Oxford House Manual ©

An Idea Based on a Sound System
For Recovering Alcoholics and Drug Addicts
to Help Themselves

HOUSING,

FELLOWSHIP,

SELF-RELIANCE,

SELF-RESPECT,

FOR RECOVERING INDIVIDUALS

Commemorative Edition

27th Oxford House World Convention

"Welcome Home: Our Story Continues."

Gaylord Rockies Convention Center
Aurora, Colorado

September 10-13, 2026

Oxford House Inc., the umbrella organization of the worldwide network of individual Oxford Houses, is a non-profit umbrella corporation that provides charters to eligible groups of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts who want to establish a new Oxford House.

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Introduction

This edition of the Oxford House Manual© builds upon a system that has worked since 1975. For more than 50 years, Oxford House members have proven that people in recovery can live together, manage their own homes, support one another, and build long-term recovery. Today, more than 4,300 Oxford Houses provide homes for over 36,000 people, but the basic Oxford House system remains the same.

On November 18, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed P.L.100-690, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, which established a nationwide program to encourage the mass replication of recovery houses based upon the Oxford House concept. At the request of Congress, Oxford House worked with them to craft a simple but workable start-up loan program in each state. Originally, the start-up loan program was mandatory, but now it is permissive.[1] Some states have start-up revolving loan funds, and some do not.

The expansion of Oxford Houses began in June 1989. By 1994, only five years later, the number of Oxford Houses had grown from 18, primarily in and around Washington, D.C., to more than 500 located in 39 states.[2] Year after year, the number of Oxford Houses has continued to increase. Over more than 750,000 individuals recovering from alcoholism, drug addiction, and co-occurring mental illness have found that Oxford House living has contributed to their long-term recovery. The time, peer support, and disciplined participatory democracy that underlies Oxford House gave each of them the time to reinvent personal behavior from a life of chaos into comfortable long-term recovery.

The foundation or blueprint for that transformation continues to be the Oxford House Manual©. As with the previous editions of the original 1975 manual, this edition is also dedicated to Jim S., the first member who was voted into Oxford House in 1975. On August 19, 1987, Jim died at far too young, but with over 12 years of remarkable sobriety. He touched hundreds of recovering alcoholics with his dedicated program of joyful sobriety. For two and a half years, he lived in Oxford House, keeping everyone's spirits up and proving that Oxford House worked, and then rejoined his wife and two children. As a "graduate of Oxford House," Jim kept coming back to bring "newcomers" in and help "old-timers" out. Jim taught us all that you don't need to drink or use drugs to have a good time living in an Oxford House.

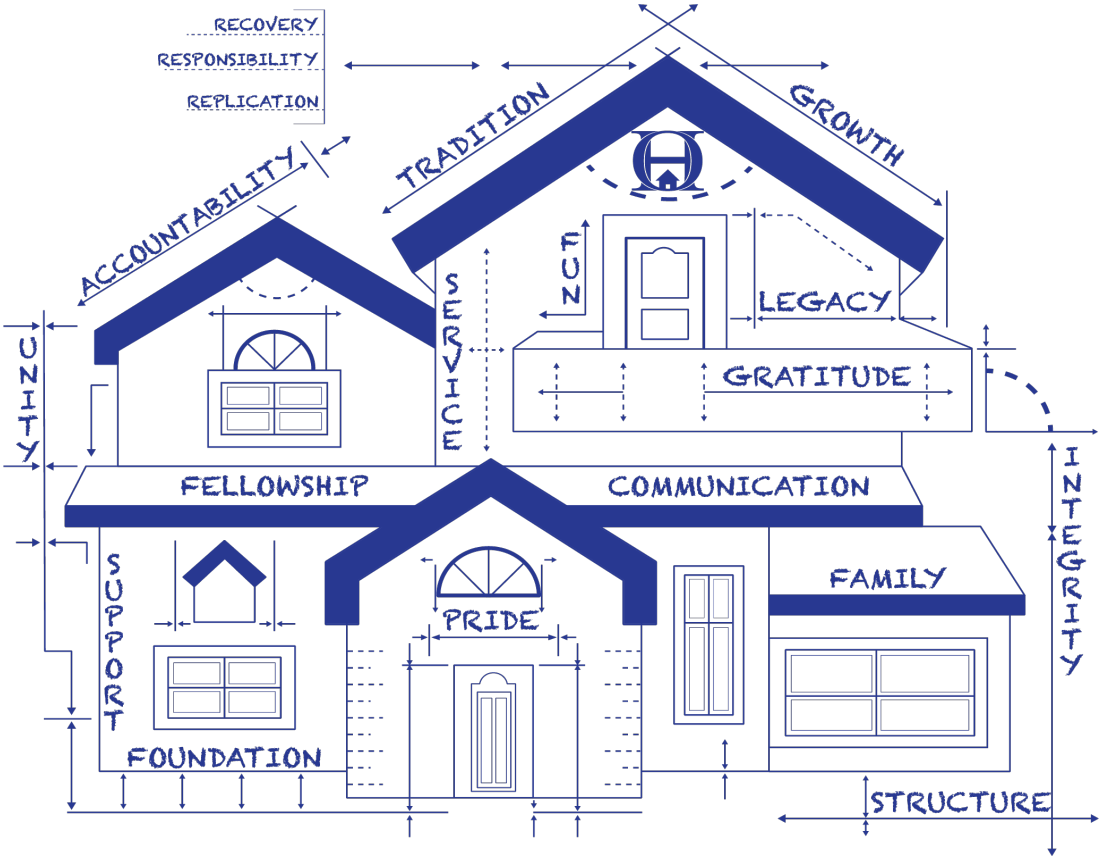
This latest edition of the manual adds a reminder that emphasizes that if an applicant or Oxford House members rely on a service animal or emotional support pet due to a disability, reasonable adjustments should be made. These adjustments allow the individual to keep their animal in the residence, irrespective of pet policies. The person with the disability is accountable for the animal's well-being, behavior, and control. Oxford House members should discuss and decide on suitable accommodations for the animal, considering all household members' needs and rights.

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1 See the Oxford House website: www.oxfordhouse.org under "About Us/History" for the text of the current law.
2 The number of Oxford Houses reached over 4,300 in August 2025, just prior to the 25th Oxford House World Convention in Orlando, FL. The total number includes houses in 48 states, Australia, Belgium, Canada, England, and Ghana.

In summary, Oxford Houses, like any housing entity, must comply with the regulations of the Fair Housing Act when it comes to service animals or emotional support pets. Individuals with disabilities who require the assistance of such animals should be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to housing and recovery support.

The Oxford House Manual is more than a set of instructions. It contains the time-tested system of operation that has made the Oxford House model the standard for democratically run, self-supporting recovery housing. Learn the Manual. Use it. Share it with new members. The principles and procedures in this Manual have worked for more than 50 years. It is our responsibility to make sure they continue to work for those who come after us.



The Oxford House™ Story

In October 1975, the first Oxford House™ was opened in Silver Spring, Maryland, by a group of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts who had been living in a county government-run halfway house. Each of them had been clean and sober for only a short period when they learned that the halfway house was going to be closed. Each feared that without the support of living in a group committed to staying sober and clean, he would return to alcoholic drinking or drug use.

When the news reached them that the halfway house was to be closed, their first reaction was one of anger, resentment, and panic. They had known that the halfway house had a *"six-month rule"* which required a person to move out after six months to make room for a newcomer. During their stay, they had seen 12 men leave at the end of their six months, and 11 of the 12 returned to drinking or using drugs within a month. That fact only increased their fears and insecurity upon learning they would have to move within thirty days.

A private individual, a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, held the lease on the house the county was closing. Several of the men faced with eviction approached him to see if there was some way to convince the county to change its decision. He felt such a change was impossible — it was simply a matter of economics. County halfway houses cost too much money to run. The county budget was tight, and Alpha I, as the halfway house was named, would definitely be closed. He then asked if the men had considered taking over the house themselves.

Over the next several days, hope began to replace despair. Still, a number of obstacles stood between the idea of taking over the house and the reality of doing it. Where would they get the money? They had all drunk or used themselves out of good jobs, and few had done more than day work since getting sober. How could they pay for the rent, the utilities, the food, and a counselor to manage a halfway house? Who could they find to run it, even if they came up with the money? Day and night they discussed the possibilities among themselves and sought advice from members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Over and over, they heard encouragement: "Just don't drink," "Keep it simple," and "Remember, a day at a time."

