to disability]. **I am writing to ask that you make this change as a reasonable accommodation.**

The federal Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA) requires landlords to make “reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services, when such accommodations may be necessary to afford [a handicapped] person equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling” [42 USC § 3604(f)(3)(B)]. Similarly, the Washington Law Against Discrimination (WLAD) requires parties “to make reasonable accommodation in rules, policies, practices, or services when such accommodations may be necessary to afford a person with the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability . . . equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling” [RCW 49.60.222(2)(b)].

Under the FHAA and WLAD, [landlord/manager/company name] has a duty to grant a reasonable accommodation so that [NAME] has an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the dwelling.

Please contact me if you require any additional information.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Your Phone Number]

We write this letter in our capacity as medical care providers to our patient(s). We are not lawyers and are not giving legal advice or making legal demands.