

# Oxford House 2011 Profile Series

Recovery • Responsibility • Replication



August 2011

## District of Columbia Oxford House Resident Profile

**Oxford House World Services**

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# Oxford House™

*Recovery • Responsibility • Replication*

## **The 3-R's for Addicts to Regain Freedom**

**Recovery:** The process by which addicted individuals become free of addiction for the rest of their life.

**Responsibility:** The means by which an individual gradually assumes control over his or her lifestyle so that choices can be consistently made to avoid the use of alcohol or drugs.

**Replication:** The means through which addicted individuals living in an Oxford House™ share their newfound lifestyle of living in a supportive, alcohol and drug-free environment with other individuals wanting comfortable sobriety by starting new Oxford Houses to give other recovering individuals a real opportunity to achieve recovery without relapse.



### **Oxford House – Military Road**

Home to 9 men since July 2007

\*Residents participated in survey. Participation rate is 83% of residents surveyed. Relapse rate among all DC houses was less than 8% for 2010. This is lower than national average of 19% found by Oxford House, Inc. The low relapse rate in DC is in large part because turnover is so low. More than 50% of residents have resided in an Oxford House for an average of two years..

Visit the Web site at [www.oxfordhouse.org](http://www.oxfordhouse.org)

## Oxford House in The Nation's Capital

Today, there are 35 Oxford Houses [8 for women, 27 for men] within the city limits of Washington, D.C. providing 302 beds for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts to help themselves by helping each other. There are 239 beds for recovering men and 63 beds for recovering women. It has been 35 years since the first Oxford House started in the District – shortly after the successful establishment of the first Oxford House in neighboring Silver Spring, Maryland in 1975.

### History

The first DC Oxford House™ was established as a home for eight men at 44th and Fessenden Street, NW in March 1976. After one year at that location, the group moved to a house at Huntington Street, NW just off Connecticut Avenue. Oxford House - Huntington, was an Oxford House™ for 11 men until it closed at the end of 2000 because the landlord wanted to use the property for something else.

The second Oxford House™ in the District was started in November 1977 with funds provided by the first D.C. Oxford House™ and the original Oxford House™ in Silver Spring. It has been in continuous operation ever since and is located on Northampton Street, NW, just off Connecticut Avenue at Chevy Chase Circle. Oxford House-Northampton is a house for thirteen men recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction. [See box on page 4.]

In 1988, Dr. Ian Mac Donald visited the house at the request of then President Ronald Reagan to find out how to replicate the Oxford House model throughout the country. He met with the residents of the house and learned that they had about 26 applicants for every vacancy. When he asked why they did not just rent another house, he was told that it took the D.C. group of eight houses about a year to save \$5,000 – the amount it took to buy beds and pay the first month's rent and security deposit on another house. He then suggested the need for a revolving loan fund.

Shortly after Dr. Mac Donald's visit to Oxford House-Northampton, the late Edward Madigan (R. Ill) added an amendment to the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (§2036 of PL 100-690) to require jurisdictions receiving federal block grant funds for alcoholism and drug addiction to establish such funds. That original provision requiring each state to establish a recovery home revolving loan fund was

amended in 2000 to make it permissive rather than mandatory.<sup>1</sup>

### Growth

From its modest beginnings in the Washington, DC area, Oxford House has spread to 41 states. By the summer of 2011 there were 1,087 rented houses in more than 340 cities and towns. In addition, there are 26 Oxford Houses in Alberta, Canada, 2 in Ghana, 1 in England and 5 Oxford Houses in Australia.

Two factors have been responsible for the successful expansion of Oxford House throughout the country. First, the cost-effective concept of renting houses and using a standard, self-help system of operation works. Second, the availability of the federal start-up loan provision served as a catalyst to introduce Oxford House to new communities.

Not all Oxford Houses in the District are as “grand and glorious” as Oxford House – Northampton, but all Oxford Houses are good houses and create a functional family environment that supports learning to live without the use of drugs or alcohol.