Slowly, an idea began to take shape: maybe they could do it. The first task was to study the costs of the halfway house to see how much money would be needed. The largest expense was the paid manager, cook, and counselor. Someone suggested they could live without a paid manager, cook, or counselor. But without a manager living in the house, who would be the supervisor? Of the men ready to move in, only one had more than six months' sobriety.

The men decided that the cost of paid staff was too great. If they were going to keep the house, they would have to learn how to stay sober and manage it themselves.

One man recalled that he had once lived in a college fraternity with sixteen men and no paid manager, though, of course, there had been no requirement to stay sober there. As they discussed the fraternity concept, the core fear became whether they could enforce sobriety without paid authority. They had been without real responsibility for so long that there was considerable doubt they could act responsibly as a group.

As discussions continued, talk drifted into complaints about the halfway house way of life: lights out at eleven, everyone up at six, breakfast at seven sharp, and chores done exactly on schedule. Any suggestion for change was met with a lecture and a "shape up or ship out." As much as they resented the arbitrary rules, the fear of homelessness was greater.

After days of discussion, an organizational plan began to form. Their experiences in the halfway house, both good and bad, helped them develop a system for carrying out the responsibilities that the manager, cook, and counselor had handled. And so, the Oxford House concept took shape.

One positive lesson from the halfway house was the reinforcement of sobriety gained by knowing immediate eviction followed the first drink. From the start, the founders agreed there had to be an absolute rule against any alcohol or drug use by members. The question was how to enforce it. They decided the only way was to call a meeting of the members and vote. If a majority agreed that a member had used alcohol or drugs, that person would be expelled immediately.[3]

Before the first relapse happened, there was much debate about detection. Some suggested a breathalyzer for all, others an official "sniffer" as a cheaper safeguard. New houses today may have the same discussions, but experience shows no member can hide relapse for long. We are all "professional" drinkers and users — we know the tricks, and we can spot them.

Relapses do occur. When they do, the worst mistake is to let it slide. That endangers the sobriety of all members and can destroy the house. Before moving in, every member learns that relapse will mean expulsion.[4] Once expelled, a member can only return with clear evidence of renewed solid sobriety.[5]

The founders developed a democratic system out of necessity; they could not afford a paid manager. The early history proved that members could run a house themselves. Today, Oxford House is still self-run, and it still works.

Within six months, the first Oxford House had helped start a second; then those two started a third, and so on. Over thirteen years, Oxford House grew from one house to more than twenty. By October 1987, Oxford House had spread to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and the same pattern repeated.

Early in 1988, all Oxford Houses decided to establish a full-time central services office to provide the technical assistance needed to start new houses. The belief was strong that Oxford House could work anywhere. Between 1989 and 2025, growth has been phenomenal: more than 4,300 Oxford Houses have been started in 48 states, plus Australia, Belgium, Canada, England, and Ghana.

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[3] The first Oxford House tried allowing probation for relapses that happened outside the house. It didn't work — all four probation cases relapsed again within weeks. Experience showed that any relapse must result in immediate expulsion. The vote is solely to decide if a relapse occurred, and the third charter condition absolutely requires it

[4] It is never easy to expel a friend, but principles must come before personalities. The first responsibility of any Oxford House is to enforce sobriety.

[5] This may include completion of a treatment program, documented abstinence, and regular AA/NA attendance. Houses in the same area stay in touch so that someone expelled for relapse cannot simply move to another house until recovery is re-established.

Foundations, businesses, churches, individuals, and government agencies have helped fund technical assistance, but expansion still relies heavily on the volunteer efforts of members in existing houses. Across the country, clusters of Oxford Houses organize into chapters to support one another and to keep expanding until every alcoholic and addict who wants one can have the support of an Oxford House.

Each Oxford House has its own story, but all share the same history: a democratically run, self-supporting home that works. *The System of Operations* and *Oxford House Traditions* that follow are taken directly from the original Oxford House Manual©, with only minor updates, and they remain the blueprint for success today.

The Oxford House, Inc. organization is listed below. Direct any correspondence, telephone calls, or emails to it. Its purpose is to be of help.

Oxford House, Inc.
1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 300
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
Telephone: (301) 587-2916
www.oxfordhouse.org / www.oxfordvacancies.com
Oxford House, Inc. is incorporated in Delaware and is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

The following information is time-tested to be helpful in running an Oxford House. It is printed at the end of this manual and can be downloaded from the website www.oxfordhouse.org, as can new versions of forms.

Membership Application

The standard form used by Oxford Houses to help evaluate the eligibility of applicants applying for membership in an Oxford House.

Weekly Meeting Report

A form to record the minutes of the weekly meeting of the Oxford House family members so that the House has an ongoing record of the democratic decisions made by the group.

Weekly Financial Report

A form to report who has paid their share of expenses, a list of the costs paid during the previous week, the amount of funds available to the House, and a list of regular or unexpected expenses coming due within the next few weeks.

Oxford System Checklist

A checklist is used by some Oxford Houses to remind members of the Oxford House family about the basic steps that must be taken to make the House run on a financially sound basis.

Oxford House System of Operations

There is a frequent saying among Oxford House members that "Oxford House has no rules except 'Don't drink or use drugs." For the most part, that saying is true. However, it does overstate the facts. While rules at Oxford House are kept to a minimum, there are nevertheless rules. Unfortunately, it is only possible for an organization to function with some systems or procedures. The basic rule for all Oxford Houses is that they *must operate on a democratic basis*. Each member of the House has one vote. A majority rules, except for accepting a newly recovering person with a substance use disorder for membership, when 80% of the current membership must vote in its approval.

The following discussion spells out the Oxford House System of Operations. It draws upon the experience of the existing Oxford Houses. It tells any recovering person with a substance use disorder who is interested (1) how to start an Oxford House, (2) how to make an Oxford House run smoothly, and (3) how to manage money in an Oxford House.

Oxford House, Inc. is the umbrella organization for all Oxford Houses. Any group of recovering alcoholics that wants to form an Oxford House must obtain a charter from Oxford House, Inc. The charter confers on to the Oxford House the benefits of being part of a non-profit corporation that offers the experience and guidance necessary for making the Oxford House Model work.

Any group of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts can apply for an Oxford House charter. Oxford House, Inc. has no hard and fast rules regarding the length of sobriety required of applicants who want to charter a new house. As a rule, however, several charter group members should have several months of solid sobriety.

Obtaining a Charter

Two or more recovering alcoholics or drug addicts can apply for a charter from Oxford House, Inc., by completing an application for a charter[6] or simply writing a letter containing the pertinent information to Oxford House World Services. Relevant information would include answers to the following questions:

- Names of proposed charter members.
- Length of sobriety for each proposed charter member.
- The plans that the charter group has for renting or leasing a house.
- The number of beds contemplated for use in the proposed new Oxford House.[7]
- The anticipated charge per person per week would be needed to make the House self-supporting.

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[6] One can get a form to apply for a charter by writing to Oxford House, Inc., 1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 300, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, or by downloading a charter application form from the website www.oxfordhouse.org by clicking "applications" under "Houses."

[7] To receive a charter the proposed house must be for a minimum of six members. The largest Oxford House group to date has been eighteen. The best size group seems to be made up of eight to twelve members. Charters are only granted for single-sex houses. There are no "co-ed" Oxford Houses. Leases with landlords should make clear that no smoking within the house is permitted and that the use of decorative candles, incense or other items that represent fire hazards should be prohibited. Group safety is important.

Once Oxford House, Inc.'s central office has reviewed the application or letter from the prospective charter members, it will either issue a charter or suggest additional steps for the prospective members to take to obtain a charter. A charter will be issued if, in the judgment of Oxford House, Inc.'s central office, the proposed new Oxford House would have a reasonable chance of success.[8] All charters are issued conditionally. This means that the new group, once started, must demonstrate that it has learned the Oxford House system of operation sufficiently to be awarded a permanent charter.

In rare cases, Oxford House, Inc.'s central office will issue a charter before the applicants acquire housing. In such cases, the charter will be issued upon the condition that the charter members obtain a suitable house within a specific period of time.[9]

Obtaining a House

The Oxford House philosophy relies on expanding capacity rather than limiting the length of time that a member can live in a House. To achieve sufficient capacity for providing enough rooms for all recovering alcoholics and drug addicts who want to live in an Oxford House, it has been the custom for an established Oxford House to look for an additional house once it has become full and has applications that it is unable to accept because of lack of space.

A suitable house's size, location, and cost depend more on what is available than any specific criteria. The charter members looking for a suitable house should ensure that any prospective house can be occupied without violating local zoning or health and safety laws. In practice, any Oxford House is no different from an ordinary family– except no one in an Oxford House drinks or takes mood-changing drugs.

