

## How Oxford Houses Can Make Treatment More Effective

*Concepts like Oxford House are absolutely critical in the rehabilitation area.* – Herb Kleber, M.D., August 1989

Both residential and outpatient treatment providers recognize the value of time and support for those recovering from a Substance Use Disorder 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, the traditional halfway house is expensive to operate and too often fails to provide the time, motivation or support needed to assure recovery without the recurrence of the use of alcohol and illicit drugs.

Today, Oxford Houses fill that void because they are self-run and financially self-supported rented houses that can provide the time each person needs. Started in 1975, Oxford House™ has developed a sound system of operations and now has more than 2,600 individual Oxford Houses. In 2011, Oxford House™ was listed on SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices [NREPP].

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, employers, EAPs and society at large have demanded better long-term outcomes from treatment providers. As the tolerance for chronic relapsing has decreased, the number of Oxford Houses has increased and 80% of the residents in Oxford Houses stay clean and sober.<sup>1</sup>

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 operation. Since all Oxford Houses are rented, it is relatively easy to get clusters of Oxford Houses started in any geographic area and to maintain quality control.

## Oxford House, Inc. Questions and Answers

**Q.** What are Oxford Houses?

**A.** Oxford Houses are groups of 6 to 16 recovering individuals who live together in a rented house and follow the standardized, disciplined system of democratic operations and financial self-support in compliance with the terms of an Oxford House charter.

**Q.** What is an Oxford House™ charter?

**A.** It is a document and authorization from Oxford House, Inc. – the umbrella non-profit organization of the national network of Oxford Houses – that is issued without charge and has three conditions.

**Q.** What are the three conditions of an Oxford House™ charter?

**A.** The three conditions of a charter are: [1] the group must be democratically self-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.

**Q.** Are there minimum charter requirements?

**A.** Yes, the house must be for recovering alcoholics and/or drug addicts. The house the group rents must be suitable for a minimum of six individuals. All the individuals in the group must be of the same sex.

**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 organization – at the address listed below. There is no fee or charge and the application can be download from the web.

Oxford House, Inc.  
1010 Wayne Ave., Suite 300 Silver Spring,  
Maryland 20910 Telephone (301) 587-2916  
Facsimile (301) 589-0302  
Vacancies: [www.oxfordvacancies.com](http://www.oxfordvacancies.com)  
Website: [www.oxfordhouse.org](http://www.oxfordhouse.org)

# Oxford House™

*Evidence-based; Nationally Recognized*



## Working with Treatment Providers

Going back to where you came from after treatment for alcoholism and drug addiction almost always spells failure – a return to old behavior.

Mark Spence, May 5, 1991  
CBS Program “60 Minutes”

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.

Contributions and grants are used to expand the network of Oxford Houses by providing trained outreach workers to establish new houses and to provide on-going organizational and technical support from a central services office.

This pamphlet “Working With Treatment Providers” discusses how Oxford Houses can provide the missing link in the treatment protocol to achieve recovery without relapse.

<sup>1</sup> See the DePaul University studies funded by NIDA and NIAAA grants at our website: [www.oxfordhouse.org](http://www.oxfordhouse.org) under ‘Publications/Evaluations/DePaul’.

## Recovering from a Substance Use Disorder

Substance Use Disorders [SUD's] 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 illicit drugs and alcohol use is difficult, but not impossible. Behavior change is never easy and it is especially difficult for the individual who is recovering from addiction. Most addicts go through a number of periods where they stop use because they have run out of alcohol or their drug of choice. For a fortunate few – those 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.

Treatment plus Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) – widespread twelve-step self-help programs – 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 Oxford House residents continue formal 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. Experience shows that the system works and a significant majority of residents achieve long-term recovery without relapse.



## Starting a New House

New houses can be started when a group of six or more recovering individuals apply for a charter from Oxford House, Inc. [OHI] and find a suitable house to rent as a group. Many states or behavioral health organizations have hired Oxford House, Inc. [OHI] to provide technical assistance to develop Oxford Houses in their area.

Once started, 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. To get properly started, it is best to use OHI for finding the house, training the residents and getting the house properly started.

## Research and Professional Recognition

*“While research in AA has been limited by the role of anonymity in recovery, the willingness of the Oxford Houses to open their doors to academic research gives us an opportunity to see recovery from addiction in action.”*

[Jeffrey D. Roth, FASAM, a Chicago addictions psychiatrist, editor of the Journal of Groups in Addiction in Recovery]

Since its beginning, Oxford House has been open to and has actively encouraged academic research into the Oxford House program. Many of the academic research articles that have been published can be found on the Oxford House web site. Oxford House also conducts its own surveys of its residents and publishes results. These activities permit Oxford House™ to continually monitor, evaluate and improve the program.

In 2016, the Surgeon Generals report, *Facing Addiction*, singled out Oxford House™ as an ideal cost-effective way to improve treatment outcomes by providing open-ended wrap around self-run, self-supported housing to foster long-term recovery without relapse.



## How Oxford Houses Work

Oxford Houses are rented family houses where groups of recovering individuals 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 on behalf of a group – obtains a charter from Oxford House, Inc., the umbrella organization for the national network of individual Oxford Houses

An Oxford House charter has 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 work 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.

Getting into an existing Oxford House™ requires application and acceptance by 80% of the existing residents. To get a client into an existing Oxford House™, call the house to find a vacancy or visit the web site at [www.oxfordvacancies.com](http://www.oxfordvacancies.com). If there are no existing houses in your area, start one. For more information or a proposal to help your treatment program develop a cluster of Oxford Houses, contact:

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