

1-800-221-6333



CONSUMER GUIDE TO SOBER HOUSING

Recovery happens...



**Call 1-800-221-6333
for assistance Monday- Friday 9 AM-5 PM
Advocacy • Information • Recovery Support**

Introduction

This *Consumer Guide to Sober Housing* provides information for people seeking Sober House services for themselves or others. Its purpose is to educate the “consumer.” A well-informed person can then make wise decisions.

Sober Houses are a vital component of a comprehensive Recovery Support Service system. Alcoholics and addicts are often treated and discharged from various levels of care, only to immediately return to an environment where triggers are powerful, often overwhelming and many times result in relapse. Many professionals and frontline workers acknowledge that lack of appropriate, sober housing is one of the most frustrating of the barriers for those in need of assistance. Sober Housing helps people at different stages of recovery experience a safe place to live where they can focus on recovery. This guide focuses on and defines Sober Housing options available after detoxification.

This *Consumer Guide to Sober Housing* is designed to answer commonly asked questions about Sober Housing. If you have additional questions or want information on how to find Sober Houses, or if you would like to talk about other recovery issues, please call our toll-free Advocacy/Information line at 1-800-221-6333.



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Yes, there are different types of care and sober housing...

There are “Halfway” Houses, Recovery Centers, houses that follow the “Oxford” model, and Recovery Houses (sometimes called “three-quarter-way” houses or “transitional housing”). Some of the differences between them are the level of structure, staffing, accountability, care, and services provided for drug/alcohol recovery. An assessment will determine which level is right for you. Call 1-800-221-6333 to find assessment sites near you.

HERE ARE CATEGORIES OF SOBER HOUSING

Halfway House	Treatment programming Live in/work out State licensed 24-hour staffing
Recovery Center	Ongoing Recovery Support Services Live in/work out 24-hour coverage
Oxford House	Live in/work out Leased and democratically run by residents 12-Step meeting attendance strongly encouraged Chartered by Oxford House, Inc.
Recovery House (3/4-way House/ Transitional Housing)	Live in/work out 12-Step meeting attendance strongly encouraged 24-hour house manager (varies by house)

**ON THE PAGES THAT FOLLOW,
LEARN ABOUT:**

HALFWAY

HOUSES



? **RECOVERY**

CENTERS



? **OXFORD**

HOUSES



? **RECOVERY**

HOUSES



HALFWAY HOUSES



What is a Halfway House?

- A Halfway House is a community-based residential treatment and rehabilitation facility that provides services for chemically dependent persons in a supportive, chemical free environment.
- While this service setting does provide substance abuse treatment it also emphasizes protective and supportive elements of family living and encourages and provides opportunities for independent growth and responsible community living.
- Mutual self-help assistance in economic/social adjustment and integration of life skills into daily life as well as a solid program of recovery are also encouraged.
- Clients entering this environment must have already had some experience in another type of drug and alcohol treatment.
- A Halfway House is a live in/work out environment with a typical length of stay being three to six months.







Who manages a Halfway House?

- Halfway Houses are licensed treatment facilities, professionally staffed in accordance with state licensing requirements.
- As licensed facilities, all Halfway Houses are required to use an assessment process for admission.
- The Pennsylvania Client Placement Criteria is the assessment tool used in the state for all counties and HealthChoices managed care providers.



RECOVERY CENTERS



What is a Recovery Center?

-  A Recovery Center is a recovery-oriented sanctuary anchored in the heart of the community. Recovery Centers connect people with recovery needs to people with recovery assets.
-  Recovery Centers are similar to Recovery Houses in terms of rules and rent, but they also provide community-based and peer-supported life and recovery skill-building programming.
-  Like Halfway Houses, Recovery Centers emphasize the protective and supportive elements of family living and encourage and provide opportunities for independent growth and responsible community living.
-  Recovery Centers encourage a solid program of recovery that includes mutual support.
-  Recovery Centers also facilitate linkages to recovery-conducive employment, planned leisure activities, sober socializing, and community service work.
-  A Recovery Center is a live in/work out environment; some centers require a 6-month minimum length of stay with no maximum length of stay for residents in good standing.

Who manages a Recovery Center?

-  Typically, non-profit organizations run Recovery Centers. Recovery Centers are staffed by professionals as well as volunteers who are “sober lifestyle consultants.”
-  A Recovery Center uses an intake process for admission, and works with clients to develop recovery plans and support to achieve goals.



OXFORD HOUSES



What is an Oxford House?

