

Highlights of Oxford House™ and Church Participation

Listed below are Oxford House milestones and a few examples of churches that have helped Oxford Houses.

1975 – First Oxford House™ opens in Silver Spring, Maryland with the help of St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church.

1976 – Oxford House – Northampton opens in Washington, D.C. with the assistance of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church.

1987 – Review of first ten years by William Spillane, Ph. D., Catholic University of America, shows 80% of residents stayed clean and sober.

1988 - First Oxford House™ opens in Bethlehem, PA and Congress passes legislation to encourage states to help get recovery houses started throughout the country based upon the Oxford House™ concept.

1989 – With implementation of the new federal law, Oxford House™ begins expansion.

1990 – Sally Robinson – daughter of Rev. Sam Shoemaker who played a role in AA founding – introduced Episcopal Churches in Baltimore, MD and Trenton, NJ to the Oxford House concept. NY Avenue Presbyterian Church in DC donates funds.

1991 – CBS “60 Minutes” favorably features Oxford House™ and houses owned by churches are opened in Wildwood, NJ, Albany, NY and DC.

1992 – Rev. Ed Stephenson and lay members of Methodist Church in Kansas work with Oxford House, Inc. to establish Friends of Recovery and open three Oxford Houses in Kansas, by 2019 has grown to more than 116 houses.

1993 – Salvation Army helps establish two houses in El Paso, TX and 7 in PG County, Maryland.

1999 – Mt. Zion Baptist Church helps establish a house in DC area and sets up a loan fund to help individual move in.

2004 – Oxford House works with S.O.M.E., to open more houses in the DC area.

2019 – Over 2,600 Oxford Houses in 48 states, Australia, Canada, Ghana and Great Britain.

Questions and Answers

Q. What is an Oxford House?

A. Oxford House™ is self-help supportive housing for those recovering from a Substance Use Disorder. Each house is chartered by Oxford House, Inc. [OHI], the non-profit umbrella organization for the network of individual Oxford Houses.

Q. How do Oxford Houses get started?

A. Members of churches, synagogues and mosques can become friendly landlords by buying and renting four to five-bedroom houses for use as Oxford Houses. It also makes sense to have OHI outreach workers available to teach folks how the houses operate. Money to support outreach workers often is provided by states or foundations.

Q. What is the cost of getting a new house started?

A. The average *one-time* technical assistance cost to start a new Oxford House™ is about \$40,000. That amount includes money for an on-site, experienced outreach worker and is generally financed by local contributions or grants.

Q. How much does it cost an individual to live in an Oxford House™?

A. The average weekly cost in 2019 to live in an Oxford House™ is about \$125 a week. The range of cost, depending on the expenses of a particular house, is \$95 to \$200 a week.

Q. How does one get into an Oxford House™?

A. An individual applies to an existing Oxford House™ and the residents of the house vote whether to accept the new person.

Q. Can religious groups help start new houses?

A. Religious groups can help start new houses by finding or buying suitable houses for groups to rent and arranging to get technical assistance from Oxford House, Inc. An Oxford House, however, promotes no particular religion.



Oxford House™

Working with Churches, Synagogues and Mosques



Going back to where you came from after treatment for alcoholism and drug addiction almost always spells failure – a return to old behavior. – Mark Spence, May 5, 1991 on CBS Program “60 Minutes”

Oxford House, Inc. is the 501(c)(3) non-profit umbrella organization of the national network of individual Oxford Houses.

The primary purpose of Oxford House, Inc. is to establish enough self-run, self-supported recovery houses to provide an opportunity for every recovering individual to learn a clean and sober way of life – forever.

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

This pamphlet “*Working With Churches, Synagogues and Mosques*” discusses how Oxford Houses can provide the missing link in the treatment protocol to assure recovery without relapse.

Website: www.oxfordhouse.org

Vacancy Website: www.oxfordvacancies.com

Substance Use Disorder Recovery

Substance Use Disorders [SUD] are chronic and progressive problems. Those with a SUD become “hooked” on their drug of choice and physically all cells in their bodies call out for a steady supply of the drug. This physical compulsion causes the mind to trigger any kind of behavior needed to get the next drink of alcohol or an illicit drug “fix.” Once addicted, the only “cure” is total abstinence – stopping the use of the alcohol and illicit drugs – forever.