### The Oxford House Charter

Each Oxford House is granted a charter from Oxford House, Inc. – the national nonprofit umbrella organization located in Silver Spring, Maryland. The charter has three firm conditions:

- ◆ The house must be democratically self-run using the standard Oxford House Manual® system of operation.
- ◆ The house must be financially self-supporting, and
- ◆ The house must immediately expel any resident who returns to using alcohol and/or drugs.

Oxford House, Inc. has the sole authority to issue charters to group of six or more recovering individuals who want to establish an Oxford House. This procedure, along with the standard operating system developed by the men and women of Oxford House™ over its 29-year history, is essential to assure the quality of each Oxford House™.

Chartering is a two-step process: a six-month temporary charter followed by a permanent charter once the group learns the Oxford system of operation. The permanent

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford House, Inc. supported the change because of its belief that expansion should be motivated by attraction rather than any force such as a mandate.



### **Oxford House-Northampton**

3765 Northampton Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20015

A recovery home for men established April 1977  
Tel. 202-237-0989

At the time of his Amendment to the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, Congressman Madigan in explaining to his colleagues how Oxford Houses work said the following about Oxford House-Northampton, the second Oxford House in DC:

“Oxford House - Northampton must surely be one of the finest recovery homes in the country and is probably the most comfortable residence leased by Oxford House. It is located in an upper middle class neighborhood, one block from Chevy Chase Circle in upper Northwest Washington, D.C. about a mile from the exclusive Chevy Chase Country Club. It is the last house on the end of a quiet residential street near Connecticut Avenue, a major thoroughfare.

“On the west side is a branch bank and the bank’s parking lot. On the east side is a residence. Across Northampton Street is the Chevy Chase city library. Along Connecticut Avenue is a short business district, the only commercial strip in the area. Within a few blocks of the house are two grocery stores, a drug store, another bank, a gasoline station, movies, and a number of restaurants and other shops. Everything a resident needs is within walking distance. It is on a city bus line and within walking distance of a subway stop. It is about five miles from the center of the city and an easy commute.

“The house at 3765 Northampton Street is an imposing structure with a circular driveway in front and four white pillars on the concrete front porch. Inside is a chandelier at the front of a wide hallway that runs the length of the downstairs. The hallway was painted gray-blue with white trim by a member of the house.

“The downstairs has five large common rooms plus a kitchen and half-bath. To the right of the entrance is a paneled library, which is often used as a television room. To the left of the entrance is the living room with a television, video recorder and working fireplace for which the residents buy firewood. Above the fireplace are a number of large trophies won by a resident on the golf course. Behind the living room is another large room used as a dining area. Behind the library is a large kitchen with appliances found in most Oxford Houses, a drip coffee maker and microwave oven. Each resident has his own shelf space and spot in the two large refrigerators. Behind the kitchen, in what was once probably the dining room, is a room used as a combination office and den. It has two pay telephones, which house members got as a solution to unclaimed long-distance charges.<sup>1</sup> It also has a bulletin board and desk.

“The second floor has seven bedrooms, three double and four single, and two full baths. Each room is carpeted, each has a television set and each television set is wired for cable reception. Eight of the 13 house members have private telephones, some with answering machines.

“In the basement are three single rooms and two full baths. Also in the basement are a washer and dryer and a weight room with an exercise bicycle and punching bag.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Today, the pay phones at Oxford House-Northampton have been removed because the house got a fixed fee long distance plan.