- An Oxford House is a self-run, self-supported recovery house program for individuals recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction. Oxford Houses assure an alcohol- and drug-free living environment.
- Oxford Houses are chartered through Oxford House, Inc. The first Oxford House was started in Silver Spring, Maryland in 1975.
- Generally, an individual comes into an Oxford House following a 28-day rehabilitation program or at least 10-day detoxification program.
- A recovering individual can live in an Oxford House for as long as he or she does not drink alcohol, does not use drugs, and pays an equal share of the house expenses. The average stay is a little over a year, but many residents stay three, four, or more years.

Who manages an Oxford House?

- Oxford Houses are democratically self-run by the residents who elect officers to serve for terms of six months. In this respect, they are similar to a college fraternity or sorority.
- If, however, a majority of residents believe that any member has relapsed into using alcohol or drugs, that person is immediately expelled.
- There are no resident counselors in an Oxford House.

What is Oxford House, Inc.?

- ❑ Oxford House Inc., is a non-profit, tax exempt, publicly supported corporation which acts as a umbrella organization for the national network of Oxford Houses. It provides quality control by organizing regional Houses into Chapters and by relying heavily upon the national network of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups.
- ❑ Oxford House is not affiliated with AA or NA; however, its members realize that recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction can only be assured by the changing of their lifestyle through full participation in AA and NA. In most communities, the members of those organizations help Oxford Houses get started and report any charter compliance problems with respect to a particular house.
- ❑ As soon as Oxford House, Inc. hears of any charter compliance problems it takes corrective action, because the Oxford House name is an important factor in the recovery of thousands of individuals.



RECOVERY HOUSES



What is a Recovery House?

- A Recovery House is intended to be a safe environment where a person in early recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction, or those with a history of recovery, resides so they can focus on recovery.
- Recovery Houses are self-sufficient or receive funding from various sources; all collect rent from the housing residents to help cover operational expenses and, in some cases, provide some income to the individuals who own/operate the house.
- Residents need moderate structure and the support of others experiencing similar challenges in order to maintain sobriety.
- Each facility has rules that all persons living there are required to follow.
- A Recovery House is a live in/work out environment; the typical length of stay is three months to one year.

Who manages a Recovery House?

- Many non-profit organizations operate Recovery Houses.
- Other Recovery Houses are owned and operated by people in recovery who see the need for transitional housing.
- Some owners are strictly business persons.
- A Recovery House may be part of a Recovery House Coalition and may have agreed to standards set forth by that coalition.

ON THE PAGES THAT FOLLOW, LEARN ABOUT:

STANDARDS—WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN QUALITY SOBER HOUSING

*The following standards are combined from two sources. One source is the Recovery Housing Coalition of Connecticut. The other is Philadelphia's Coordinating Office for Drug and Alcohol Abuse Programs (CODAAP). CODAAP's standards were developed with direct input from over a dozen Philadelphia recovery organizations/houses committed to improving the care of peoples striving to maintain a healthy and productive life style.



ARE THERE STANDARDS THAT GOVERN SOBER HOUSING?



Standards provide a framework and goals across a range of essential areas in order to promote a stable, clean and sober environment that is safe and conducive for recovering individuals and families. Standards address things such as services, programs, management, staffing, physical plant, safety and emergency procedures, sanitation, food service rules, staff training and development, and fund controls. Generally, Sober Housing facilities are contracted with agencies and agree to follow standards to be considered as a referral. Standards help set uniform, consistent performance criteria and guiding principles of operation that are acceptable to the resident and all referral sources. The following are examples of standards.*

Ask for a tour. Look for the following:

Mission/Philosophy of Program

A written statement that describes the facility's mission and intention to provide quality recovery care to individuals and families striving to maintain sobriety.

- A written description of what is offered to the residents.
- Safe and comfortable living accommodations.
- Policies to encourage and support residents in practicing the faith-based activity of their choice.

Physical Plant/Codes

- The appropriate zoning for the number of people residing in the house.
- Adherence to all fire codes and maintain required equipment

Consumer Guide to Sober Housing

- ☐ Adherence to all applicable health codes, housing and license and inspection codes; a certificate of occupancy is secured and prominently displayed.
- ☐ Adequate furniture per person, kitchen facility, bathrooms, living space per resident and sufficient common space for the number of people residing in the house.

Comprehensive General Liability Insurance

- ☐ Liability insurance that provides coverage for injury to residents, visitors or property damage.

Staffing Coverage & Staff Training

- ☐ Staff coverage for supervision or a designated individual responsible for house operations 24-hours/day.
- ☐ Sufficient supervision of residents by maintaining a system of accounting for their whereabouts.
- ☐ Medication management procedures to control any prescription medication within the house. Procedures include a locked cabinet, medication logs and process for observing the taking of medications. The house will also have a clear written policy of non-prescription or over the counter pharmaceuticals.
- ☐ Staff training on house orientation, safety, rules, and emergency procedures.

