

An Evaluation of the West Virginia Network of Oxford Houses



Oxford House – Saving Money: Saving Lives

December 2018

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About Oxford House, Inc.

Oxford House, Inc. [OHI] is the Delaware nonprofit, 501(c)(3) corporation that serves as the umbrella organization of the worldwide network of more than 2,500 individual Oxford Houses. Its central office is at 1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 300, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

Oxford House™ is a concept and system of operations based on the experience of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts who learned that behavior change is essential to recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction. They also learned that Oxford House provided the living environment that could help them become comfortable enough with abstinent behavior to stay clean and sober without relapse.

The Oxford House Manual[©] is the basic blueprint that provides the organization and structure that permit groups of recovering individuals to successfully live together in a supportive environment. All Oxford Houses are rented ordinary single-family houses in good neighborhoods. There are Oxford Houses for men and Oxford Houses for women but there are no co-ed houses. Nationally the average number of residents per house is about 8, with a range per house of 6 to 16.

Oxford Houses work because they: (1) have no time limit for how long a resident can live in an Oxford House; (2) follow a democratic system of operation; (3) utilize self-support to pay all the household expenses; and (4) adhere to the absolute requirement that any resident who returns to using alcohol or illicit drugs must be immediately expelled. Oxford House provides the missing elements needed by most alcoholics and drug addicts to develop behavior to assure total abstinence. It provides the time, peer support and structured living environment necessary for long-term behavior change to take hold.

Individuals living in an Oxford House learn or relearn values and responsible behavior and, slowly but surely, they develop long-term behavior to assure comfortable sobriety – forever. Some individuals live in Oxford Houses a few months; others for many years. By using participatory democracy and self-support, alcoholics, drug addicts and those with co-occurring mental illness develop long-term recovery.

After 43 years of steady growth and successful recovery outcomes, Oxford House™ has been proven to work and is a very cost-effective way to support long-term recovery without relapse. There are 25 Oxford Houses in West Virginia and more than 2,500 nationwide.

Oxford House is listed as a best practice on the National Registry of Evidence-based Practices and Procedures. [NREPP] and is singled out as an effective tool for long-term recovery in the 2016 U.S. Surgeon General's report: "Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health."

This evaluation of the West Virginia Network of Oxford Houses describes the operation and make up of the Oxford Houses in the state. The program works and is highly cost-effective.

Silver Spring, Maryland
December 2018

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Oxford House™ – The West Virginia Resident Profile



Oxford House-West Washington
Huntington, West Virginia

Oxford House – West Washington, at left, is a house at for 6 women that was established in Huntington at 1457 11th Avenue in September 2008. The house is a typical single-family detached house and, like all Oxford Houses, it is rented and supported by its residents. Now in its 10th year, Oxford House – West Washington has served 126 individuals since it started. Of those total residents, about 27 individuals were been asked to leave because of relapse [21%]. However, 99 have stayed clean and sober while living in the house – an average 8 months – and, based on the DePaul University national studies of relapse, more than 80% of the men have achieved long-term sobriety.

Creating an Effective National Recovery Network One House at a Time

West Virginia Oxford House™ Resident Profile

Number of Women's Houses	10	Number of Women Residents	69
Number of Men's Houses	17	Number of Men Residents	117
Total Number of WVA Houses	27	Total Number of Recovery Beds	186
Average Age	36.6	Percent Veterans	16.4%
Minimum Age	18.0		
Maximum Age	71.4		
Average Educational Level	11.8 years	Range of Educational Level	2 – 16 Years
Race:		Marital Status:	
White	82.6%	Never Married	45.7%
Black	10.3%	Married	15.9%
Hispanic	2.1%	Separated	18.0%
Native American	2.1%	Divorced	13.8%
Asian	3.0%	Widowed	6.4%
Percent with Prior Homelessness	67.7%	Average Length of Time	10.6 Months
		Range:	7 Days to 7 Years
Prior Jail/Prison Time	75%	Average Length of Time	16.8 Months
		Range:	7 Days to 10 Years
Percent Presently Employed	69.9%	Average Monthly Income	\$1,186
Average Length of Sobriety	9.1 Months	Ave. Weekly 12-Step Meetings	4.3
Importance of OH to Sobriety:		Would Recommend Oxford House Living to Others:	
Very Important	87%		91%
Somewhat Important	7%		
Important	2%		
Unknown	2%		
Insignificant	2%		
Place Living Immediately Before Moving into an Oxford House:		Self-Reported Current Status of Health:	
Homeless	16%	Very Good	48.8%
Jail/Prison	7%	Pretty Good	37.8%
Apartment	20%	Not So Good	13.3%
Mental Hospital	1%	Good	0%
Halfway House	7%	Quit Poor	0%
Rented Room	29%		
Heroin or other Opioid Use	62%	Alcohol Only	16%
Males in Survey	67.7%	Females in Survey	32.3%