<sup>2</sup> Congressional Record, November 10, 1988 that reprints legislative activity from October 21, 1988. Remarks of Edward R. Madigan (R. Il.) [CR Vol. 134, No. 152, pp E3732-E 3737]

## Education and Outreach

Teaching the Oxford House system of operation is fundamental to Oxford House success. The Oxford House World Council - made up of leaders elected by houses and Oxford House alumni – focuses on the development of policy, workshops and mutual support among individual houses to provide on-going teaching of the Oxford House system of operation. The Oxford House World Services Office – the professional staff operating under the direction of the Oxford House, Inc. – provides service to all Oxford House entities – houses, chapters, state associations and the annual Oxford House World Convention. It also is the official connection of Oxford House with government agencies, treatment providers, courts, the press and the recovery community as a whole.

Oxford House outreach workers trained by Oxford House World Service or housing committees of chapters of existing Oxford Houses are best able to start new Oxford Houses. The cost of finding a house to rent, suitable residents to live in the house and training the new residents the system of operations averages about \$30,000 a house. Once a house is established the residents equally share all household expenses. This self-support feature of Oxford House makes the program very cost-effective. The 35 Oxford Houses in the District of Columbia amply illustrate this point. Oxford House-Northampton [13 men] has been in continual existence since April 1977. Oxford House-Garrison [10 men] has been in existence since March 1980. As a matter of fact, eight of the thirty-five houses are over ten years old.

### Self-Help – Heart of Oxford House

Not only do the Oxford House residents pay their own living expenses but they also manage the operation of their own Oxford House. They hold weekly house meetings and elect officers from among house residents. No officer can hold the same office for more than six months. Each officer has specific duties and by following the prescribed procedures for handling money, weekly business meetings and applicant interviews once established Oxford Houses stay on track by following the Oxford House standard system of operation set forth in the Oxford House Manual<sup>®</sup> and Oxford House Chapter Manual<sup>®</sup>.

At the heart of the Oxford House system of operation is the democratic procedures used by each individual Oxford House<sup>™</sup>. The residents of each house meet once a week to conduct a democratic house meeting using parliamentary procedures with a definitive structure to enable an orderly process.

Within each house five officers are elected and have specific duties. They also can hold the particular office for only six months – a limitation designed to prevent bossism from crowding out the egalitarian principles of Oxford House<sup>™</sup>.

The following table shows the basic duties and responsibilities of each elected officer:

### President

- ◆ •Leads Weekly Meeting
- ◆ •Overall Leadership
- ◆ •Attends Chapter Meetings
- ◆ •Co-signer of checks

### Secretary

- ◆ •Takes Meeting Notes
- ◆ •Contacts Treatment Providers
- ◆ •Notifies House Applicants
- ◆ •Monthly reports to OHI

### Treasurer

- ◆ •Keeps Checkbook
- ◆ •Pays House bills
- ◆ •Co-signer of checks

### Comptroller

- ◆ •Collects Weekly Rent
- ◆ •Audits Treasurer's Books
- ◆ •Posts weekly payments

### Coordinator

- ◆ •Supervises Household Chores
- ◆ •Buys House Supplies
- ◆ •Reports to meeting on chores
- ◆ •Enforces fire safety practices

At each and every Oxford House<sup>™</sup> elections are held every six months to provide the framework for Oxford House to work well. Everyone has a role and the elections minimize the chance of bossism by entrenched leaders.

## Profile of DC Oxford House Residents June 2011

In May-June 2011, the 82% of residents in the District of Columbia Oxford Houses surveyed completed a questionnaire used by Oxford House, Inc. since 1987.

### Average Age

Oxford House residents in the District had an average age of 49.7 years old compared to 45 years old in 2004. The range of ages is from 19 to 74. Only 5% are less than age thirty but 37% are in their fifties.

This average age is more than ten years older than expected based upon surveys conducted in various states. This fact, combined with the fact that a minimum three applicants to live in Oxford House are being rejected each week because there is no vacancy within the District's network of Oxford Houses shows the continuing need for many more houses.

### Past Sobriety Efforts

It is clear successfully staying clean and sober without relapse is not by accident. The population in Oxford House have a past recovery record that would suggest a pattern of relapse instead of comfortable sobriety without relapse. The table below shows the number of times residents have gone through residential treatment before coming into an Oxford House.