Most jurisdictions in the country do not have specific ordinances that relate directly to an Oxford House-type situation. Most group housing ordinances, if they exist at all, are geared to highly institutionalized situations. Most commercial zoning ordinances, i.e., rooming houses, apartments, hotels, or motels, are inappropriate for the Oxford House situation. Under the Federal Fair Housing Act, local governments must reasonably accommodate recovering alcoholics and drug addicts from living in the supportive Oxford House living environment.[10]

Suppose the charter members have yet to determine how their jurisdiction will view an Oxford House. In that case, they should face the matter directly and clear their occupancy with the local zoning authorities. Oxford House, Inc. is willing to provide any assistance

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[8] The Board of Directors has delegated the decision-making authority to approve charter applications to Oxford House, Inc.'s central office.

[9] This situation is more likely to occur when Oxford House is new to a geographic area. In those geographic areas where there is already an Oxford House, those wanting to start a new House are more likely to find the available house first and then apply for a Charter. Following the tradition of early Oxford Houses, each house tries to match the supply of Oxford House recovery beds with the number of applicants wanting to live in an Oxford House. Houses in an area always work through the chapter to ensure supply and demand balance.

[10] The United States Supreme Court on May 15, 1995, issued a decision in the City of Edmonds, WA v. Oxford House, Inc. (514 U.S. 725), which confirms that recovering alcoholics and drug addicts living in an Oxford House are "handicapped" and therefore a protected class within the meaning of the Federal Fair Housing Act, as amended. Local jurisdictions must make reasonable accommodations to afford them living arrangements that are supportive of recovery. Several subsequent federal cases have affirmed that Oxford Houses are not commercial institutions and should be treated as single families for purposes of zoning.

to persuade local authorities to treat Oxford House the same as it would treat any other single-family residential property within its jurisdiction.[11]

Common sense should be used in selecting any house to be used as an Oxford House. It should have adequate plumbing, adequate kitchen facilities, adequate laundry facilities, enough bedrooms, and a pleasant common living space. In addition, the area should be carefully examined to determine if parking automobiles might cause a problem.

The rent a new group can afford depends on the number of beds the House can hold. More than one bed should be put in larger rooms. New members moving into a house can feel at home more easily if they share a room. Most Houses use a system of seniority for bed selection. "Old-Timers" generally move into single rooms as new members move into the House. The single rooms are usually the smaller rooms in a house.

There are three reasons Oxford House encourages more than one person to a room. First, newcomers maintain recovery better with a roommate. Loneliness continues to threaten sobriety, and loneliness can be a problem for the newcomer adjusting to a new place to live. Second, the number of people living in a House directly affects the economics of an Oxford House. The more people who live in a House, the less each member must pay for the House to be self-supporting. Third, roommates discourage having non-house members spend the night at an Oxford House.

The House's size is directly related to the rent a new group can afford. In most areas, the monthly rent will be the most significant single cost for the members of a House to meet. For example, the first Oxford House (Oxford House-Silver Spring)[12] held 13 members. The monthly rent was $700; utilities ran about $300; staples about $250 monthly.[13] The charge per member had been set at $30 a week. Since the House quickly became full and stayed full, income exceeded expenses.[14] As a matter of fact, after six months of operation, the House had nearly $2,000 in the bank. It used $1,200 to start a new Oxford House so that some recovering alcoholics who had applied to live in an Oxford House could live in one. Even today, most Oxford Houses have a backlog of applications. The tradition of some house members of an existing house helping to start a new Oxford House in an area continues.

Generally, it is easy to acquire furniture for a new House at little or no expense. Letting friends, family, and church groups know you are looking for furnishings can be very effective. Every community tends to be willing to help. However, getting beds and chests of drawers donated may be difficult sometimes. Since beds are essential, members in a new House may need to purchase twin-size mattresses and box spring sets. Thrift stores,

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[11] In Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for example, Oxford House received a ruling from the Chief of the Bureau of Inspections that it is within the definition of "Family" as defined in the City Zoning Code. As a practical matter, most jurisdictions so appreciate the valuable service provided by Oxford House that it is considered to have a "family" classification.

[12] Oxford House-Silver Spring was opened on October 25, 1975, and continued to be an Oxford House until the end of 1984. It was located at 1219 Fiddler Lane, Silver Spring, Maryland. The building was razed to make way for another building in 1986.

[13] The first Oxford House and most subsequent Houses have bought milk, potatoes, spices, flour, coffee, bread, eggs, and bacon on a group basis. Individual members get their own meals – either individually or as groups – but use the "staples" as needed. Note also that the figures used above are 1975 dollars or about one-half comparable l987 dollars or one-third 2000 dollars.

[14] By late spring, a surplus of nearly $2,000 was in the House treasury. The members met to decide whether to lower their weekly payment or to use the surplus to open a new House. They chose to open a new House in Washington, DC, in May 1976.

Goodwill, or Salvation Army stores often have chests of drawers at a reasonable price. However, the first and most effective way to get furniture is to ask the local recovery community members for it. Often, they upgrade their own furnishing and are pleased to give their old furniture to an Oxford House.

Other start-up costs include a month's rent in advance and a security deposit equal to one month's rent. New Houses often get loans from A.A. members or other Oxford Houses to meet this expense. Whenever a loan is obtained, the members of the new House should agree to pay it back according to a definite schedule – at least $100 a month until it is repaid.[15] The good name of Oxford House is at stake whenever any House has a loan outstanding. Therefore, it is essential to make payments on the loan regularly.

Membership

The charter members of a new Oxford House constitute the basic core of membership. Once the House has started, the charter members will want to bring in enough new members to fill all available beds. The higher the occupancy rate, the lower the rent that each Oxford House member must pay.

One of the requirements of an Oxford House charter is that new members must be approved by 80% of the existing members in a particular House. Approval from 80% of the existing members is required because it is important for all the members living in an Oxford House to feel comfortable with any newcomer. As a practical matter, existing Oxford Houses have denied membership to very few individuals. Most members of Oxford House keep their memories green, and few applicants are excluded from membership. Those who are excluded are generally excluded because there are no beds available.[16] A waiting list is maintained, but it is of little value after some time because when a person needs a room, he or she needs it immediately. On the other hand, the waiting list can be a valuable resource for getting new members to help form another House.[17] The waiting list is also a ready resource for filling vacancies as members move out to live elsewhere in the community or are evicted because of relapse to drinking or taking drugs.

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[15] This is also true of loans received from a state revolving loan fund. Repayments on time are a must because it allows other groups to start houses and helps expand the opportunities for recovering individuals to stay clean and sober without relapse. State loans are usually $4,000 and are repaid at $170 a month for 24 months.

[16] Not everyone is suited for living in an Oxford House, but the existing members should never exclude anyone simply because of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, or a disability co-occurring with addiction to alcohol or other addictive drugs unless such disability would make it difficult for an individual to function in an Oxford House. For example, being HIV positive does not - in and of itself – preclude successful Oxford House membership because, absent unprotected sex or needle sharing, HIV or AIDS is not contagious and hundreds of recovering individuals afflicted by HIV or AIDS are and have been successful Oxford House members. Also, hundreds of recovering individuals with co-occurring mental illnesses or physical disabilities have been – and are - successful Oxford House members. In considering whether an applicant will make a suitable Oxford House member, the group conscience should always err on the side of providing a recovering individual a chance to benefit from Oxford House living. In other words, if the group believes the individual has exhibited a sincere desire to develop sobriety comfortable enough to avoid relapse, pay an equal share of household expenses and help others in recovery, the applicant should be accepted if space is available.

[17] Once an Oxford House has been established for a few months, there will soon be more applicants than there are beds available. The situation soon causes the members living in the House to start looking for an additional house to rent.

Oxford House works well for men and for women. However, it has been the experience of Oxford House that it does not work well with men and women in the same House.[18] Relationships are bound to develop and will unnecessarily complicate the comfortable operation of an Oxford House.

When a new Oxford House is established, the charter members of the House should make themselves known to quarter-way houses, halfway houses, detoxification units, drug courts, rehabilitation facilities, A.A. groups, and N.A. groups within the area. Included among those items which should be stressed are that the House is democratically run; it is self-supporting; drinking or the taking of drugs is not permitted; and both the new and not-so-new recovering alcoholics are welcome to come and live at the House if they do not drink or take drugs and pay their equal share of household expenses. Oxford House is not in competition with any of these groups. It is a resource for them to use in the common goal of helping the alcoholic avoid relapses. Many of these groups will become supporters of Oxford House and will refer new members to the House. Remember to explain that a new member must file an application, be interviewed, and be approved by 80% of the members living in Oxford House.