Survey of West Virginia Oxford House Residents Conducted During Last 10 Days of November 2018

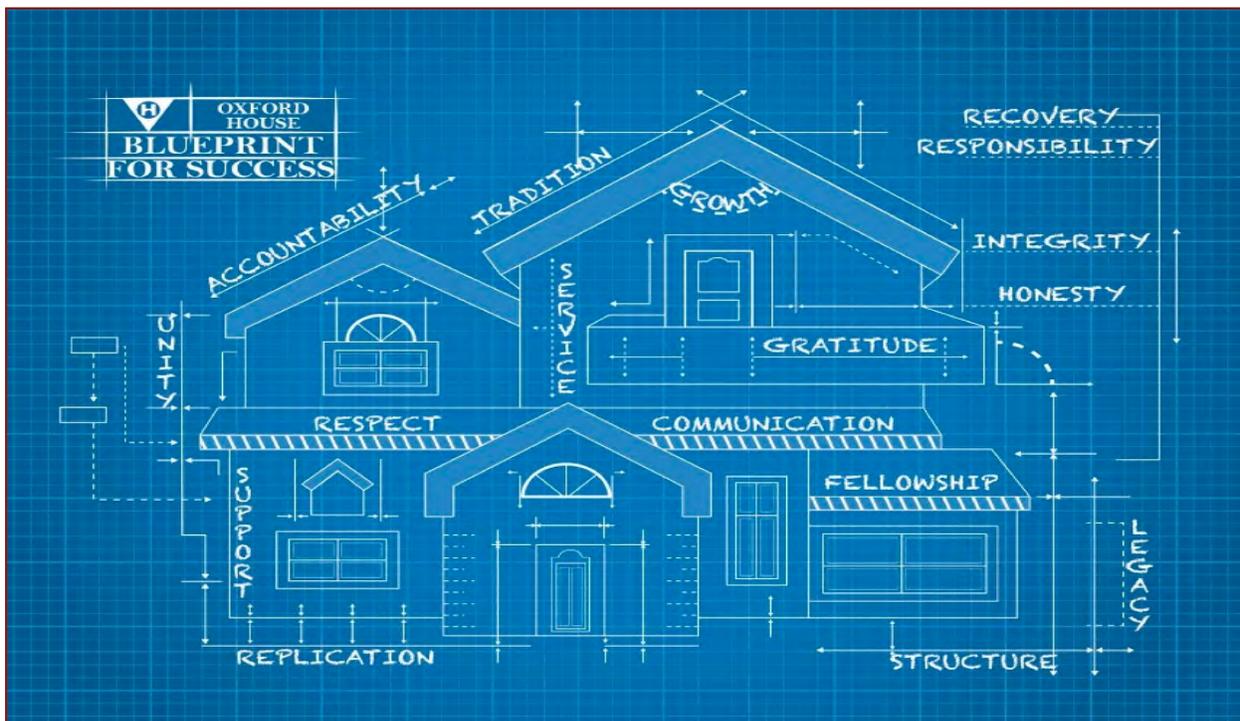
Behavior change takes:

Time,

Peer Support, and

Safe supportive living environments.

Oxford House™ provides all that and more –



... at a very low-cost.

