

How Oxford Houses Can Make Treatment More Effective

Concepts like Oxford House are absolutely critical in the rehabilitation area. –Herb Kleber, M.D.

Washington Conference, August 1989

Both residential and outpatient treatment providers recognize the value of time and support for the recovering drug addict and alcoholic to learn and become comfortable with new behavior. Historically, the halfway house was developed as a means to provide the kind of time and support for the recovering individual to develop a lifestyle free of alcohol and drug use. Unfortunately, neither society nor the health care system had the resources necessary to establish enough halfway houses to provide space for all who could benefit from living in an environment supportive of recovery.

Today, Oxford houses fill that void because they are self-run and financially self-supported *rented* houses. Started in 1975, Oxford Houses have developed a sound system of operations and became a national movement of more than 2,600 individual homes. There are no limits on time of residency in an Oxford House.

Already many residential and outpatient treatment programs have discovered that Oxford Houses are relatively inexpensive to get started and assure better outcomes for their clients. The move toward Oxford House™ living – during or after treatment – has been accelerated, as insurance companies, EAPs employers and society at large have demand better treatment outcomes. As the tolerance for chronic relapsing has decreased, the number of Oxford Houses has increased. Over 80% of the residents in Oxford Houses stay clean and sober.

The new trend in treatment includes renting a house, getting an Oxford House™ charter, and assembling recovering individuals to live in the house and learn the Oxford House™ system of operations. Since all Oxford Houses are rented, it is relatively easy to get clusters of Oxford Houses started in any geographic area by using Oxford House, Inc. [OHI] to help.

See our website: www.oxfordhouse.org for the De Paul University studies funded by NIDA and NIAAA grants. At site: click "Publications/evaluations/DePaul."

Oxford House, Inc. Questions and Answers

Q. What is Oxford House™?

A. Oxford House™ is self-help supportive housing for those in recovery from a Substance Use Disorder. Each house must be chartered by Oxford House, Inc., the non-profit umbrella organization for the network of Oxford Houses [OHI]. Each Oxford House™ follows standardized operations developed through 44 years of Oxford House™ experience.

Q. How do Oxford Houses get started?

A. Oxford Houses get started when a group of individuals interested in recovery from addiction learns how to set up an Oxford House and how to make it work – usually with the help of an Oxford House outreach worker.

Q. What an Oxford House outreach worker?

A. An outreach worker is usually a trained resident or former resident of an Oxford House who can [1] find a suitable house to rent, [2] recruit recovering residents to live in the house, [3] teach the residents the time-tested system of disciplined democratic operation, and [4] organize clusters of houses into mutually supportive chapters. An outreach worker costs OHI about \$80 K per year with about half going for salary and fringe benefits the other half for expenses. OHI outreach workers start on average three new houses a year.

Q. What are the conditions of a charter?

A. The three conditions of a charter are: [1] the group must be democratically run; [2] the group must be financially self-supported, and [3] the group must expel any resident who uses alcohol or drugs in or out of the house. There is no charge for the charter.

Q. How does a group get a charter?

A. An existing group, a potential group or a treatment provider helping to form a group can apply to Oxford House, Inc. – the umbrella non-profit organization – at the address listed below.

Oxford House Inc.

1010 Wayne Ave., Suite 300
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
Telephone (301) 587-2916
Facsimile (301) 589-0302
Internet: www.oxfordhouse.org

Oxford House™

Self-Help Recovery Housing
Since 1975



"Dollar for dollar, I can think of no other federal government investment that has yielded so great a return for our country and for those whose lives have been all but been destroyed by drugs and alcohol. I salute you and those who have helped to expand the Oxford Houses."

Jerome H. Jaffe, M.D. February 4, 2011

Oxford House, Inc. is the 501(c)(3) non-profit umbrella organization of the national network of individual Oxford Houses.

The primary purpose of Oxford House, Inc. is to establish enough self-run, self-supported recovery houses to provide an opportunity for every recovering individual to learn a clean and sober way of life – forever.

This pamphlet discusses how Oxford Houses can provide the missing link in the treatment protocol to assure recovery without relapse.

Oxford House Inc.