Once an Oxford House has been established for a few months, applications for membership will exceed the space available. At that point in time, consideration should be given to opening a new Oxford House, using some of the current members as a core group for the new House. Generally, a few members in a House will begin thinking about opening another House in response to a House's inability to accept all the deserving applicants. They will discuss the matter at a House meeting, and everyone will begin to look for a suitable additional house to rent. When such a house is found, several existing members will volunteer to become the core group for a new House. The existing House begins to figure out ways to come up with the necessary money for starting the new House and checks with applicants to see if they would be willing to live in the new House. This is how Oxford House can comfortably exist with the principle of letting members live in an Oxford House for as long as they want, provided they do not drink or use drugs and pay their rent.

Rules

Alcoholics and drug addicts, by nature, seem to dislike rules. Only one rule applies to all Oxford Houses, i.e., membership is conditioned on not drinking or using drugs. It is impossible for a house of recovering alcoholics to stay sober if even one person is permitted to drink or take drugs—the presence of someone actively using drugs or alcohol among those who are trying to stay sober invites other relapses. As a matter of self-preservation, the membership of an Oxford House must confront the relapsing member

[18] In 1978, Oxford House opened a House intended for women but started with a core group of four men from an existing Oxford House. After eight women moved into the House, the four men moved out with the expectation that their spaces would be filled by the women accepting four additional women. Instead, the women accepted four additional men as replacements, and the House began to have problems. Several relationships evolved between the men and women, and soon, a number of the members returned to drinking. Oxford House, Inc. closed the House and reopened it as a House for men. It was clear then and continues to be clear today that men and women living in the same house operating under the self-support system of Oxford House create unnecessary additional stress to group living. Women's Oxford Houses work.

immediately. A meeting of the House should be held, and if a majority of the members believe that a member is drinking or taking drugs, that member should be asked to leave.

The rule relating to alcohol or drug use grows out of common sense. That is the only mandatory rule once a group of recovering alcoholics has received an Oxford House charter. Other rules will evolve from the membership of the House itself. Those rules should come into being only if they are necessary. The fewer the rules, the more likely it will be that a house will be successful. Different Houses will often tend to have different rules. For example, one Oxford House has a rule that requires unanimous consent before any pet can be brought onto the premises. Another Oxford House has two cats and a dog and would require unanimous consent before either the cat or the dog could be evicted.

In many alcohol rehabilitation units, there are rules covering many activities. Those rules include curfew hours, clean-up details; mandatory attendance at A.A. or N.A. meetings; and other rules almost inherent in institutional living. Oxford House is not an institution. It is more analogous to a family. However, certain rules may be required to ensure an equitable distribution of the work in keeping the House clean, and at times, there may be the need for rules to keep some individuals from disrupting others.[19]

Since the success of an Oxford House depends on having enough income to meet expenses, members must pay their equal share of household expenses promptly. Rules may be required that force the eviction of members who do not keep their equal share of household expenses up to date. All members should be encouraged to pay their share of household expenses at least one week in advance. The weekly house meeting becomes the ideal time to discuss this issue, especially if a member is not up to date in paying an equal share of household expenses. It helps the individual members, and the house group keep everyone from falling behind.

Officers

For an Oxford House to run successfully on a democratic basis, it must have certain elected officers. It is part of the Oxford House tradition to make sure that officers do not become so entrenched that other members of the House do not have an equal voice in its management. Therefore, it is an Oxford House tradition that an officer shall serve up to six months in the same office for one continuous period.[20] All officers are but trusted servants of the entire membership. The number of officers may vary from House to House, but all Houses generally have the following elected officers:

- ❑ President
- ❑ Treasurer
- ❑ Secretary
- ❑ Comptroller
- ❑ Coordinator

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[19] For example, if a member's non-attendance at AA or NA meetings is causing problems – for the individual or the house – the members may vote at a meeting to require meeting attendance as a condition of living in the house. The "group conscience" should be the determining factor in this situation. It is guided by the fact that the welfare of the house must always come first. Long-term recovery is the primary reason for the house to exist.

[20] See Tradition Two

The election of a treasurer and a Comptroller emphasizes the importance each Oxford House places on money management. The Treasurer and Comptroller work together to maintain accurate financial records and ensure that each member's equal share of household expenses is collected and properly recorded. Houses elect a "Coordinator" to help schedule daily and weekly work details to keep the House clean - inside and out.

The election of officers is necessary because they provide the leadership for the House to work well. The officers can serve continuously for only six months in any office; after an intervening six-month period, an individual can be re-elected to an office they have already served. The duties of the various officers are designed to keep Oxford House running smoothly by conducting regular weekly meetings of the House membership, ensuring that the Oxford House Traditions are followed, and maintaining the finances of the House in good order.

Meetings

It is essential to have a House meeting at least once a week.[21] After some experimenting, Oxford House will find the hour or half-hour most convenient for most of its members. A meeting should be used to:

- report on the current financial status of the House.
- consider new applications for membership.
- resolve any problem affecting members in the House.
- resolve general complaints about maintenance of the house; and
- consider proposals or projects to be undertaken by the House.

A special meeting should be called, just as soon as possible, whenever there is any suspicion that a member is drinking or taking drugs. Such a meeting is the most difficult of any held in an Oxford House. Some Houses have decided to use three elected officers as a screening committee to determine if an individual has violated the rule against drinking or taking drugs. In such cases, the screening committee makes its report to the full membership of the House for their consideration. The individual suspected of violating the rule against drinking or taking drugs should be directly confronted with the facts leading to the suspicion. The membership of the House then must vote on whether the facts support the conclusion that a member has violated the rule.

The decision by the House membership should be viewed simply as a factual determination. If a majority of the House membership attending the special meeting believes that the individual did, in fact, drink or take drugs, the expulsion of that member is automatic.

The Secretary should take notes about what takes place at each House meeting. The notes of the previous meeting should be read at the beginning of the next meeting so that all the members can agree with the record of what the House had previously determined. If the Secretary has made a mistake in recording what had happened, it should be corrected. The approved minutes of a meeting should be made a permanent record of the House.

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[21] It is suggested that all Oxford Houses and related entities, including chapters and state associations, should engage in properly duly organized meetings, allowing for real-time interactive discussions and accurate minutes. This approach aims to preserve the integrity of the Parliamentary Procedure and the Democratic Process.

The Secretary should also verify that vacancy updates have been made.[22] The next item of business should be the report on House finances by the Treasurer. That report should include (a) the amount of the bills outstanding, (b) the cash on hand, (c) members' rent paid in advance, and (d) members' rent due. To the extent possible, the Treasurer should project what the House finances will likely be over the next month and consider the expectation of any large utility bills or unusual expenses.

The House meeting should then take up new applications and listen to each member who has met or talked to the applicant. A vote should be taken on each applicant when space is available. If the applicant is rejected, they should be told right after the meeting and encouraged to apply to another Oxford House. If the applicant is accepted and space is available, they should be informed as to when to move in, who the current officers are, and the money due to move in, and they should be given a copy of the manual to understand how Oxford House works.

If the applicant is accepted but no space is immediately available, they should be put on a waiting list and told their prospects of getting in. Each new member should be told that the completed application constitutes an agreement to follow the rules of the House.

Meetings also include discussions of the wide range of decisions facing an Oxford House, from purchasing wastebaskets to planning to open a new house. The House meeting is the place to resolve any conflicts that arise from living together as a group. It is also an excellent place to pass on information about new A.A. or N.A. meetings or upcoming A.A./NA-related events. Staying sober and enjoying life is at the heart of Oxford House living.

Money

Oxford House is built on the principle of self-help. When it comes to money matters, this simply means that any House must be self-supporting and operate without debt, other than the start-up loan that should be repaid on a regular basis. There may be exceptions when a House is first getting started. After a few weeks or months, a new Oxford House should be able to pay all its operating expenses out of its equal share of household expenses.