Oxford House™ – What it is, what it does and how it works

The diagram on the facing page really sums up the reality for individuals in transition from active addiction to long-term recovery. There is no way to sugar coat reality. Recovery from addiction to alcohol or other addictive drugs requires behavior change. The rub is that behavior change for an alcoholic or drug addict is fraught with peril. Oxford Houses provide a safe place to use the time, peer support and structure to make recovery without relapse the norm rather than the exception. For many it become the vehicle to get out of a pattern of cycling in and out of treatment or incarceration.

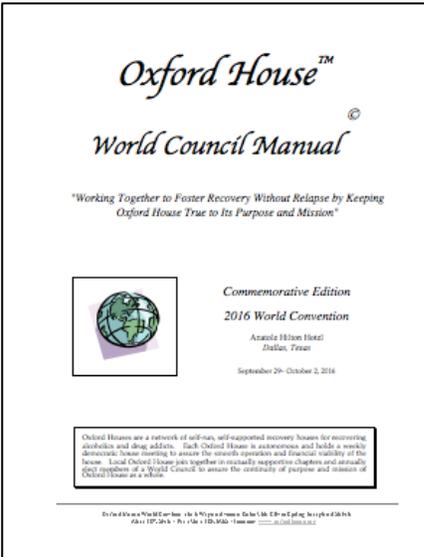
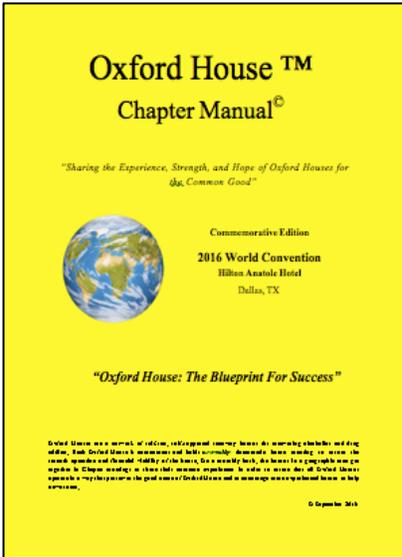
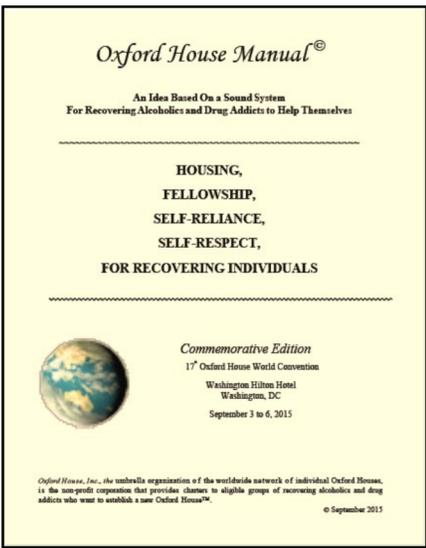
The residents in the West Virginia network of Oxford Houses reflect the national statistics when it comes to cycling in and out of recovery. Before coming into an Oxford House the average number of times the residents had previously been through treatment is 4.4 times. This is not surprising. The national Treatment Episode Data Set [TEDS] compiled by the federal government [SAMHSA] shows that 15% of those in treatment have been through treatment previously five times or more. The average number of prior treatment episodes is more than three. Very few get and stay clean and sober the first time through treatment yet Oxford House living demonstrates that does not have to be the case. Once living in an Oxford House both those new to recovery and those who have repeatedly been through treatment can succeed.

Oxford House™ is a concept and system of operation designed to provide each recovering individual the time, peer support and structured living environment needed to succeed. Simply stated recovering individuals are organized into groups of six or more to rent a house, to live together and to follow a time-tested, democratic, structured system of operation. Groups range from a minimum of six to a maximum of sixteen. Each group is autonomous but abides by certain egalitarian principles inherent in American democracy – equal votes, equal sharing of household expenses and adherence to the basic requirements of its charter that entitles the group to be an Oxford House™. The charter sets three simple conditions: [1] the group must be democratically self-run following the process defined in the Oxford House Manual[©] of operations, [2] the group must be financially self-supporting, and [3] the group must immediately expel any resident who uses alcohol or illicit drugs.

