

Cabinets offer accessibility solutions

Informing policymakers through research

The issue. Although state and federal laws require at least five percent of newly constructed multi-family housing units to have extensive accessibility features, there is seldom a good match between the units that are set aside for disabled users and the people who need accessibility features.

Because accessible kitchens and bathrooms look different, non-disabled users are reluctant to rent handicapped units unless there are no other choices. Furthermore, individuals who have no disability when they move into a standard apartment may be forced to move to a different unit when their health situation changes.

According to our research. Both older consumers and senior housing providers like the appearance, convenience, and accessibility solutions offered by Kwik-change Cabinets that were developed by researchers at Iowa State University. Although they look like ordinary cabinets, (Fig. 1) their modular components can be changed easily for accessibility (Fig. 2)—and back again—with a few simple tools.

We recommend. Kwik-change Cabinets can be an effective way to meet accessibility requirements without expensive remodeling. Rather than designating some units as “handicapped” and others as “standard,” Kwik-change Cabinets could be installed in all units and the modular components could subsequently be reconfigured to adapt to individual needs as residents of differing abilities come and go.

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For more information, visit:
www.hs.iastate.edu/makeadifference

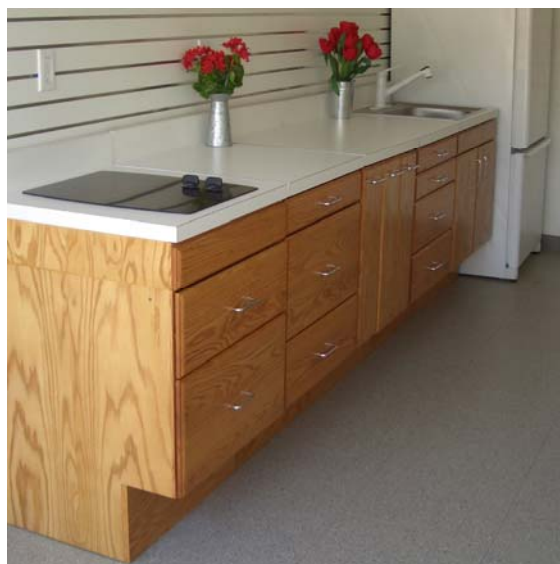


Figure 1: “Standard” configuration



Figure 2: “Accessible” configuration

This policy brief is based on published research: Years, M. H., Patterson, P. E., & Bice, A. (2005). Developing cabinet prototypes for a universal design kitchen: Responses from consumers and senior housing providers. *Housing and Society*, v32(2), 81-100.

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