Prior Sobriety Tries Residential*	
Times	Percent
First	27
Twice	19
3 – 5 Times	34
6-10 Times	12
More than 10 times	8

\*Residential treatment

Fifty-four percent of the residents had been through residential treatment three or more times – the same high percentage as in 2004. Almost a quarter of the individuals had been through residential treatment more than five times. However, once in Oxford House both the first time treatment residents and the chronic relapsers have stayed clean and sober without relapse. Since sobriety is habit forming, it safe to project that most Oxford House residents in DC have successfully achieved long-term sobriety.

## Homelessness and Incarceration

Oxford House residents in DC have recycled through detox and residential treatment, and most have been



**Oxford House-Kalorama**

1318 Delafield Place, NW  
Washington, DC 20011

homeless and served time in jail. Specifically, 78% of the residents reported homelessness averaging 725 days – about two years. This compares to 72% and 732 days in 2004. The average number of times the residents have been homeless is 2.15 times – up from 1.9 times in 2004. This is a slightly fewer times homeless than nearby states but the percent homeless and duration of homelessness is slightly higher. The table below compares the homeless experience of DC, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina residents based on a survey questionnaire completed in June 2004.

### Homeless Data

Jurisdiction	DC	MD	VA	NC
% Homeless	78%	73%	60%	70%
Times Homeless	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.3
Days Homeless	725	289	423	274

Moreover, 57% of the Oxford House residents in the DC houses have served jail time with an average length of jail time of 910 days – about two and a half years. The days in jail shown in the table below for Maryland is 500 days less if the 20% of the residents who served more than 10 years are excluded.

### Incarceration Data

Jurisdiction	DC	MD	VA	NC
% Jail Time	57%	72%	73%	77%
Times in Jail	2.2	3.4	4.2	3.7
Days in Jail	910	1303	524	542

## Other Marginal Living Conditions

Since the only “cure” for alcoholism and/or drug addiction is behavior change, the living environment can have a significant influence on outcome following treatment. The following table shows the survey results where the DC Oxford House residents had lived just prior treatment before moving into an Oxford House™.

### Last Lived

	Count	Percent
Apartment	50	33
Owned House	15	10
Rented House	13	9
Rented Room	19	13
Jail	8	5
Mental Hospital	1	-
Halfway House	14	10
Homeless	31	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>100</b>

Compared to 2004 in the table below.

### Frequency Distribution for LAST LIVED

	Count	Percent
<b>APARTMENT</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28.77</b>
<b>OWNED HOUSE</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15.07</b>
<b>RENTED HOUSE</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12.33</b>
<b>RENTED ROOM</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15.07</b>
<b>JAIL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.74</b>
<b>VA HOSPITAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.37</b>
<b>HALF-WAY HOUSE</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9.59</b>
<b>HOMELESS</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15.07</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Marginal living conditions [rented room down table through homeless] affected 44% of the residents. Going back to such living conditions following treatment for these individuals would almost guarantee relapse. The prior residence of DC Oxford House residents breaks down in a way that is similar to prior residence of Oxford House residents in nearby jurisdictions – except homelessness which is slightly higher

### Living Arrangement Before Oxford House [%]

Prior Residence	DC	MD	VA	NC
Apartment	33	28.4	22.8	22.6
Owned House	10	11.8	11.0	12.7
Rented House	9	17.3	13.4	19.5
Rented Room	13	11.8	19.7	14.1
Jail	5	03.9	04.7	04.0
Mental Hospital	-	-	03.2	01.0
VA Hospital	-	01.6	05.5	00.3
Halfway House	10	07.1	01.6	09.9
Homeless	21	18.1	18.1	16.0

At a minimum, this data shows that Oxford Houses attract low-bottom alcoholics and drug addicts.