Some expenses associated with an Oxford House are fixed. For example, the monthly rental payment will be a fixed amount. In addition, utilities (electric, gas or oil, telephone, and often water) will be relatively fixed expenses. One area where expenses are controllable involves the purchase of food and supplies. All costs, whether fixed or controllable, must be carefully watched so that any member at any time can know the exact financial condition of the House. Particular attention must be paid to cable TV expenses. If one or two members get a pay-for-view, they should reimburse the House. Usually, the Comptroller is responsible for seeing that the members pay their share of the

[22] Keeping vacancies accurate on the website is essential if a house is to have any creditability with treatment providers, drug court judges or the recovery community. The newcomer relies upon accurate vacancy data, and every house should make sure that the Secretary updates the vacancy website by text at least once a week and that a current cell phone in the house is available for weekly vacancy verification.

cable bill promptly so that the House is not faced with an unwanted and unwarranted expense.[23]

The President, the Treasurer, and the Comptroller are all responsible for ensuring that accurate records are maintained showing the expenses and income of the House. Every Oxford House should have its own checking account and make certain to run all income and outgo through the checking account as the main control point for keeping track of money flow. The first thing a new Oxford House does is establish a checking account. At least three officers of the House should be authorized signers on the account. Two signatures on checks are preferred whenever permitted by the bank. Promptly deposit members' rent in the checking account and pay all bills by check. That is the easiest and safest way to ensure good record-keeping. Do not use electronic payment except for start-up loan repayment and Oxford House World Services contributions.

Each Oxford House should maintain (1) a membership ledger, (2) a cash receipts journal, and (3) a cash expenses journal. The Treasurer is responsible for keeping these records and for posting the "Weekly Financial Status Report."

The "Weekly Financial Status Report" lets everyone in the House know exactly the current financial condition of the House. It shows:

- Money on hand the prior week.
- Money on hand that week.
- Bills paid during the last week.
- Bills due during the current week.
- Bills due by the end of the current month.
- Members' rent paid in advance (total dollars).
- Members' rent behind (total dollars) and the status of individual members' payment history (paid in advance, up-to-date, and behind) are listed by the member.[24]

The Treasurer and Comptroller are the officers primarily responsible for ensuring sound financial management for Oxford House. Together with the President, they should continually check and cross-check the books to ensure the true financial status of the House. At each weekly meeting, a report should be made to the full membership of the House for the membership to determine whether the equal share of household expenses is accurate and to decide if a member is too delinquent in paying to continue in the House.

Oxford House members should remember that paying bills punctually is crucial to maintaining the house's charter. Simply put, if there's not enough money to cover rent or other expenses on schedule, the current occupants must each contribute equally from their funds. Preserving Oxford House's reputation is paramount and shouldn't be jeopardized by those who don't fulfill their financial responsibilities.

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[23] As a rule, an Oxford House gets cable TV with limited access to pay for the view. However, if that is not possible, the house should carefully monitor any "extra" expense over the basic system.

[24] There are no "secrets" in an Oxford House. Members need to know whether the House is living on "borrowed money" (from rents paid in advance) or whether members are falling behind in rent to know how much needs to be charged for a House to be financially sound.

Oxford House, Inc.

Oxford House, Inc. serves as an umbrella, non-profit corporation for all the Oxford Houses that have or will be given a charter. It is incorporated in the State of Delaware and is recognized as qualifying under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The sole purpose of the umbrella organization is to serve the Oxford House movement. Each Oxford House has an equal voice in running Oxford House, Inc., consistent with the principle that each member has an equal voice in running an individual Oxford House.

Oxford House, Inc. is the only entity authorized to provide charters for individual Oxford Houses. It operates a central services office to help existing houses stay on track and to help start new Oxford Houses.

The World Council

The Oxford House World Council, an advisory board responsible for making policy recommendations, comprises 12 members. Among these members, nine are members of Oxford Houses who are elected through a vote involving all Oxford Houses. These members serve staggered three-year terms. Additionally, three Oxford House alumni are elected to the World Council. Every year, elections are held during the Oxford House Convention to fill one-third of the positions on the World Council. The World Council holds six meetings per year. Several committees have been established within the World Council to address various important aspects of the global network of Oxford Houses.

The World Council's chairperson also serves on the Oxford House Board of Directors. This arrangement ensures that the organization's services align with the needs of individual houses, as evidenced by the actions taken by the World Council.

The Board of Directors

The Oxford House Board of Directors oversees and governs Oxford House, Inc., the umbrella 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of the national network of individual Oxford Houses. One-quarter of the Board members are alumni or members of Oxford Houses. The Board guides the external finances used for expansion and network maintenance.

Oxford House Nine Traditions …

TRADITION ONE

Oxford House has as its primary goal the provision of housing and rehabilitative support for the alcoholic and drug addict who wants to stop drinking or using drugs and stay stopped.

By the time many of us had stopped drinking, we had lost jobs, we had lost families, and some of us either had no place to live or no place to live, which was not an invitation to start drinking again. Oxford House was founded not only to put a roof over our heads but also to create a home where the disease of a substance use disorder was understood and the need for the alcoholic and drug addict to stay away from the first drink or drug fix was emphasized.

Oxford House is group housing. The bond that holds the group together is the desire to stop drinking or using drugs and to stay stopped. Modest rooms and living facilities can become luxurious suites when viewed from an environment of alcoholics and drug addicts working together for comfortable sobriety.

When we stopped drinking or using drugs, we began to realize that to stay stopped, our lives would need to change. Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous provided a framework for us to change physically, mentally, and spiritually. The degree to which we were able to change our lives successfully had a direct relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. Many of us soon learned that living alone or among our old drinking companions made it more difficult to practice the principles necessary for continued sobriety.

Some of us had lived for a time in alcohol and drug rehabilitation facilities. Those facilities provided us with shelter, food, and therapy for understanding alcoholism and addiction. Initially, the structure and supervision of such facilities were acceptable because, physically and mentally, we were exhausted. Later, some of us were to move into halfway houses, which provided shelter, food, and supervision. As our recovery progressed, the supervision and dependency on a halfway house created dissatisfaction. The dissatisfaction was partly the realization that we were shirking responsibility for our own lives and, in part, resentment of authority. The third factor affecting us both in the rehabilitation facilities and the halfway houses was the realization that the duration of our stay must be limited because space must be made for others in need of help.

Oxford House grew out of the need for many of us to begin a new life without fear of backsliding because of loneliness leading to a renewed dependency on former drinking companions or drug dealers. Throughout its tradition, Oxford House has combined the concepts of self-support and responsibility with a fellowship having the common purpose of continued and comfortable sobriety. Oxford House must always have as its primary goal the provision of housing and rehabilitative support for the alcoholic who wants to stop drinking and stay stopped and the drug addict who wants to stop using drugs and stay stopped.

TRADITION TWO

All Oxford Houses are run on a democratic basis. Our officers are but trusted servants, serving continuous periods of no longer than six months in any one office.

Most of us ceased functioning as responsible individuals during the last days of drinking or using drugs. We were not only dependent upon alcohol and illegal drugs but were also dependent on many others to continue our alcoholic and drug-addicted ways. When we stopped drinking or using drugs, we began to realize just how dependent we had become. For those who had been in institutions or halfway houses, resentments against authority were common.

A significant part of the Oxford House philosophy is that dependency is best overcome through an acceptance of responsibility. In Oxford House, each member equally shares the responsibility for running the House and upholding the Oxford House tradition. All aspects of Oxford House operations, from the acquisition of the House to the acceptance or dismissal of members, are carried out under democratic procedures. Each member has one vote, and the majority rule applies except that 80% of the members must agree to accept new persons for membership.

During our drinking and drug use years, and even before, many of us found it difficult to accept authority. Many individuals in society can abide by the strict letter of any rule, regulation, or law. Alcoholics and drug addicts tend to test and retest the validity of any actual, potential, or imagined restriction on their behavior. As alcoholics and drug addicts, we became experts at outwitting "the system." As recovering alcoholics and recovering drug addicts, it has become essential for us to learn how to live without the use of alcohol or illegal drugs within society.

By running Oxford House democratically, members become able to accept the authority of the group because the group is a peer group. Each member has an equal voice in the group, and each has an opportunity to relearn responsibility and accept decisions once they are made.

The opportunity for a house to function democratically requires periodic meetings within the House, at least once a week. Such meetings should resolve any operational or personality problems facing the House.

Any group needs leaders to function effectively. Misguided leaders can create dependency and usurp self-responsibility. Oxford House should rely on democratically chosen leaders, but the leaders must always be trusted servants. To discourage excessive dependence on leaders, Oxford House's principle is that every member should serve in the same office for a continuous period of six months.

TRADITION THREE

No member of an Oxford House™ is ever asked to leave without cause, a dismissal vote by the membership because of drinking, drug use, or disruptive behavior.

During early recovery from a substance use disorder, some members had to leave an institution to make room for a person with a substance use disorder just beginning the recovery process. Other members were asked to leave halfway houses to make room for a recovering alcoholic or recovering drug addict ready to move into a halfway house. Only the very fortunate can make such a transition upon demand. Each individual recovers from alcoholism or drug addiction at a different pace. All too often, an abrupt transition from a protected environment to an environment that places considerable glamour on the use of alcohol and drugs causes a return to alcoholic drinking or addictive drug use.

