

OXFORD HOUSE - A Concept, System of Operations and Traditions Recovery, Responsibility, and Replication

Started in the Washington, D. C. area in 1975, Oxford House is a self-run, self-supported group housing for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts. The first house for thirteen men opened a second house within six months. By 1990, there were 90 Oxford House - 69 for men and 21 for women and as a result of P.L. 100-690, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, the cost-effective, self-run, self-supported recovery house can soon be replicated throughout the nation.

The new law requires each state to establish a revolving fund to make loans to cover the first month's rent and security deposit for groups of recovering individuals everywhere to start recovery homes. Oxford House will provide each new group an Oxford House Charter and will help the new group with the know-how and support to establish and operate a successful recovery house.

The Charter is free of charge, but has three conditions each group must follow to comply with the new law and keep its charter:

1. The house must operate using democratic procedures;
2. The group must be financially self-supporting, and
3. Any resident who relapses into using drugs or alcohol must be immediately expelled.

Oxford House, Inc., is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation which acts as an umbrella organization for the national network of Oxford House. It provides quality control by organizing houses in a region into chapters and by relying heavily upon the national network of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups. While Oxford House is not affiliated with AA or NA, its members realize that recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction can only be assured by changing lifestyle through full participation in AA and NA. In most communities, 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 such problems, it takes corrective action because the good name of Oxford House is an important factor in the recovery of thousands of individuals.

Q. What is Oxford House?

A. 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. The first Oxford House was started in Silver Spring, Maryland 1975.

Q. Who manages Oxford House?

A. They 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. However, if a majority of the residents believe that any member has relapsed into using alcohol or drugs, that person immediately expelled.

Q. How long can anyone live in an Oxford House?

A. 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 some residents stay three, four or more years. There is no pressure on anyone in good standing to leave.

Q. Why is Oxford House self-run?

A. Oxford Houses are self-run because (1) this permits individuals in recovery to learn responsibility, and (2) the low cost associated with self-run housing permits extensive replication of houses.

Q. How can one get into an Oxford House?

A. Any recovering alcoholic or drug addict can apply to get into an Oxford House by filling out an application and being interviewed by the existing members of a house. The application is then considered by the membership of the house and if there is a vacancy and if 80% of the members approve, the applicant is accepted and moves in.

Q. What if there is no Oxford House in an area or there are no vacancies in any Oxford House in the region?

A. Any group of recovering individuals can start a new Oxford House. All they need to do is to find a house to rent in the name of the group and apply to Oxford House, Inc., for a charter.

Q. Is there any financial aid available to start a new Oxford House?

A. Yes, each state has in place a revolving fund that can make loans to cover the first month's rent and security deposit (up to \$4000) to rent a house in a good neighborhood. The loan must be repaid by the group within two years in 24 equal installments.

Q. Can the new house become affiliated with Oxford House?

A. Yes, by simply writing or calling Oxford House to ask for a Charter application. Once that application is completed and received by Oxford House, Inc., it will grant a charter at no cost.

Q. Can an Oxford House be started without a loan from the state?

A. Yes, the prospective residents of the house can find a suitable house, rent it, put up the security deposit and pay the first month's rent themselves. Oxford House, Inc., will favorably consider a charter application whether or not a loan is received from the state.

Q. Can both men and women live in the same Oxford House?

A. No, Experience has shown that Oxford Houses work for both men and women, but not in the same house.

Q. What is the "ideal" number of individuals to make a self-run, self-supported recovery house work?

A. Experience of Oxford House has shown that from 8 to 25 members works very well. A house with fewer than six individuals is difficult to maintain because of the small size of the group and the fact that any vacancy causes greater disruption to the financial welfare of the house than a vacancy in a larger house.

Q. How much sobriety or clean time is needed before an individual can be accepted into an Oxford House?

A. There is no minimum time limit. Generally an individual comes into an Oxford House following a 28-day rehabilitation program or at least a ten day detoxification program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, WRITE OR CALL THE OXFORD HOUSE NATIONAL OFFICE, P.O. BOX 994, GREAT FALLS, VA 22066 HOTLINE - 1-800-344-2509