## Family Status

Likewise few Oxford House residents come from stable family relationships. The following table compares marital status of residents. As in most jurisdictions “never married” is the largest category.

### Marital Status of Residents [%]

Jurisdiction >	DC	MD	VA	NC
Never Married	59.6	48.6	52.7	42.3
Married	03.1	11.4	02.7	07.3
Separated	09.4	18.6	18.7	17.9
Divorced	26.5	21.4	25.3	31.7
Widowed	02.9	00.0	01.0	00.8

## Employment and Income

When the newly recovering alcoholic and/or drug addict is accepted into an Oxford House he or she is expected to get a job. In June 2004, 96% of the residents in DC Oxford Houses were employed. In 2011 when the survey was undertaken 72% of the residents were employed. The table below shows that DC led the employment records of those in surrounding states. A few were between jobs but a large group was in receipt of retirement or disability benefits.

### Employment of Oxford House Residents

Jurisdiction	DC	MD	VA	NC
Employed (%)	72%	92%	83%	82%

In June 2004, residents in the respective states were earning more than enough to pay their individual equal share of household expenses and rent to the landlord. The average share was \$89.50 a week – \$387 a month. In 2011 the average share is about \$100 a week or \$420 a month but the average monthly income still substantially exceeds that amount.

### Monthly Income of Oxford House Residents

Jurisdiction	DC	MD	VA	NC
Income	\$1726	\$1716	\$1238	\$1309

## Diversity

Since it began in 1975 Oxford House has never had a racial or ethnic disruption problem. This is in part because of the nature of alcoholism and drug addiction creates a common ground that supplants

bias that might otherwise exist. The egalitarian nature of alcoholism and drug addiction in 2004 was reflected in the racial make-up of Oxford House residents.

Race	DC 2000 Census	DC Oxford	MD 2000 Census	MD Oxford	VA 2000 Census	VA Oxford
White	30.8%	21%	64.0%	27%	72.3%	43%
Black	60.0%	75%	27.9%	71%	19.6%	54%
Hispanic	7.9%	–	4.3%	–	4.7%	01%
Other	9.2%	04%	8.1%	02%	8.1%	02%

Note: Hispanic overlaps with White, Black and Other

The table above shows how three jurisdictions compare on diversity with respect to house residents and census data. All three jurisdictions tend to under-represent Whites. Experience in other parts of the country shows that with more houses such differences diminish as supply and demand balance.

The 2010 Census shows that the non-Black population in the District is about equal to the Black population – a shift between 2000 and 2010. The racial composition of Oxford Houses in 2011 does not reflect that population shift.

Race	Percentage
Black	78.1
White	20.5
Hispanic	2.4

### Education



#### Oxford House-Garrison

4312 Garrison Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20016

A recovery home for men established March 1980  
Men – Tel. 202-364-2549

Within DC Oxford Houses about 16% have not graduated from High School but 17% have graduated

from college. The average educational attainment is 12.8 years.

The Oxford House residents in the District of Columbia have an average level of school attainment slightly higher than their peers in nearby jurisdictions.

#### Average Education of Oxford House Residents

Jurisdiction	DC	MD	VA	NC
Years of School	12.8	12.7	12.4	12.5

Many residents have gained additional education while living in Oxford House. Several have graduated from UDC and many have gained a GED. Together they have the highest average education level for Oxford House residents in any jurisdiction.

### 12-Step Meetings

The average length of sobriety of 61.4 months is not an accident. Residents of DC Oxford Houses go to an average of 5.4 AA or NA 12-Step meetings each week. This compares to the average of 2 meetings a week among the average AA or NA member.

The distribution of residents attending NA meetings is similar. While recovering drug addicts tend to go to both AA and NA meetings, recovering alcoholics tend to go only to AA meetings.