The charter is given to a group free of charge. During the first few months the charter is probationary but, if the group shows it understands the system of operations it becomes eligible for a permanent charter than can only be revoked if the group fails to abide by its three simple conditions. Learning the system of operations is facilitated through the time-tested manuals, procedures and practices that Oxford House™ has used for more than 43 years. Outreach workers help local communities and new Oxford Houses to learn the nuts and bolts of Oxford House™ development and operation. The outreach workers have had experience as Oxford House residents and are trained and supervised by

Oxford House, Inc. [OHI], the national umbrella nonprofit of the national network of Oxford Houses, to help local groups of recovering individuals to find suitable houses to rent and operate as Oxford Houses.

Key Manuals To Keep Oxford Houses On Track



Oxford Houses work because the self-run, self-supported processes and procedures have been time-tested for more than 43 years and they are uniform. There are no residency time limits, but any resident who relapses is immediately expelled from the house. Every Oxford House™ follows the same practices and policies to assure self-support and self-operation including the election of officers [see box at the left], formal weekly business meetings and selection of new residents. OHI – the umbrella organization – provides a conditional charter to each house. Moreover, individual houses form mutually-supportive chapters, state associations and elect a national advisory council. Each house has its own FEIN number and bank account. Each resident pays an equal share of household expenses including utilities and rent that the group pays to the landlord. Nationally, the average equal share of expenses is \$130 a week with a range from \$85 a week to \$165 a week.

- House Officers**
- President
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Comptroller
 - Chore

After a house has existed for several months, some of the residents volunteer to form a core group to rent and start another house in an area. Often a trained outreach worker is able to help them do so. The catalyst for expansion from the original small cluster of Oxford Houses into a national network of more than

2,400 houses was the 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Act [42 USC 300x-25], which encouraged states to provide small start-up loans repayable within 24 months.

Scientific studies also helped and, as early as 1987, Oxford House residents overcame a tradition of anonymity to fully participate in such

While research on AA has been limited by the role of anonymity in recovery, the willingness of Oxford Houses to open their doors to academic research gives us an opportunity to see recovery from addiction in action.

Dr. Jeffrey Roth, M.D.
Editor, Journal of Groups in Addiction and Recovery

studies. Since 1990, DePaul University researchers in Chicago have published more than 200 articles reporting findings showing the success of Oxford House living. The U.S. Surgeon General in his 2016 report “Facing Addiction” singled out Oxford House as a best practice for developing long-term recovery from addiction. In 2011 SAMHSA listed Oxford House as a best practice on the National Registry of Evidence-based Practices and Procedures [NREPP].

Finally, OHI – the umbrella nonprofit – has been a pace setter in protecting the civil rights for groups of recovering individuals to live in good neighborhoods. The US Supreme Court, in *City of Edmonds, WA v. Oxford House, Inc.* 514 U.S. 725 (1995) agreed with OHI that residents are a class protected from zoning restrictions. That protection has also assured landlords renting their houses for groups to use as Oxford Houses that they do not have to worry about higher comprehensive property insurance rates. Insurers cannot charge them any more than if they were renting the property to an ordinary family. Likewise, the law protects against Oxford House residents having to install more fire safety equipment than if they were an ordinary biological family. Treating Oxford House groups the same as an ordinary family is the rule – not the exception – because the law requires it. OHI has paved the way for equal treatment of Oxford House residents throughout the country.

The West Virginia Network of Oxford Houses

West Virginia continues to develop a network of Oxford Houses throughout the state. Its statewide network of Oxford Houses has reached 27 – 10 for women [69 beds] or women with children and 17 for men [117 beds]. Clearly the demand for more houses is great. One way to measure demand is the number of Oxford Houses based on state’s population. In Delaware, for example, there are 65 Oxford Houses, which is about one house for every 14,000 people in the state. Using that measure in West Virginia there is approximately one Oxford House for every 67,000 people in the state. On the other hand, there are 258 Oxford Houses in North Carolina, which is about one house for every 39,700 people in that state. In both of those states the statewide network of houses is very strong and continues to grow. The critical mass of Oxford Houses in West Virginia to assure self-sufficiency and growth has probably not been yet achieved. However, the 27 existing Oxford Houses are a good foundation for a statewide network.