There's no justification to assume that it's the collective responsibility of society to offer extended shelter in a safeguarded setting for those struggling with alcohol and substance addiction. Nonetheless, there's ample reason to believe that individuals in recovery can care for their own needs, a task society isn't obligated to undertake. Oxford House operates on the principle of replication to address demands, which sharply differs from the notion of temporarily aiding someone with a substance use disorder to create space for a more recently recovering addict or alcoholic just finding sobriety.

Loneliness is one of the greatest threats to the sobriety of a recovering person with a substance use disorder. At a time when we acquired a serious desire to stop drinking or using drugs, many of us lost our families and friends because of our alcoholism and drug addiction. Too often, newly recovering alcoholics and drug addicts are faced with the necessity of living alone and relying solely on contacts with twelve-step or other mutual aid groups to stay sober. Some can keep from drinking despite the loneliness. Others are not so fortunate.[25] The person with a substance use disorder alone compares himself to those members of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, who still have family and friends. Loneliness and self-pity soon lead such individuals back to alcoholic drinking or drug use. With Oxford House, there is no need for a recovering individual to live in an environment dominated by loneliness.

The only members who will ever be asked to leave an Oxford House are those who return to drinking, use drugs, or have disruptive behavior, including the nonpayment of an equal share of household expenses. No Oxford House can tolerate the use of alcohol or illegal drugs by one of its members because that threatens the sobriety of all the members. Neither can an Oxford House function if some do not pay their fair share of the costs.

It is obvious why Oxford House must vigorously protect the sobriety of its other members by asking the drinking member or member using drugs to leave. The line between an Oxford House of recovering alcoholics or drug addicts and an Oxford House of active alcoholics or drug addicts is thin. A member's tenure is secure in an Oxford House if he does not drink or use drugs, keeps his share of household expenses up to date, and is not disruptive.

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[25] Due to the increasing overdoses from the opioid epidemic, it's highly advised that all Oxford Houses get Narcan opioid overdose reversal kits. Members should learn how to use them correctly and keep them safe. This topic should be covered in their weekly meetings to address the location of the kits and any other questions.

TRADITION FOUR

Oxford House is not affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, organizationally or financially. Still, Oxford House members realize that only active participation in Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous offers the assurance of continued sobriety.[26]

Oxford House members often attribute their sobriety to Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or other mutual aid meetings. Each Oxford House member, as an individual, considers himself a member of A.A. and N.A. Without that, sobriety would be short-lived.

As individual members of Alcoholics Anonymous, Oxford House members are keenly aware of the Sixth Tradition of A.A., which is:

> *An A.A. group ought never to endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*

Oxford House has never sought nor obtained sponsorship from any A.A. or N.A. group in deference to that tradition. Oxford House members value the Sixth Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous (and Narcotics Anonymous) too greatly for themselves to try to get either movement deeply involved in the organizing, financing, or sponsorship of any Oxford House. However, Oxford House members firmly believe that the Oxford House concept can expand as an independent entity while fully utilizing the benefits of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

Oxford House creates an environment whereby each member can more fully realize the benefits of active A.A. or N.A. membership. A house full of sober, recovering alcoholics and drug addicts invites informal A.A. or N.A. "meetings after the meeting," each day, they find many informal A.A. or N.A. meetings before individual members go off to their regular A.A. or N.A. meeting.

An underlying principle of Oxford House is that each member can be responsible for themselves. Living within an Oxford House provides all Members the opportunity and motivation to attend recovery meetings regularly. The example of Oxford House members attending A.A. or N.A. meetings on their own is contagious. Oxford House's experience has shown that participation in A.A. and N.A. is exceptionally high in an environment where one individual can see another individual with the same disease, reaping great benefits from A.A. and N.A. participation.[27] As an organization, Oxford House is not part of A.A. or N.A. However, the members of Oxford House have found that only by being active in A.A. and N.A. have they found comfortable, long-term sobriety – for themselves and the Oxford House in which they live.

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[26] Since its inception in 1935, numerous mutual aid meetings have sprouted within the A.A. community. Each Oxford House is urged to adopt the diverse range of available pathways and ensure that its members take responsibility for actively engaging in their chosen path to recovery.

[27] If a member's non-attendance at AA or NA meetings is causing problems – for the individual or the house – the members may vote at a meeting to make meeting attendance for a particular member a condition of living in the house. The "group conscience" should be the determining factor in this situation. It is guided by the fact that the welfare of the house must always come first.

TRADITION FIVE

Each Oxford House should be autonomous except in matters affecting other houses or Oxford House, Inc.

Each Oxford House is self-supporting and self-run. The members of Oxford House assume full responsibility for the operation of the House. The members themselves, in a democratic fashion, determine the equal share of household expenses that are charged to the members. The rules that govern the House are, for the most part, made by those who live in a particular Oxford House.[28] Such autonomy is essential for the Oxford House system to work.

The reason that each Oxford House is independent arises from the very practical consideration that those closest to a situation can best manage it. If an Oxford House follows the democratic principles and traditions of Oxford House, Inc., it should have no difficulty running smoothly. Those democratic principles will also enable the members of a particular Oxford House to take pride in their newfound responsibility.

The charter of each Oxford House requires that an Oxford House meet specific minimum requirements of Oxford House, Inc. First, an Oxford House must be democratically self-run following the Oxford House Manual©. Second, an Oxford House must, in essence, be a good member of the community by obeying the laws and paying its bills. Third, an Oxford House group must immediately expel any member who returns to drinking alcohol or using drugs.

Failure to adhere to any of these three requirements would bring the entire Oxford House concept into question. Therefore, it is essential that each Oxford House meet these minimum responsibilities for its charter to continue.[29] Oxford Houses are both autonomous and self-supporting. All Oxford Houses have been careful to avoid undue dependence on government or other outside funds.

Each local Oxford House votes annually at the convention to elect the national Oxford House World Council. All the individual Oxford Houses elect nine members of the Oxford House World Council, and they must be members of an Oxford House when they are elected. Three of the World Council members are alumni and are elected by the houses, and the alumni are in attendance at the annual World Convention. The organization was deliberately set up to ensure that each Oxford House is autonomous, and that the overall policy of the Oxford House movement reflects the will of the majority of individual Oxford Houses.

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[28] Rules against anyone living in an Oxford House who uses alcohol or drugs are universal with all houses. For obvious reasons, an individual house cannot establish different rules in this regard because such rules would run entirely counter to the primary purpose and functions of the Oxford House System. On the other hand, while the "application for residency" is used by every house, other forms are "suggested" for use – they generally make sense to use by every house but are not mandatory.

[29] At this point in the text the original Oxford House Traditions, which were written when the first Oxford House began in the Fall of 1975, stated: "At this time, it also appears that Oxford Houses can be totally self-supporting. By that, we mean that a minimum amount of government support or private support may be accepted for start-up purposes." Some states have recovery house revolving loan funds to help a new house get started. This grew out of §2036 of PL 100-690, the federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, and has served as an important catalyst for the expansion of Oxford Houses.

TRADITION SIX

Each Oxford House should be financially self-supporting, although financially secure houses may provide new or financially needy houses with a loan for a term not to exceed one year with the approval or encouragement of Oxford House, Inc.

Oxford House was built on the unique concept that its members should try to expand the number of available beds rather than turn existing members out of the House after a set period. In carrying out that concept, Oxford House-Silver Spring, shortly after it started, put up over $1,200 to start Oxford House-Washington. Later, Oxford House-Washington did the same for the start-up of another House. From the beginning, existing Oxford Houses helped new ones get started. Once a new House gets on its feet, it pays back the older Houses, which had loaned it money, and stands ready to help another new House.[30]

When an Oxford House first starts, it is generally necessary for the members to pay a slightly higher rent than what they pay once the House is established. There are two reasons for this pattern. First, there are start-up costs associated with the beginning of any new house, such as security deposits, supplies, and furnishings.31 Second, when a House starts, it takes some time to fill all the beds. As all the available beds in a House become full, the members can decide whether to lower the equal share of household expenses or begin to develop a small surplus. As a practical matter, most Houses choose to have a surplus of one month's expenses. Once having obtained that surplus, it then decides whether to lower the equal weekly share of household expenses or to accumulate money for the beginning of a new Oxford House – or to do both.

Starting new Houses through the mutual assistance of existing Oxford Houses is a tradition because each House was started with the help of existing Houses and tends to pass on to others what it received. Once more applications are received than beds available, the members of any Oxford House will begin to look around for another suitable house. When they find such a house, they will bring it up with the other existing Houses, and if there is a consensus, they will attempt to find the start-up money and members to fill the new House. Often, several members of an existing House will move into the new House to provide a core group of new members who already know how an Oxford House works.