Description of Intake Criteria and Intake Process

- ☐ A description of intake criteria and specific steps involved in the intake process.
- ☐ A written description of policies regarding resident admission criteria.
- ☐ A policy that resident transfers must leave in good standing. Good standing would include but is not limited to rent, house dues and house violations.



Clearly Articulated and Documented (Written) House Rules

- ☐ Clear and documented (written) house rules, such as house visitation policy and hours, curfew limits, furlough policies, and expectations on attending fellowship meetings and/or house meetings.
- ☐ A verbal orientation for all new residents covering house rules/regulations.
- ☐ A schedule on the collection of fees/rent signed by the resident as part of the rental agreement.
- ☐ A document/statement upon admission that shall be signed indicating that a resident is responsible for all health care costs.
- ☐ A clear and written drug screening policy/procedure for urine testing as well as pre-set sanctions for use and a clear prohibition of substance abuse in the house; the policy is reviewed and signed by each resident.
- ☐ A written policy promoting appropriate house/community behavior and discouraging violence/fighting.
- ☐ A resident grievance policy and appeal process for those facing disciplinary action, loss of privileges or early termination.
- ☐ A document that attests to the fact that house rules were explained to new residents and that they make a commitment to abide by the documented house rules.

Resident Records

- ☐ Resident records maintained in a locked file (e.g., signed house rules, rental agreement, payment log and any necessary signed release forms, brief discharge summary, etc.).

Emergency Procedures

- ☐ Written fire and emergency procedures that are reviewed and signed by a resident upon admission.

- ☐ Clearly defined procedures for accessing services (substance abuse, mental health, or medical) when an emergency situation arises.

Relationships with Licensed Treatment Providers

- ☐ A relationship with licensed treatment providers such as drug and alcohol programs, medical providers, and mental health providers.

Awareness and Adherence to Federal and State Regulations on Confidentiality and Non-Discrimination

- ☐ A policy that all staff are aware of and adhere to federal and state regulations on discrimination and confidentiality, strictly limiting disclosure of confidential information.

Non-Exploitation of Residents

- ☐ A written policy promoting non-exploitation of residents including protection from sexual abuse, physical intimidation, financial manipulation or forced labor.

Description of Discharge Criteria and Discharge Process

- ☐ A clear and written procedure for discharge (e.g., positive urine test results, aggressive behavior, etc.).

*Standards have been combined from two sources: The Recovery Housing Coalition of Connecticut and the Philadelphia's Coordinating Office for Drug and Alcohol Abuse Programs (CODAAP). CODAAP's standards were developed with direct input from over a dozen Philadelphia recovery organizations/houses committed to improving the care of peoples striving to maintain a healthy and productive life style.



**ON THE PAGES THAT FOLLOW,
FIND THREE IDENTICAL SETS OF:**

**SAMPLE “QUESTIONS TO ASK” WHEN
YOU CALL OR VISIT SOBER HOUSES.
THESE QUESTIONNAIRES CAN HELP GUIDE
YOU IN YOUR SEARCH FOR THE RIGHT
SOBER HOUSE. YOU MAY WANT TO USE
THEM TO TRACK ANSWERS FOR UP TO
THREE DIFFERENT HOUSES.**

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN SELECTING SOBER HOUSING
FOR HOUSE 1**

CONTACT NAME _____ **PHONE #:** _____

House Type: (circle)
Halfway Recovery Center Oxford Recovery House

What should I ask about entrance requirements?	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Must I come from a treatment facility?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is an interview required for admittance?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a waiting list?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Do residents have to agree to random drug and alcohol screenings?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Are clients on a methadone maintenance program eligible for admittance?		
What should I ask about costs and conveniences?	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> What are the up front costs?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Rent payments are how much? How often?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is heat, hot water and electricity included in rent?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is cable TV included in rent?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Are meals provided?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a phone on the premise?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a laundry facility on premise or near by?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is parking for registered and insured vehicles available?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is transportation available and provided by facility?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the facility location on or near a bus route?		

