

An Evaluation of the Network of Oxford Houses

## Delaware



*Oxford House – Saving Money: Saving Lives*

November 2018

**Oxford House Inc.**

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## Oxford House, Inc.

Oxford House, Inc. is the umbrella organization of the national network of more than 2,400 individual Oxford Houses. Its central office is located at 1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 300, Silver Spring, Maryland near where the first Oxford House™ started in 1975.

Oxford House™ is a concept and system of operations based on the experience of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts who learned that by living together in a disciplined, self-run, self-supported home they could help each other to become comfortable enough in sobriety to avoid relapse. The Oxford House Manual® is the basic blueprint that provides the organization and disciplined democratic structure that permit groups of recovering individuals to successfully live together in recovery. All Oxford Houses are *rented* ordinary single-family houses in good neighborhoods.

The national network of Oxford Houses works because the umbrella organization assures the quality of Oxford Houses through a time-tested system of operation, encourages expansion through partnerships with individual state governments, fosters independent outcome research and assures the civil rights of residents to locate in good neighborhoods. Its 43-year old system of operation provides individuals recovering from alcoholism and/or drug addiction with the time, peer support and confidence building skills to become comfortable enough in sobriety to avoid relapse or return to addictive use of alcohol and/or drugs.

Following enactment of §2016 of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 – PL 100-690, Delaware was one of the first states to begin development of a network of Oxford Houses and utilized a local group to carry out development. By 2009, ten houses had been established. In 2009, the state began to utilize Oxford House, Inc. to help open new Oxford Houses and to keep the existing houses on track. Today, there are 65 Oxford Houses in the Delaware providing 519 recovery beds. This report brings up-to-date the evidence about who is being served by the statewide network of Oxford Houses in Delaware. It profiles the residents and describes the ways and means that Oxford House enables successful recovery without relapse at a very low cost.

Oxford House provides successful, affordable recovery and we urge the state to expand the network of houses to reduce recidivism and recycling of alcoholics and drug addicts through treatment. Growth in the Delaware Network of Oxford Houses is still needed. Recovery without relapse can become the norm rather than the exception, and open up primary treatment slots by slowing down the needless costs of recidivism.

Silver Spring, Maryland  
October 28, 2018

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## Oxford Houses of Delaware

The 2017 Annual Evaluation of Oxford Houses in the State of Delaware is based upon completion of the standard Oxford House resident survey, monthly reports from the Oxford House outreach worker and monthly reports by the Delaware Oxford Houses. In 2017, 205 residents [84% of those residing in the houses surveyed] completed surveys<sup>1</sup>.

### Current Profile of Delaware Oxford Houses

Number of Women's Houses	18	Number of Women Residents	132
Number of Men's Houses	47	Number of Men Residents	387
Total Number of Houses	65	Total Number of Oxford Recovery Beds	519
<i>Annual</i> Turnover Rate	2.1	Annual Recovering Persons Served	1,058
Applicants per Vacancy	3.4	Average Cost to Live in a Delaware OH	\$125/week

### 2017 Profile of Delaware Oxford House Residents

<b>Race</b>		<b>Marital Status</b>	
White	86.6%	Never Married	68.3%
Black	9.4%	Married	3.9%
Other	4.0%	Separated	7.3%
		Divorced	18.5%
		Widowed	1.9%
<b>Average Educational Level</b>	12.4 Years	<b>Military Veterans</b>	4%
<b>Employed [9/30/17]</b>	79.2%	<b>Average Monthly Earnings</b>	\$1,777
<b>Average Age</b>	37.9	<b>Age Range</b>	20 – 79
<b>Average Length of Sobriety</b>	20 Months	<b>Average Stay in Oxford House</b>	10 months
<b>Self-Assessment of Health</b>		<b>Importance of Oxford House to Recovery</b>	
Very Good	34.6%	Very Importance	93.2%
Pretty Good	53.6%	Moderately Important	3.8%
Not So Good	11.8%	Somewhat	.9%
		Not Really Sure	0%
		Insignificant	1.9%
<b>Prior Jail Time</b>	69.7%	<b>Average Jail Time Served</b>	374 days
<b>Prior Homelessness</b>	63.8%	<b>Average Length of Homelessness</b>	110 days

<sup>1</sup> Residents in 39 of the 65 Oxford Houses in Delaware completed the survey. It is representative of all houses in the state.

## Oxford Houses save money because:

Oxford Houses are *rented* – never purchased – a practice, which avoids tying up capital and keeps the rental property on local tax rolls and...

Oxford Houses are self-run, avoiding the hiring of staff for each house...

House residents democratically operate the houses themselves. Each resident has one vote to elect officers and to resolve issues facing the house.

Oxford Houses are self-financed ...

Residents pay all household expenses by equally sharing rent and related household expenses – average per resident nationally is about \$120 a week [range \$90 - \$150 a week].

Oxford Houses are effective ...

Instead of the usual outcomes – relapse with repeated treatment, incarceration or death – most Oxford House residents become comfortable enough in sobriety to avoid relapse and achieve long-term recovery.<sup>2</sup>

### HOW THE OXFORD HOUSE PROGRAM WORKS

Oxford House™ is forty-three years old. From its beginning, Oxford House™ has [1] kept its focus on recovery from alcoholism, drug addiction and co-occurring mental illness; [2] emphasized self-determination and self-governance, and [3] relied on expansion to avoid arbitrary time limits on residency while meeting the need for recovery beds.

