



SAFEProject
Stop the Addiction Fatality Epidemic



Choosing
Quality
Recovery Housing
Workbook





Choosing *Quality* Recovery Housing Workbook

Oftentimes, people move into the first recovery home they can find that is both affordable and available. While options may be more limited in some areas, individuals in early recovery should feel empowered to search for a high-quality recovery home that will best suit their needs, priorities, and path of recovery.

This workbook is designed to assist you in your search and provide you guidance when determining what characteristics and support are most important for you and/or your loved ones.

How to Use this Notebook

This notebook provides an overview of the following:

- What is recovery housing
- Types of recovery home certifications & credentials
- A list of questions when conducting your search
- Feedback from recovery housing owners/operators and residents

Review the information contained in this notebook prior to meeting with any potential recovery home and be sure to take it along with you to assist you in your search. We have included blank pages so that you can take notes and draw clear comparisons to one another.

Choosing *Quality* Recovery Housing Workbook

What Is Recovery Housing?

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), “recovery houses are safe, healthy, family-like substance-free living environments that support individuals in recovery from addiction. While recovery residences vary widely in structure, all are centered on peer support and a connection to services that promote long-term recovery. Substance-free does not prohibit prescribed medications taken as directed by a licensed prescriber.” ^[1]





Types of Recovery Home Certifications & Credentials

NARR

The National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) is a 501-c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding the availability of well-operated, ethical, and supportive recovery housing. NARR offers recovery homes a suite of certifications.

<https://narronline.org>

Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)

CARF is an independent, non-profit accreditor providing accreditation services worldwide at the request of health and human service providers. CARF accreditation demonstrates a provider's commitment to enhance its performance, manage its risk, and distinguish its service delivery. <http://www.carf.org>

Oxford House

Oxford Houses are self-run and publicly supported. A 501(c)3 corporation serves as an umbrella organization connecting networked Oxford Houses and allocating resources to duplicate their model. <https://oxfordhouse.org>

Types of Recovery Home Certifications & Credentials

Independently Owned & Operated Homes

Recovery homes may be independently owned and operated as a small business outside of an existing credentialing network offering flexibility and ease of admission. These homes are often peer led, allowing the residents to provide mutual support to one another and become financially self-sufficient. Although independently owned recovery houses do not provide on-site licensed professional services, they often have resources and relationships with local recovery support professionals. Independently owned and operated recovery homes conform to local zoning and building safety codes for residential occupancy.

Note: States may have independent certification or credentialing requirements. Please check the recovery residence certification guidelines within your own state for more information.

One type of recovery housing is not better or worse than another - they each offer something different. It ultimately depends on what you are looking for in recovery housing. As a best practice, try visiting multiple types of settings.





Conducting Your Research

If possible, call the recovery house you are interested in visiting in advance and set up an appointment for a tour. If you are not able to visit in-person, then inquire if a virtual tour is possible. Try to plan for a visit that lasts approximately 30-60 minutes.

As a best practice, take note of your first impressions of each prospective house. Often, your instincts are the best indicator. A good start is to observe how you are greeted, what the interactions are between the owner/house manager and other residents, and the overall cleanliness of the home.

Use the checklist of sample questions below when you meet with the house manager to help inform your decision. This is not an all-encompassing list of questions and all of these questions may not necessarily apply to you and your search for recovery housing. Please, feel free to ask what you are most comfortable with or anything else that may come up for you during the visit. Additionally, you may consider asking some of the more basic questions over the phone first to allow more time for your visit.

General Questions

- Is there a required amount of recovery time prior to moving into the recovery house?
- Am I required to have completed a program prior to moving into the recovery house (e.g.: inpatient rehab program)?
- Are there staff members or a house manager on site? If so, what are their qualifications?
- What is the suggested length of stay? Is there a maximum length of stay?
- What is the maximum occupancy? What is the average occupancy?
- What is provided? (e.g.: sheets, towels, coffee, laundry detergent, cleaning supplies)
- What am I permitted to bring myself?
- Do we cook our own meals? If I am receiving food benefits (e.g: food stamps/ SNAP), how are they utilized in the house?
- Is there a weekly house meeting? If so, when?
- Is there accessible transportation nearby? Do you provide transportation to appointments?
- Are you able to provide proof of residence for my probation/parole officer or any other requesting party? Do you provide updates to probation/parole and/or treatment service providers?
- Are there security cameras? If so, where? Are they inside, outside or both?



