

# Recovery Residences

The National Association of Recovery Residences defines the term “recovery residence” to broadly describe “a sober, safe, and healthy living environment that promotes recovery from alcohol and other drug use and associated problems.” These residences are intended to provide a structured, alcohol- and drug-free living environment for individuals in recovery from substance use disorders (SUDs). Recovery residences can vary widely in size, organizational structure, the populations targeted, and services offered.

## Need

More than 70,000 people in the United State died of a drug overdose in 2017. Between 2007 and 2017, the number of overdoses involving opioids increased more than 250 percent. During the same time period, there were also significant increases in fatal overdoses involving cocaine, psychostimulants, and cocaine.

Access to quality treatment plays a key role in addressing the drug overdose crisis in the United States. It is also vital that individuals can access quality services and support during the vulnerable early stages of recovery.

## Benefits

Research suggests that recovery residences are cost-effective and promote recovery; however, more research is needed to understand exactly how recovery residences are effective and whom they best serve.

Benefits may include:

- **Accountability:** Residences provide measures to hold residents accountable, which aids in self-accountability and responsibility
- **Health and safety:** Residences provide safe living environments and recovery-related support systems whereas a resident's previous home and lifestyle may be dangerous or unsupportive
- **Structure:** Residences are designed to improve self-discipline through rules and regulations, and to help individuals in recovery build on the gains made while in treatment
- **Transition:** Residences assist individuals in transitioning from highly structured residential care to day-to-day life, and may also assist residents with obtaining employment and establishing a more permanent residence

## Services

Generally, recovery residences do not offer formal SUD treatment. At a minimum, residences offer peer-to-peer support. Some residences may offer more intensive support, such as counseling services. Many residences emphasize 12-step support groups.

Recovery residences' medication policies vary. Some residences may not accept individuals prescribed medications for SUDs, such as buprenorphine for opioid use disorder. Such policies may be due, in part, to lack of capacity to manage and oversee the use of addiction-treatment medications in the house. For some residences, these policies may stem from philosophical differences regarding the use of medications to treat SUDs.

## Governance

Internally, recovery residences establish house rules, policies, and procedures to govern the group living environment. For example:

- "Oxford Houses," which are a subset of recovery residences, are democratically managed by residents and do not have on-site paid staff.
- "Sober homes," a different subset, generally have a house manager who oversees the house in concert with other staff and the residents.

Residents in recovery generally are afforded protection from discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Amendments Act.

Federal and state oversight of recovery residences has been limited. Currently, there are no federal laws or regulations governing recovery residences. States' oversight largely has been limited to establishing voluntary accreditation standards and task forces to address the exploitation of residents in recovery, such as those in Palm Beach County, Florida and Orange County, California.