Oxford House, Inc. acts as the coordinating body for providing charters for the opening of new Oxford Houses and for helping individual houses organize mutually supportive chapters. Through chapters, individual houses can share their experience, strength, and hope with each other to ensure compliance with the Oxford House concept and its respected standardized system of operations.

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[30] Numerous Oxford Houses have been opened since 1975. Some operate for several years, and then, because of the expiration of a lease, dissatisfaction with the facilities, or simply the finding of a better location, the members of a particular House will move into a new location. Other Houses often help that type of move and start new Oxford Houses. In both cases, financial assistance is in the form of a loan having a payback schedule not to exceed one year, defined upfront. (Since 1989, many new Oxford Houses have taken advantage of state revolving loan programs. Repayment from those start-up loans assures the continuation of the revolving fund to enable other new houses to get started – just as repayment of loans to chapters permits the same resources to be used again and again.)

[31] For example, the landlord and phone company may require a security deposit, and while furnishings are generally donated, members will often have to rent a truck to pick them up. When a new House starts up, there may also be a need to buy more "staples" such as flour, sugar, coffee, cleaning supplies, etc.

TRADITION SEVEN

Oxford House should remain forever non-professional, although individual members may be encouraged to utilize outside professionals whenever such utilization is likely to enhance recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction.

It is inconsistent with the Oxford House system of democratic rule to have a professional manager of Oxford House. Likewise, it is inconsistent with the Oxford House concept to have a requirement placed on members to utilize the services of psychiatrists, doctors, or even the program of Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, except in very special circumstances.

Within an Oxford House group, it is not unusual to find some members who have problems that the group cannot deal with. In those situations, it is not uncommon for the Oxford House members, at a meeting, to strongly suggest that a fellow member seek professional help. In those situations where a member's behavior is disruptive to the group, the member may be required to seek professional help or attend more self-help meetings to avoid being dismissed from Oxford House.

One can only be dismissed from an Oxford House because of drinking, using drugs, non-payment of rent, or disruptive behavior. Members should be careful not to abuse the dismissal process. Every opportunity should be given to a member who needs professional help to see that he obtains it.

Nearly all members of Oxford House utilize A.A., N.A., or other mutual aid meetings to obtain and maintain comfortable sobriety. However, Oxford House relies primarily upon an example to ensure a high percentage of meeting attendance from its members. Formal meetings, such as 12-step meetings, are not held in an Oxford House. However, every member who has maintained comfortable sobriety in Oxford House makes it a practice to attend many recovery meetings regularly. If a house member does not regularly attend A.A. or N.A. meetings, the House may – as a group conscience – decide that an individual member should attend a set number of meetings each week for both the individual's well-being and the well-being of others who live in the House.

Individuals living in each of the Oxford Houses have also been responsible for starting many new Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous groups with meetings near an Oxford House. This not only helps those individuals become more involved in A.A. or N.A. and thereby reap greater individual benefits, but it also helps to build strong bonds between local A.A. and N.A. groups and Oxford House.

TRADITION EIGHT

Propagation of the Oxford House, Inc. concept should always be conceived as public education rather than promotion. Principles should always be placed before personalities.

Those who have benefited from living in an Oxford House have acquired enthusiasm for the Oxford House concept. In their enthusiasm, they have been anxious to share Oxford House with any recovering alcoholics and drug addicts who want to establish an Oxford House in their community.

Every Oxford House member stands ready to explain the workings of his House and the benefits derived there to anyone anywhere. No personal gain is derived from any Oxford House promotion. It should also be pointed out that Oxford House, Inc. in no way gains from the creation of new Oxford Houses. It has been formed as a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation and will continue to operate as one according to the letter and spirit of the law.

It is not easy to spread the word about a new or old concept with a new twist. The members of Oxford House give the highest priority to propagating or spreading the word about the Oxford House concept.

Before spreading the word, an individual Oxford House should make certain that it is sufficiently established to undertake a public discussion of its goals and mission. The best sales pitch for spreading the word about Oxford House is simply the establishment of a sound Oxford House and a straightforward discussion of what it is, how it works, and why it is needed.

As with any group or organization, some individuals will be so impressed with the Oxford House concept that they will become "super salesmen." Each super salesman should be keenly aware that the Oxford House concept is one based on principles rather than personalities. The situation should be avoided whereby certain individuals will begin to equate their persuasive qualities with the Oxford House concept. The concept and the standardized, democratic, self-supported Oxford House system of operations itself are far more persuasive than any individual. Be honest and straightforward when sharing the Oxford House concept with others.

The Oxford House concept is sound and based on sound principles. It has demonstrated its worth with an established track record. We should spread the word about Oxford House but be wary of individuals who place their own personalities before the principles that made it work. Oxford Houses are dedicated to recovery and group support, not individual gain.

TRADITION NINE

Members who leave an Oxford House in good standing are encouraged to become associate members and offer friendship, support, and examples to newer members.

While no one is ever asked to leave an Oxford House without cause, some individuals will outgrow living in an Oxford House. They will return to their families and start new families; they may move into another living situation.

Once members have left Oxford House, they should be encouraged to become active in the Oxford House Alumni Association. Many alumni members continue to be associated with their former Oxford House as associate house members. The associate member should be encouraged to attend House meetings, but a local House may decide that his voting privileges are somewhat less than those of members who live in the House. Such a restriction of voting privileges makes sense and should not discourage members who leave in good standing from becoming associate members of their former House or chapter.

Gratitude is a feeling that most alcoholics acquire sometime during their recovery process. Often, recovering alcoholics and drug addicts struggle to express their gratitude adequately. The alumni member of Oxford House is in the enviable position of being of service in an environment where he has total understanding. The alumni member can offer friendship, support, and an example to the active members of Oxford House.

Moreover, alumni members can often assist in forming new Oxford Houses or recruiting new members who want to live in an Oxford House. Above all, associate members are examples of those who lived in an Oxford House and "made it."

All Oxford Houses should encourage members who leave in good standing to maintain a continuous link with their Oxford House experience. The welcome mat should be out to any associate member and contact between associate members and active members should be encouraged.[32]

To the greatest extent possible, each Oxford House should keep Oxford House, Inc. updated with the current address of alumni members who have left the House in good standing so they can receive the "Oxford Grape" and other Oxford House newsletters.

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[32] Many former Oxford House members who left their houses clean and sober become members of the national Oxford House Alumni Association. The Alumni Association is a fellowship of former Oxford House members who share their experiences, strengths and hope to expand the Oxford House movement and keep it operating and expanding in a way to assure other recovering individuals the same opportunity they have enjoyed.

Oxford House System Checklist

Money

Set Up a Checking Account for Each Oxford House

- Obtain A Federal Tax Identification Number
- Get The Name of The House and Address on Each Check
- Require At Least Two Signatures to Write a Check
- Record All Deposits, Checks Drawn, And Service Charges
- Run All Income and Expenses Through the Account
- Post Monthly Statements So All Members of The House Can See

Set Equal Weekly Share of Household Expenses to Cover Costs

- Figure Monthly Expenses (Rent, Utilities, Staples)
- Divide By the Number of Beds Likely to Be Occupied
- Add A Small Amount to Enable the House to Have a Reserve
- Remember That Other Members Must Make Up Any Shortfall If Any of The House Recovery Beds Are Not Occupied

Collect an Equal Share of Household Expenses in Advance

- Usually, A House Sets a Rule of One or Two Weeks in Advance
- Do Not Let Members Get Behind in An Equal Share of Household Expenses
- If A Member Is Two Weeks Back, Confront the Member at The Weekly Meeting
- Discuss Hardship Cases at A Meeting Before Accepting a New Member. Sometimes, It May Be Necessary to Consider the Fact That an Individual Just Out of Rehabilitation Will Have to Get a Job to Pay Their Equal Share of Expenses

Utilities

- Remember, The Electric Bill Is Higher in Summer
- Remember, The Fuel Bill Is Higher in Winter
- Cable TV programs Must Be Paid for by the User Unless There Is a House Vote. Alcohol or Drug Use

Alcohol Or Drug Use

Sobriety

- Sobriety Is the Primary Purpose of An Oxford House
- Make No Compromise
- Frequently Go to AA /NA Meetings but Rely On "Attraction" Rather Than Mandates – AA/NA Meetings Should Be Outside the House.