Policy Questions

- Is there a resident handbook? May I have a copy to review in advance?
- What are the primary house rules?
- Is there a contract that both myself and the manager sign? May I see a copy in advance?
- Is there a relapse/recurrence policy?
- What are the policies on moving out?
- What medications are allowed? What medications are not allowed?
- Do I keep my medication with me or will it be locked up and administered?
- What is the visitor policy? Does that include children? Are there item drop off policies?
- Is there a blackout period? (a set amount of time during the introductory period where a new resident may be required to adhere to a more structured routine - e.g.: no cellphone, no vehicle, early curfew)
- What is the employment policy? Am I required to work? What if my job requires me to work past curfew? Is this allowed?
- Am I required to attend 12-step meetings or something similar?



Program Structure Questions

- Is there job assistance or other supportive programming (e.g.: parenting classes or GED classes)?
- Is peer support provided and if so, how often or accessible are their services?
- Is therapy or outpatient counseling required?
- If I am on disability and cannot work, am I required to participate in volunteer services?
- Do you require a deposit and if so, what are the provisions of the deposit?
- What is the price of rent and other fees?

Pregnant Women, Women and Children's Homes Questions

- What are the age ranges of the children residing in the home?
- Am I able to have all my children reside at the house with me (if you have more than one)?
- Do you provide childcare?
- Do you provide assistance with helping to regain custody of my child/children?
- What programs do you provide for children?
- What are the sleeping arrangements for me and my child/children?
- Do you provide healthy food or snacks for my child/children?



The National Council for Behavioral Health

According to research conducted by The National Council for Behavioral Health, recovery housing provides individuals opportunities to obtain and maintain long-term recovery. ^[2]

Benefits of living in recovery housing include:

- Reduced risk of relapse/recurrence
- Lower rates of incarceration and recidivism
- Higher income
- Increased employment
- Improved family relationships
- Overall higher recovery capital

This toolkit is provided for you, a prospective recovery house resident, to support you in your search. There is no perfect set of standards for how quality recovery housing is defined because everyone's recovery journey is different. However, we hope that this notebook will help you narrow down and prioritize factors that will make you most successful in your recovery. Remember, the work isn't over when you find good recovery housing. Building a strong relationship with your recovery community is an essential part of your experience.





Feedback from Owners, Operators & Residents

We asked recovery housing residents and managers about quality recovery housing.

Here is what they said:

“Signing a contract with the house manager and director of the program gave me a sense of structure, quality and organization”

– **Recovery Housing Resident**

“When I walked into the house, I noticed the guidelines printed very clearly on the wall. I liked the word ‘guidelines’ rather than ‘rules’. It made it feel more like a home.”

– **Recovery Housing Resident**

“Structured, safe, trusted environment. If those three things are not present, a person cannot recover. People are coming from all different circumstances- homelessness, abuse- a lot of them have never felt safe. Also, the people in the house are committed to their recovery.”

– **Carleah Phillips Summers,**
Founder and Executive Director
at Rainbow of Love Recovery Foundation

“Figure out what you need personally for recovery such as structure or accountability. If you’re coming from treatment or are working with trusted clinicians, ask their suggestions on how much care will be necessary for you moving forward. Personally, I was looking for accountability with some structure. I wasn’t looking for heavy structure but more accountability and a supportive community.”

– **Person in Recovery Who Lived In Recovery Housing**

Feedback from Owners, Operators & Residents

“You need to know that recovery housing is different from inpatient treatment. You won’t have a therapist at the house who is on call and ready to help you, and the people you live with will have lives outside of the recovery house. You need to know that there may be some restrictions placed on you (dating, socializing, etc.) and realize how that is helping your recovery.”

– Person in Recovery Who Lived In Recovery Housing

“If you know you will attend meetings or need a therapist, research where you can find meetings and therapists in relation to your recovery house. It makes a difference when you move to know where they are before rather than after.”

– Person in Recovery Who Lived In Recovery Housing

“It’s helpful to meet people who currently live in the house, and find out if they go to support groups, see a therapist, and are working towards maintaining their recovery. You’ll also want to know if people currently living in the house share similar stories to yours, have a recovery outlook similar to yours, and are people you can learn from.”

– Person in Recovery Who Lived In Recovery Housing

References

1. Recovery housing: Best practices and suggested guidelines. SAMHSA. (n.d.). Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/ebp/recovery-housing-best-practices-suggested-guidelines>.
2. Recovery Housing Issue Brief - National Council. The National Council. (2017, May). Retrieved December 9, 2021, from https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Recovery-Housing-Issue-Brief_May-2017.pdf?daf=375ateTbd56.







SAFEProject

Stop the Addiction Fatality Epidemic