About a third [32%] go to weekly counseling sessions in addition to 12-Step meetings. This level of dedication strengthens recovery for them and helps others as well. The continuing high participation in both the 12-Step meetings and weekly counseling is a direct result of the peer group living together in an Oxford House. The common bond of former addiction and current recovery serves as a catalyst for house members to go to 12-Step meetings as a sort of common recreation or social event. In addition, the clear rule that any resident who relapses will be immediately expelled puts a premium on learning to live without the use of alcohol or addictive drugs. All members of the group home are able to watch the progress of each other in achieving comfortable sobriety and it generates behavior patterns aimed at achieving the comfort with abstinence necessary to avoid relapse.

### 12-Step Meetings Attended Each Week

Jurisdiction	DC	MD	VA	NC
AA	3.3	1.9	2.8	2.7
NA	2.1	2.4	2.7	3.1
Combined	5.4	4.3	5.5	5.8

Periodic surveys by AA and NA show that the average member of each group attends about two meetings a week. Notice above that every jurisdiction goes to more than twice as many meetings each week. Meeting going becomes almost an every day event.

### Drug Addiction

Unlike 1975, when ten of the thirteen residents of the first Oxford House in Silver Spring were alcoholics, today most residents of Oxford Houses are addicted to crack, cocaine, heroin and other drugs in addition to alcohol. Because it is so difficult for newcomers to get into District of Columbia Oxford Houses, the percentage of drug addicts is a little lower than in surrounding jurisdictions.

#### Percentage of Drug Addicts

Jurisdiction	DC	MD	VA	NC
Percent	76%	81%	70%	71%

### Recovery Without Relapse

Whether addicted to alcohol and/or drugs or alcohol only, residents of Oxford House achieve long-term comfortable sobriety. The average current sobriety of residents in DC Oxford House is 61.3 months – a little more than five years. This is the biggest difference from the situation facing the men who started the first Oxford House in 1975. They lived in Alpha I, a halfway house in Silver Spring, Maryland. Because the taxpayers financed the halfway house, it was important to turn over the 13 recovery beds on a regular basis. There was a six-month time limit and during one three month period just before Oxford House took over the facility twelve men had been required to leave because their time limit was up. Eleven of the twelve men relapsed within 30 days of leaving Alpha I. This experience helped the original Oxford House residents to make certain that the new Oxford House had no time limit.

The absence of a time limit will enable some individuals to live in an Oxford House for years. This benefit not only permits them to stay until they are comfortable enough in sobriety to avoid relapse, but also enables the local network of Oxford Houses

to have an experienced core of membership to help keep the houses on track. The experience of the “old-timers” benefits everyone. It makes the network of Oxford House a supportive, highly functional family.

### Primary Treatment Provider Before Oxford House

America's Keswick	1
Avery Road	4
Baptist Mission	1
Blair House	6
Bridge Back	3
CAG	9
Community Connection	1
Clean and Sober Streets	7
DC General	1
Federal City Recovery	10
Fulton House	1
Gospel Rescue Ministry	2
Hazelden	1
Holy Comfort	1
Kaiser	1
Kolmac Clinic	3
LaCasa	4
McKenna Center	1
NIH	5
NST Village	1
OATS	1
Psychiatric Institute	1
Phoenix House	1
RAP	10
Reality	2
Safe Haven Outreach	2
Salvation Army	10
Samaritan Inn	2
Save the Seed	1
Second Genesis	10
Seton House	2
So Others Might Eat	7
St. Elizabeth	1
Suburban Hospital	1
VA [Washington, DC]	4
Virginia Hospital Center	1
Warwick Manor	3
White Deer Run	1
Whitman Walker	1

Oxford House living greatly improves the odds of an individual staying clean and sober without relapse. It is a “best practice” because it provides the time, peer support and living environment that enable a person to become comfortable enough in sobriety to avoid relapse – forever.

# Oxford House™

1975-2011

*36 Years of Organized Self-Help To Enable Alcoholics and Drug Addicts to Recover Without Relapse*

- ◆ Providing the 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 Houses 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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