Oxford House – Marvel
464 Hornor Avenue
Clarksburg, WV
6 W • Est. November 2017

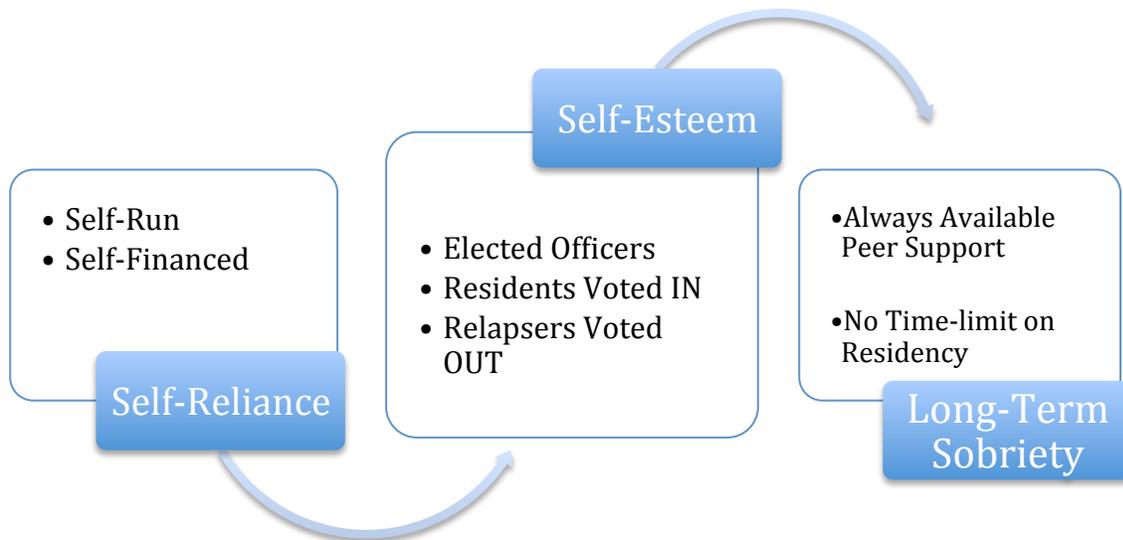
Oxford Houses typically are nice houses in good neighborhoods. The benefits from such locations include making it easier to have a good mix of residents to share networking for jobs and other skills needed to function in society. The particular house pictured at the left has provided a home for women from all different backgrounds. Their common ground has been a desire to achieve and stay in long-term recovery. At survey time their ages ranged from 19 to 42. One had never been married; one a widow; two married; one divorced and one separated. One had been homeless, one had just come from a halfway house, two from an apartment and one from a rented room. Five were White; one an Asian. They had gone through different treatment programs and four went to AA and two to NA. All hit 4 or more 12-step meetings a week. Length of sobriety ranged from 2 months to 11 months. Three had been addicted to heroin. All were staying clean and sober.

The mix of individuals in a house varies but the system of operation used in each house is the same. Officers are elected; weekly business meetings are held and the house involves itself with the chapter. Oxford House-Marvel is one of four houses located in Clarksburg. All were established a little over a year ago.

The current status of any of Oxford Houses in West Virginia can be checked to determine vacancies by going to the website: www.oxfordvacancies.com or the regular Oxford House website: www.oxfordhouse.org and looking under "Houses/Directory". This provides a convenient way for individuals at primary treatment providers or individuals working with re-entry from the state correctional system to identify where vacancies are located. To fill a vacancy an individual has to complete a standard application and be interviewed by the existing house residents. An 80% approval vote by existing residents is needed for a new member to be accepted into the house. If an applicant is not available for an on-site interview a house often conducts a face-time or telephone interview. This process for acceptance is meaningful for the applicant and builds confidence that having clean and sober behavior is worth the effort.