Alcohol Or Drug Use

- As soon as Use Is Suspected, Call A Special Meeting
- When a Majority Vote Confirms Use, Expulsion Results
- If Drunk or High, Members Should Leave Immediately
- If Not Intoxicated or Impaired, Leave the Next Morning
- Make No Exceptions
- Establish a Readmission Guideline of Solid Sobriety. Thirty Days of Abstinence Is Suggested.
- Accept The Fact That the House's Welfare Is More Important Than that of Any Individual

Oxford House Officer Roles & Responsibilities

OFFICERS

House President

- Elected for a six-month term
- Must be a member of an Oxford House
- Calls and leads weekly and special meetings
- Cannot succeed himself but can be elected to the same office after six months have elapsed

House Treasurer

- Elected for a six-month term
- Must be a member of an Oxford House
- Responsible for maintaining the House's financial records
- Keeps membership informed about financial condition
- Cannot succeed himself but can be elected to the same office after six months have elapsed

House Secretary

- Elected for a six-month term
- Must be a member of an Oxford House
- Responsible for recording minutes of House Meetings
- Before each weekly meeting, ensure that vacancy updates have been made and the vacancy contact cell phone is accurate
- Sends thank you notes to contributors
- Cannot succeed himself but can be elected to the same office after six months have elapsed

House Comptroller

- Elected for a six-month term
- Must be a member of an Oxford House
- Responsible for collecting each member's equal share of household expenses and reporting the status to the House
- Balances books with Treasurer prior to each meeting
- Responsible for ensuring completion of the annual survey and submission through the Oxford House website
- Cannot succeed himself but can be elected to the same office after six months have elapsed

House Coordinator

- Elected for a six-month term
- Must be a member of an Oxford House
- Assigns and reviews house chores
- Cannot succeed himself but can be elected to the same office after six months have elapsed

The goal of every Oxford House is to be an example to everyone in recovery of the way to become comfortable enough in sobriety to ensure long-term recovery without relapse. In brief, every Oxford House is a "*Good Neighbor and a Good Citizen.*"

Protecting House and Chapter Finances

Weekly house meetings are essential to a well-run Oxford House. Avoid thinking, "Things are going so well; we only need to meet every two weeks or once a month." Experience shows trouble follows whenever a house skips regular weekly meetings.

The standard forms in the Oxford House Manual©, the Oxford House Chapter Manual©, and the website are blueprints for staying on track during meetings. Use them, and if you have questions, contact Oxford House, Inc.'s central office via hotline or web form.

When an Oxford House is established, it receives its own Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) from the IRS for opening a checking account. Record the FEIN in the House Record Book and ensure the central office has it. The House Secretary should check the Oxford House, Inc. website to confirm it is on file. If missing, provide it—your bank can supply it if misplaced.

Oxford Houses should use two signatures on checks whenever permitted by the bank. Bills are typically reviewed during house meetings, so all members know how funds are spent. Keep the checkbook locked between meetings; a simple lockbox from Staples, Office Max, or Office Depot works well. The president, treasurer, and one other officer should have access.

Keep house money secure. Use electronic payments only for start-up loan repayment or Oxford House, Inc. contributions, so expenses are fully documented and approved. Do not elect the same person as Treasurer for the House, Chapter, and State Association.[33]

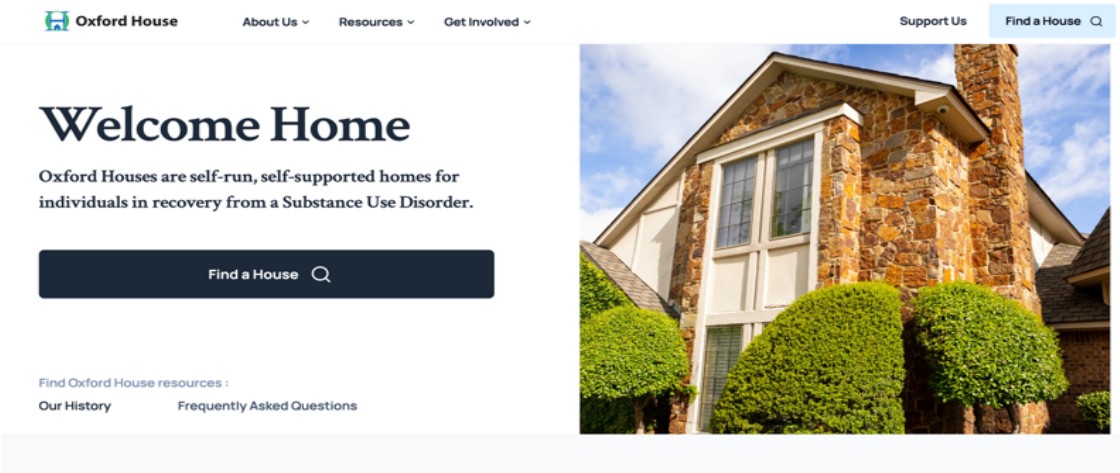
The best safeguard for protecting finances in a House, Chapter, or State Association is to make financial data available to all members of that Association. Transparency is the best safeguard against stealing by dishonest members. The audit forms and procedures ensure transparency. The Treasurer of the House should report current House finances at each weekly House meeting. The Comptroller should work with the Treasurer to conduct a monthly audit of House funds to ensure careless mistakes in addition or subtraction do not misrepresent how much money is on hand, paid out, or due.

Finally, don't let House members get behind in paying their equal share of expenses. Everyone in recovery must be responsible. Our past addictive behavior often led us to put off doing things until tomorrow. Remember, there is never an excuse for not paying house bills on time - including rent to the landlord. Vacancies can be no excuse. If the house checking account is short of funds when the bills are due, house members must kick in an additional amount on an equal basis to pay the rent and other bills on time.

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[33] See World Council Resolution # 42. Voting for different individuals to oversee membership money at different levels of the organization is a sound "check and balance" to avoid embezzlement.

Staying Connected



Every Oxford House stays connected to share strength, experience, and hope with other Oxford Houses, Oxford House, Inc., the treatment community, drug courts, researchers, and the broader recovery community.

The House Secretary should check the Oxford House website, oxfordhouse.org, before each weekly meeting and report any new material to the membership. The Secretary must also ensure that the cell phone number of at least one current member is listed on oxfordvacancies.com so that vacancy texts can be received and answered promptly.

Finding safe housing was difficult for each of us, and one of the biggest frustrations was being told a house had a vacancy when it did not. The least we can do for newcomers seeking a safe place to live is to make sure our vacancy information is correct. Accurate listings protect the good name of our House and build trust with counselors, recovery advocates, and others who refer people to Oxford House. No one will refer applicants to our House if the vacancy details are wrong or the contact phone number is never answered.

Each House has an assigned email address, and the elected Comptroller is responsible for making sure it is active and monitored. Email is an excellent tool for setting up interviews and filling vacancies, and messages should be answered promptly.

If the House does not have a computer or internet connection, it should get one. Computers are inexpensive, internet service costs less than cable TV, and donated or second-hand computers are acceptable. Ask the community for donations if needed.

Keeping connected and up to date ensures vacancies are filled quickly. If the House checking account cannot cover rent or utilities, members will need to make up the shortfall. Vacancies must be filled promptly, and household expenses adjusted as needed to avoid losing the charter. Staying on track by addressing recurrences of use, paying bills on time, and following the House Charter is the shared responsibility of every member.

OXFORD HOUSE TRADITIONS

1. Oxford House has as its primary goal the provision of housing for alcoholics and drug addicts who want to stay clean and sober.

2. All Oxford Houses are run on a democratic basis. Our officers serve continuous periods of no longer than six months.

3. No Member of an Oxford House is ever asked to leave without cause -- drinking, drug use, or disruptive behavior.

4. Oxford House members realize that active participation in A.A. and N.A. offers the assurance of continued sobriety.

5. Each Oxford House should be autonomous except in matters affecting other houses or Oxford House, Inc., as a whole.

6. Each Oxford House should be financially self-supporting.

7. Oxford House should remain forever non-professional.

8. Propagation of the Oxford House, Inc. concept should always be conceived as public education.

9. Members who leave Oxford House in good standing should become associate members.

Notes

Oxford House™

Since 1975

More Than 50 Years of Organized Self-Help to Enable Those with Substance Use Disorders to Achieve Long-Term Recovery

- Providing sole authority for Oxford House charters
- Providing technical assistance to establish new Oxford Houses
- Providing technical assistance to keep existing Oxford Houses on track
- Providing organization of Chapters to help Oxford Houses to help themselves
- Providing the time, living environment, and support to enable alcoholics and drug addicts to achieve recovery without relapse
- Providing the legal, philosophical, and scientific framework for a cost-effective, worldwide network of supportive recovery housing

Write or Call

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