

# ADULT FAMILY HOMES

## INTRODUCTION

- Adult Family Homes (AFH) are regulated through the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). More information about Adult Family Homes and how to obtain a license for an Adult Family Home can be found on their website at: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/residential-care-services/information-afh-prospective-providers>.
- As part of the licensing process, Adult Family Homes are required to have Building Code Inspections completed by the local jurisdiction where the home is located. Before a single family home can be converted to an Adult Family Home, modifications to the home are usually required.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO HAVE AN ADULT FAMILY HOME IN THE CITY OF TACOMA?

1. **Start the process through Washington State DSHS.** You will need to complete training, pass a background check, and prepare documentation for how you meet their qualifications. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/residential-care-services/information-afh-prospective-providers>
2. **Read through the Local Building Code Inspections Checklist** and evaluate if any changes need to be made to your house. The Checklist can be found at the DSHS website: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/residential-care-services/afh-building-inspections>. Prior to the AFH inspection, any changes will require a separate building permit(s) and inspection(s), see note 5.
3. **Required documents for AFH inspection include** a floor plan for each level of the home. You will submit the floor plan to both the City of Tacoma and DSHS. Include all sleeping rooms (bedrooms and beds) indicating which bedroom is: A, B, C, D, E and F. Label all components for existing, for example: stairs, ramps, platforms, lifts and elevators, smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, emergency escapes, adequate access to the right-of-way, etc. Your plans must be drawn to scale and be legible.
4. **Bring the plans and a copy of the checklist** to Planning and Development Services to set up an AFH inspection (Minimum Code Inspection). Check our

website for current office walk-in hours and days.

Meetings can also be arranged by submitting a [Pre-Application Request](#).

5. **A separate building permit is required** when changes are necessary to bring the house into compliance. Common items include: installing ramps, re-working bathroom fixture spacing and grab bars, and changing windows. Specific code requirements for permits and/or inspections can be seen at WAC 51-51, website link: <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=51-51>

This building permit must be completed with final inspection passed prior to calling for the AFH inspection.



*Note: This Tip Sheet does not substitute for codes and regulations.*

*The applicant is responsible for compliance with all codes and regulations, whether or not described in this document.*

**More information: City of Tacoma, Planning and Development Services | [www.tacomapermits.org](http://www.tacomapermits.org) (253) 591-5030**

To request this information in an alternative format or a reasonable accommodation, please call 253-591-5030 (voice).

TTY or STS users please dial 711 to connect to Washington Relay Services.

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## WILL I NEED A BUILDING PERMIT OR CAN I APPLY FOR A MINIMUM CODE INSPECTION WITHOUT ONE?

- It depends. Does your house meet the regulations from the Local Building Code Inspections Checklist without any alterations to the house or outside the house?
  - a. Yes – Come into our office or contact us about setting up an AFH inspection ([Minimal Code Inspection](#)).
  - b. No – You will need a building alteration (BLDRA) permit. Apply online or in person. You will need drawings and a written scope of work.
  - c. Not sure – Come into our office, call us at 253-591-5030, or email [buildingprc@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:buildingprc@cityoftacoma.org).

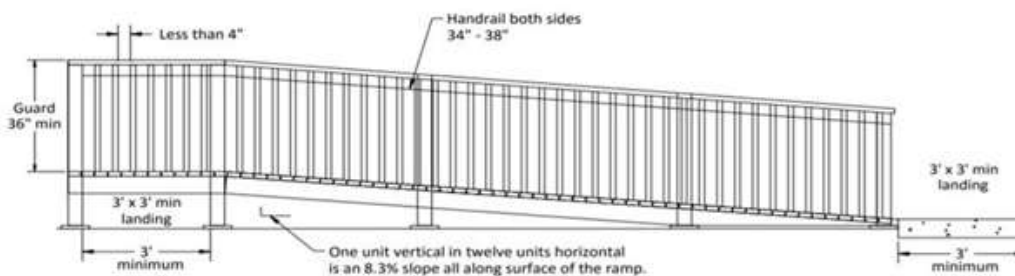
## PLANS REQUIREMENTS FOR AN AFH CONVERSION

- The house must comply with every item on the checklist. Clarify on the floor plans which items need correcting to comply with the checklist.
- Identify access from the right-of-way to the AFH for proper emergency services and if necessary show the ramp. A site plan is required if the ramp is new or there is other exterior work. The site plan must ensure that the new ramps, decks, or other exterior structures meet residential development standards under Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 13.06.020.F.
- Any proposals associated with Accessory Dwelling Units will require you to contact our office.
- Clearly identify the bedrooms and beds to ensure that the special needs housing regulations are met under TMC 13.06.080.N.
- Show all interior and exterior ramps. Show they are constructed in accordance with IRC with a maximum slope of 1 vertical to 12 horizontal. Exceptions to ramp requirements are not allowed for adult family homes.

- If the ramp needs to be constructed or modified, then provide framing plans, foundation plans, elevation views, and connection details. Identify on plans if there are stair treads, risers, and handrails in the building. Existing stair treads shall be 10" minimum and risers shall be 7.75" maximum. Handrails shall be installed on both sides of treads and risers numbering from one riser to multiple risers.
- Show location of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on plans and indicate that they shall be installed in such a manner so that the detection device warning is audible from all areas of the dwelling upon activation of a single alarm.
- Show the location of the required emergency escape windows with dimensions per International Residential Code.
- There may be other requirements not listed here depending on your scope of project.

## ADVISORY COMMENTS

- Understand grab bar locations for water closets, bathtubs and shower stalls. Vertical grab bars shall be installed at the control end wall and head end wall. Horizontal grab bars shall be provided at the control end, head end, and the back wall within the bathtub area. EXCEPTION: Shower stalls with permanent built-in seats are not required to have vertical or horizontal grab bars at the seat end wall. A vertical floor to ceiling grab bar shall be installed within 4 inches of the exterior of the shower aligned with the nose of the built-in seat.
- Understand the requirements on door operational parts and locking devices for bedrooms, bathrooms, closets, and exits.



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