Stopping the use of drugs and alcohol use is difficult but not impossible. Most addicts go through a number of periods where they stop use because they have run out of alcohol or their drug of choice. When an addict stops, he or she feels sick because of withdrawal; i.e., every cell in the body is calling out for the drug and the body shakes, sweats and produces great anxiety. This is called detoxification and it usually ends within minutes after the addict has ingested his or her drug of choice. However, for a fortunate few who can go three to seven days without taking their drug of choice, detoxification is the beginning of a whole new life.

Short-term custody in a hospital setting or a supervised detoxification facility is the usual way to stop an addict’s compulsive use of alcohol and drugs. Treatment can educate and motivate an individual to stay stopped and Oxford Houses can help to make treatment successful.

Starting an Oxford House

The nation’s churches, synagogues and mosques are first responders to individuals with or affected by alcoholism and/or drug addiction. Organized investment in suitable houses to rent to groups of recovering individuals to start an Oxford House is a win-win proposition. The odds for recovery without relapse are improved and the income from the rental property can be put to good use for other congregational benefits. Religious organizations can rent good houses to become Oxford Houses as long as they understand that Oxford Houses are self-run and self-supported and do not favor any particular religion.



Staying Stopped

Throughout its existence, Oxford House has combined the concepts of self-support and responsibility with a fellowship having the common purpose of continued and comfortable sobriety without relapse.”

From Tradition One
Oxford House Manual ©

Behavior change is never easy and it is especially difficult for the individual who is recovering from addiction. While the physical craving for drugs ends within a few days, the mind tries to trick an individual into returning to alcohol or drug use. When you think about it, the mind is doing what comes naturally – forgetting pain and remembering pleasure.

Professionals speak often of “denial” when dealing with recovering addicts. The addict really does not believe that alcohol and illicit drug use produces harm. The addict “remembers” the good feeling that came from the alcohol or drugs and wants to recapture it. At the same time, he or she forgets the violence, irrational behavior (fights, loss of job and family), and physical withdrawal that make one feel sick (hang-overs).

Treatment plus twelve-step/self-help programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) have helped millions of recovering addicts to change their behavior to adopt lifelong abstinence. Unfortunately, many recovering individuals need more support than AA and NA alone. Oxford Houses provide the additional support and the time to learn new behavior. Over 80% of those who live in an Oxford House™ stay clean and sober.

Many churches and other places of worship are natural homes for AA and NA meetings. Every church presents a front-line opportunity for intervening to help and alcoholic or drug addict kick his or her addiction. Any addict can be detoxified, but relapse is often the likely outcome – unless the recovering addict has a place to live supportive of the behavior change necessary for long term comfortable sobriety.



How Religious Groups Can Help

Oxford Houses are rented family houses where groups of recovering individuals live together in an environment supportive of recovery from an addiction. Each house is self-run and self-supported following a standardized system of democratic operation. Each group – or religious community on behalf of a group – obtains a charter from Oxford House, Inc., the umbrella organization for the national network of individual Oxford Houses. Get material at www.oxfordhouse.org

An Oxford House charter has three basic requirements for the group:

- it must be democratically self-run,
- it must be financially self-supported, and
- it must expel any resident who returns to using alcohol or drugs.

The standardized disciplined system of operations has evolved from the 44-year history of Oxford House and permits replication of Oxford Houses throughout the country. All Oxford Houses work together to provide mutual support and quality control.

The machinery – including in many states the availability of a group start-up loan up to \$4,000 for the group to rent a single-family house in a good neighborhood – is in place, but help is needed in finding a house and getting trained individuals to help make it work. Religious congregations can become friendly landlords. Members of congregations can reach out and help transform the revolving door between sobriety and alcohol or drug abuse into an opportunity for recovering individuals to gain comfortable sobriety without relapse – forever.

For more information or a proposal to help your organization provide hope for recovery without relapse by developing Oxford Houses, contact:



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