Oxford House™

Unique • Evidenced-based • Time-tested



FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ADDICTION

- About 17 million Americans are primarily active alcoholics with another 8 million addicted to illicit drugs. (SAMHSA)
- 20.3 million persons aged 18 or older needed treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol abuse problem in 2013 (8.5 percent of persons aged 18 or older). (SAMHSA)
- Of these, only 1.25 million – 6.2 percent of those who needed treatment – received it.
- Government reports show that alcohol and drug abuse is responsible for the admission of almost 1.5 million people to emergency rooms nationwide and drug addiction results in nearly half a trillion dollars’ economic loss annually or \$1,426 per American.
- For those receiving treatment, 60% had been in prior treatment an average of more than three times. [TEDS]

Oxford Houses Provide a Low-Cost, Highly Effective Method of Reducing Recidivism

The Process of Recovery

Not everyone who drinks alcohol becomes an alcoholic. Not everyone who uses mood-altering drugs becomes a drug addict. But some do. Society has struggled with effective ways to help those who become addicted to change behavior because their addiction can cause harm to them, their families and society at large. There is no magic wand but there is a process that works.

- Intervention
- Detoxification [*Ending physical dependence*]
- Treatment [*Motivation and education*]
- Long-term Behavior Change [*Supportive Living Environment*]

The weak link in the process is society’s failure to support living environments that foster long-term behavior change. Most individuals relapse after the first three steps of the process – intervention, detoxification and treatment.

Significant evidence suggests that Oxford Houses provide the time, peer support and structured democratic process to make recovery without relapse the norm – not the exception.

The Oxford House pictured at the right is relatively new. It is a women's Oxford House that accepts some women with children. Experience has shown that a women with children's Oxford House works well. Usually the children in the house are relatively young and accept the fact that they effectively live in a house with several surrogate aunts. The mother of the children has the benefit of support for both her own achievement of comfortable long-term recovery and the added benefit of finding that several of her roommates have a beneficial effect on the children. Three of the six women surveyed were from Chestnut Ridge treatment facility. All but one were employed. Two were primarily alcoholics; two meth and two opioid addicts. All attended more than four 12-step meetings a week. The house holds 10 and as of December 10th they had 4 vacancies. Its finances are good and the equal share of household expenses is about \$120 a week.



Oxford House – Meraki II
318 Wilson Avenue
Morgantown, WV
10 WC • Est. August 2018



Oxford House – Chloe
628 South Queen Street
Martinsburg, WV 25401
8 W • Est. March 2016

Another women's Oxford House is pictured at the left. Oxford House – Chloe has been active for nearly three years. Two of the women living there had come directly into the house from prison; both heroin addicts and both have more than two years clean. Overall heroin addiction among WVA Oxford House residents is at 63% so it is not unusual that residents indicated an addiction to heroin. What is unusual is that within the Oxford House setting they are staying clean. There are four Oxford Houses in Martinsburg with a total of 33 recovery beds. As of December 10th there were only two vacancies, suggesting that Martinsburg could use more houses. Of the four houses, three

are for men and one is for women. The first two Oxford Houses started in Martinsburg in 2014 and have developed roots and a following in that city.

Primary Treatment Background of Residents

Of the 100 West Virginia residents surveyed in Nov. 2018, the following table shows which formal treatment program they had attended prior to coming into an

Treatment Facility	#
ACT Unit	2
Anchor Point	2
Cambridge Behavioral	1
Chestnut Ridge	6
Ed's Place	1
Edgehill	1
Florida House	1
Genesis	1
Goode Recovery Center	3
Highland Hospital	1
Hoggard CRFA	1
Laurel Wood	1
Learn Program	4
Lighthouse	3
Miracles Blossom	5
Mission	1
MOVFH	1
Northwood Health System	12
PCC	5
Pinecrest	3
Pomalia	1
Prestera	3
Recovery Point	2
RSAT	1
St. Joe's Institute for Addiction	1
Teen Challenge	1
Treehouse	1
VA	7
Wakebrook	1
White Deer Run	1

Oxford House. About three-quarters of the residents [75] identified a formal treatment background and one-quarter did not. The greatest number of West Virginia Oxford House residents came from Chestnut Ridge [6], Northwood Health System [12], the Veteran's Administration and Miracles Blossom [5]. Most local treatment providers refer applicants to the West Virginia network of Oxford Houses.