**SAMPLE
QUESTIONS TO ASK
HOUSE 1, CONTINUED**

House Address:

What should I ask about house rules?	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents attend outpatient treatment?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents seek full-time employment?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a written policy regarding medications? (If so please describe.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Do residents have to attend a weekly house meeting?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must all residents participate in house duties (chores)?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents attend 12-Step recovery support meetings?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents attend a faith-based recovery support group?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a curfew?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is smoking allowed?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Are overnights and furloughs allowed?		
Does this House have standards, (see pages 11-14)?	Yes	No
Any other questions I have? (List your questions below)	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>		

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN SELECTING SOBER HOUSING
FOR HOUSE 2**

CONTACT NAME _____ **PHONE #:** _____

House Type: (circle)
Halfway Recovery Center Oxford Recovery House

What should I ask about entrance requirements?	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Must I come from a treatment facility?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is an interview required for admittance?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a waiting list?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Do residents have to agree to random drug and alcohol screenings?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Are clients on a methadone maintenance program eligible for admittance?		
What should I ask about costs and conveniences?	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> What are the up front costs?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Rent payments are how much? How often?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is heat, hot water and electricity included in rent?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is cable TV included in rent?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Are meals provided?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a phone on the premise?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a laundry facility on premise or near by?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is parking for registered and insured vehicles available?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is transportation available and provided by facility?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the facility location on or near a bus route?		

**SAMPLE
QUESTIONS TO ASK
HOUSE 2, CONTINUED**

House Address:

What should I ask about house rules?	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents attend outpatient treatment?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents seek full-time employment?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a written policy regarding medications? (If so please describe.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Do residents have to attend a weekly house meeting?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must all residents participate in house duties (chores)?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents attend 12-Step recovery support meetings?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents attend a faith-based recovery support group?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a curfew?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is smoking allowed?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Are overnights and furloughs allowed?		
Does this House have standards, (see pages 11-14)?	Yes	No
Any other questions I have? (List your questions below)	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>		

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN SELECTING SOBER HOUSING
FOR HOUSE 3**

CONTACT NAME _____ **PHONE #:** _____

House Type: (circle)
Halfway Recovery Center Oxford Recovery House

What should I ask about entrance requirements?	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Must I come from a treatment facility?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is an interview required for admittance?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a waiting list?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Do residents have to agree to random drug and <input type="checkbox"/> alcohol screenings?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Are clients on a methadone maintenance program <input type="checkbox"/> eligible for admittance?		
What should I ask about costs and conveniences?	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> What are the up front costs?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Rent payments are how much? How often?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is heat, hot water and electricity included in rent?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is cable TV included in rent?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Are meals provided?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a phone on the premise?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a laundry facility on premise or near by?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is parking for registered and insured vehicles available?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is transportation available and provided by facility?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the facility location on or near a bus route?		

**SAMPLE
QUESTIONS TO ASK
HOUSE 3, CONTINUED**

House Address:

What should I ask about house rules?	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents attend outpatient treatment?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents seek full-time employment?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a written policy regarding medications? (If so please describe.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Do residents have to attend a weekly house meeting?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must all residents participate in house duties (chores)?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents attend 12-Step recovery support meetings?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Must residents attend a faith-based recovery support group?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a curfew?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Is smoking allowed?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Are overnights and furloughs allowed?		
Does this House have standards, (see pages 11-14)?	Yes	No
Any other questions I have? (List your questions below)	Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>		

Additional Information

The Pennsylvania Alliance of Recovery Residences (PARR) was founded in 2011 out of the need to evaluate and monitor standards-based recovery support services provided in community-based, residential settings throughout Pennsylvania. They are the “Seal of Approval” you want to see if you are looking for a Recovery Residence. For more information go to their website:

www.parronline.org



Conclusion

Selecting the right type of and particular Sober House is a very important step toward a life in recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction. It is our goal and hope that this *Consumer Guide to Sober Housing* helps you with your selection process.

PRO-ACT is a grassroots organization of members of the recovery community. Our organization is hosted by The Council of Southeast Pennsylvania, Inc., a private non-profit organization. It is within PRO-ACT’s mission to educate the community about issues pertaining to alcohol and other drugs, including Recovery Support Services such as Sober Housing.

We have faith in your ability to recover and congratulate you for having the courage to seek Sober Housing. If you have any questions or you would simply like to talk to a PRO-ACT representative, please call our Advocacy/Information Line at 1-800-221-6333.

A bright light on the horizon...

Many people in various stages of recovery from alcohol/other drugs need a “safe” place to live where they can focus on recovery and rebuild their lives. At a time when access to affordable, quality recovery options has been significantly diminished, Sober Housing is a bright light on the horizon. Sober Houses not only help to develop the tools necessary to embark on a life of recovery, they can also positively impact the quality of that recovery.

This *Consumer Guide to Sober Living* has been developed to provide information and answer frequently asked questions about Sober Housing.

For information on how to locate

Sober Housing, call 1-800-221-6333.