1010 Wayne Ave. Suite 300
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Website: www.oxfordhouse.org
Vacancy Website: www.oxfordvacancies.com

Recovering From A Substance Use Disorder

Substance Use Disorders [SUD] are chronic and progressive problems. Those with a SUD become “hooked” on their drug of choice and physically all cells in their bodies call out for a steady supply of the drug. This physical compulsion causes the mind to trigger any kind of behavior needed to get the next drink of alcohol or an illicit drug “fix.” Once addicted, the only “cure” is total abstinence – stopping the use of the alcohol and illicit drugs – forever. Stopping the use of drugs and alcohol use is difficult, but not impossible. Most addicts go through a number of periods where they stop use because they have run out of alcohol or their other drug of choice. When an addict stops, he or she feels sick because of withdrawal; i.e., every cell in the body is calling out for the drug and the body shakes, sweats and produces great anxiety. The addict really “feels” he or she is going to die unless the drug of choice is obtained quickly. This is called detoxification and it usually ends within minutes after the addict has ingested his or her drug of choice. However, for a fortunate few – who can go three to seven days without taking their drug of choice – detoxification is the beginning of a whole new life.

Short-term custody – in a hospital setting or a supervised detoxification facility – is the usual way to stop an addict’s compulsive use of alcohol and drugs. Treatment can educate and motivate an individual to stay stopped and Oxford Houses can help to make treatment successful.

Finding a suitable house to rent, recruiting initial residents, teaching the system of operation to the residents and recovery community is often provided by trained outreach workers at very little cost. Once started it costs very little to keep houses on track because residents run the house and pay expenses. The residents pay the operating costs of the recovery homes and operations are maintained by following the disciplined, democratic, self-help system of operation used for more than 44 years.



Staying Stopped

Throughout its existence, Oxford House has combined the concepts of self-support and responsibility with a fellowship having the common purpose of continued and comfortable sobriety.”

From Tradition One
Oxford House Manual ©

Behavior change is never easy and it is especially difficult for the individual who is recovering from addiction. While the physical craving for drugs ends within a few days, the mind tries to trick an individual into returning to alcohol or drug use. When you think about it, the mind is doing what comes naturally – forgetting pain and remembering pleasure.

Professionals speak often of “denial” when dealing with recovering addicts. The addict really does not believe that alcohol and drug use produces harm. The addict “remembers” the good feeling that came from the alcohol or drugs and wants to recapture it. At the same time, he or she forgets the violence, irrational behavior (fights, loss of job and family), and physical withdrawal that can make one feel sick (hang-overs).

Treatment plus twelve-step/self-help programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) have helped millions of recovering addicts to change their behavior to adopt lifelong abstinence. Unfortunately, many recovering individuals need more support than AA and NA alone. Oxford Houses provide the additional support and the time to learn new behavior.

About 50% of the Oxford House residents nationally continue aftercare counseling. Residents also go to an average of 5 AA or NA meetings a week – even though there is no requirement to do so. No wonder 80% of the residents stay clean and sober.

Getting into an existing Oxford House™ requires an individual application and acceptance by 80% of the existing residents. If needed, a treatment provider or those in recovery can start a new Oxford House™ if the house can accommodate at least six individuals and a charter is granted by Oxford House, Inc.



How Oxford Houses Work

Oxford Houses are family houses that groups of recovering individuals rent to live together in an environment supportive of recovery from addiction. Each house is self-run and self-supported following a standardized system of democratic operation. Each group – or treatment provider or other entity on behalf of a group – obtains a charter from Oxford House, Inc., the umbrella organization for the national network of individual Oxford Houses. Download the application for a charter to start a new Oxford House at www.oxfordhouse.org.

Oxford House charters have three basic requirements for the group:

- it must be democratically self-run,
- it must be financially self-supported, and
- it must expel any resident who returns to using alcohol or drugs.

The standardized disciplined system of operations has evolved from the 44-year history of Oxford House and permits replication of Oxford Houses throughout the country. All Oxford Houses are informally tied together to assure mutual support and quality control.

Individuals living in an Oxford House™ learn or relearn values, responsible behavior and slowly, but surely, develop long-term behavior to assure comfortable sobriety – forever. Some individuals live in Oxford Houses a few months, others for many years. Together, these individuals develop each Oxford House™ into a place to learn comfortable sobriety without relapse.

To get into an existing Oxford House™, call the house to find a vacancy or visit the web site. If there are no existing houses in your area, start one. For more information or to receive a proposal to help your treatment program develop a cluster of Oxford Houses, contact:

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