The generally accepted process for an addict to develop long-term recovery without relapse is a four-step process: [1] intervention, [2] physical detoxification, [3] formal or primary treatment – education and motivation – for the individual to embrace behavior change, and [4] long-term behavior change. The weakest link in the four step recovery process is the long-term behavior change because an indefinite period of living in an environment supportive of recovery from addiction is necessary for most individuals to master the behavior change needed to avoid relapse. Many experts in the treatment field began to explain the absence of long-term recovery without relapse by rationalizing outcomes, claiming that relapse is part of the disease of alcoholism and drug addiction. Of course, those attempting recovery quickly grabbed on to this rationalization as an excuse

for cycling in and out of recovery. As previously noted, both the TEDS data and the long experience of Oxford House show that 'relapse is part of recovery from addiction' becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The largest study of Oxford House outcomes by DePaul involved 219 houses – 897 residents – across the county.¹ After periodic tracking for 27 months, the DePaul researchers found that only 13% had relapsed during the period. Internal OHI statistics show about 20% of the residents are asked to leave an Oxford House because of relapse. The norm for Oxford House is long-term recovery without relapse and that norm can become a self-fulfilling prophecy for existing and future Oxford House residents.

¹ [The need for substance abuse after-care: Longitudinal analysis of Oxford House](#) links to the NIDA sponsored study results.

Resident Satisfaction With Oxford House

There are several ways to measure what residents themselves think of the Oxford Houses they are living in. The first is to ask if they would recommend Oxford House living to a friend in recovery. In the West Virginia survey 91% said they would recommend Oxford House as a place to live. The second question to ask the respondent how important Oxford House living is to their personal recovery. 87% found it to be “Very Important” – the most favorable of several choices. 7% found it to be “Somewhat Important” and only 2% found it to be “Insignificant”.

Another indicia of resident satisfaction are how long individuals are staying in an Oxford House. There is no time limit as long as a resident stays in recovery and pays the equal weekly share of household expenses. The average length of time that the survey respondents had lived in a West Virginia Oxford House was 7.1 months with a range from 1 month to more than 7 years. A number of individuals are staying several years and some will likely live forever in house. This later situation does not involve many individuals but having a few ‘old-timers’ helps to stabilize the entire network of Oxford Houses. Cynics might argue that old-timers stay in an Oxford House because it is cheap rent. However, it is far more likely that the old-timer takes pride in the particular house and the Oxford House movement and also enjoys helping others stay clean and sober.

Conclusion

This evaluation shows pictures of only four of the existing West Virginia Oxford Houses but pictures of all 27 are available at www.oxfordhouse.org under “Houses/Directory”. The resident profile on page three has a lot of data from the survey and gives a good profile of the type of folks living in WV Oxford Houses. As in the national network of Oxford Houses, the WV Oxford Houses are home to a wide variety of individuals and going to a lot of AA/NA meetings is normal behavior. This reality plus learning the values identified in the ‘Oxford House Blueprint for Success’ illustrated on page three is a by-product of the Oxford House structured, democratic system of operation.

Everyone becomes a participant in assuring the viability of a particular Oxford House through election to a house office and participation in the weekly house business meeting. Moreover, a larger community is formed by clustering Oxford Houses in close proximity to each other so that groups can share their strength, experience and hopes. For many Oxford House becomes the functional family they never had or once had and lost – albeit Oxford House is a surrogate family.

OXFORD HOUSE TRADITIONS

1. Oxford House has as its primary goal the provision of housing for the alcoholic and drug addict who wants 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 AA and/or NA offers 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 an Oxford House in good standing should become associate members
-

Oxford House™

1975 – 2018

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

- 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.

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