#### *Focus on Recovery*

The focus on recovery starts with the charter conditions applied to each individual Oxford House™. Each house must meet the following conditions:

1. The House must be democratically self-run following the process and procedures of the Oxford House Manual<sup>®</sup>,
2. The House must be financially self-supporting, and
3. The residents must expel any resident who returns to using alcohol or illicit drugs.

From the level of the individual house to the nonprofit national umbrella organization, Oxford House™ avoids ownership of real property or accumulation of wealth – a policy that began right from its beginning. When the first Oxford House™ started in 1975, a then well-known therapeu-

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<sup>2</sup> Arnold M. Ludwig, M.D., *Understanding the Alcoholics Mind*, Oxford University Press, New York 1988, p. 5 found that eighteen months after treatment only 10% were still clean and sober. George E. Vaillant, *The Natural History of Alcoholism Revisited*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995 found that over a lifetime only 20% of alcoholics would stay clean and sober. R.J. Goldsmith, *The Essential Features of Alcohol and Drug Treatment*, *Psychiatric Annals*, 22, pp. 419-424, 1992, found that only 9% of studied persons leaving a traditional halfway house stayed clean and sober. Contrast that with outcome studies involving Oxford House. For example, on NIDA sponsored study by DePaul University followed 897 Oxford House residents for 27 months and found only 13% relapsed. [Peer-reviewed Journal article reporting study outcome downloadable from website: [www.oxfordhouse.org](http://www.oxfordhouse.org) under "Publications/Evaluations/DePaul".

tic community – Synanon – was falling apart because of fights among members over money and wealth accumulation. All Oxford Houses are rented by the individual Oxford House group, which also takes responsibility for paying the rent and managing the house. To enable the organization to succeed, Oxford House has relied upon a disciplined, effective system of operations primarily run and financially supported by recovering residents themselves.



**Oxford House - Naboo**  
325 North Bedford Street  
Georgetown, DE 19947  
7 Men • Established Oct. 2015

The charter underscores the focus on recovery by requiring immediate expulsion of any resident returning to the use of alcohol or illicit drugs. Organization of individual houses into mutually supportive chapters, workshops and continuing education about the nature of addiction and the best practices for assuring recovery are hallmarks of Oxford House’s 43-years history. Both within the individual Oxford House and throughout the entire organization recovery is the focus.

The rented house to the left is in Georgetown, Delaware and has been home to seven men at a time since it was established in October 2015. Since it began more than 41 different individuals have lived Oxford House-Naboo with 30 staying clean and sober. Eleven were expelled because of relapse but most have voluntary moved out when they became comfortable enough in sobriety to feel confident that they would avoid relapse. OHI does not formally track individuals after they have

moved out, how several of the sponsored NIDA studies by DePaul University in Chicago suggest most will stay in recovery without relapse.<sup>3</sup>

Once a house gets established it tends to stay operational year after year. Seven of the Oxford Houses in Delaware are more than ten-years old. In other words, it becomes a long-term asset to the state in its arsenal of tools for reducing addiction to alcohol and/or illicit drugs.

### *Self-Governance*

Emphasizes on self-governance is important because it enables each individual to develop behavior change that enables sobriety comfortable enough to assure long-term recovery without relapse. Each individual has an equal voice and responsibility for running the household and paying the bills. As the residents exercise their rights and responsibilities within the house self-confidence in sobriety is enhanced. Because there is no manager or authority figure in an Oxford House, the residents elect officers from among the residents and impose term limits. An Oxford House resident’s sobriety is dependent on his or her own behavior as a house member, not by relying on an institutional authority figure.

Each house has five elected officers: President, Secretary, Treasurer, Comptroller and Chore Coordinator. The officers are term-limited to six months in a particular office. As a result, residents will serve in one or more offices during residency. Each officer has specific duties and must report to the entire house membership at the weekly house meeting. House officers are elected by their housemates and are accountable to them. This egalitarian nature of Oxford House

#### **Term Limited to Six Months Five Officers:**

- President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Comptroller
- Chore Coordinator

<sup>3</sup> See [Jason, L.A., Davis, M.I., Joseph R. Ferrari, J.R., Anderson, E. \(2007\). The need for substance abuse after-care: Longitudinal analysis of Oxford House. \*Addictive Behaviors\*, 32, 803-818.](#) This study followed over 800 Oxford House residents from 219 Oxford Houses across the country for 24 months with interviews ever four months. At the last wave of interviews only 13% had relapsed.

membership avoids the typical “we versus them” problem that can often arise in an institutional setting. For example, in a traditional halfway house or managed recovery home, the residents often bond together by way of their resentment of the authority exercised by the manager of the house. Such negative bonding diverts a resident from focusing on recovery and the healing or positive steps necessary for developing new behavior that discourages a return to addictive use.

Responsible behavior and uninterrupted sobriety is habit-forming. However, since each individual is unique, it takes individuals different lengths of time for to develop the sobriety and responsible behavior that is comfortable enough to last and to avoid relapse. Forty-three years ago, the men living in the traditional halfway house that became the first Oxford House observed that the arbitrary time limit of six months residency did not work. In one three month period, eleven men had been required to leave because their six-month time limit was up. Ten of the eleven returned to drinking and using drugs within thirty days. Based upon their observation and self-interest, the first thing the founders of Oxford House did was to eliminate the residency time limit. They were able to do so because renting an additional house to start another Oxford House was not cost prohibitive.

### *Expansion*

There are two components necessary for effective expansion of Oxford Houses – the availability of small start-up loans and the availability of technical assistance to teach new residents the time-tested system of operations. Since 2009, the state has contracted with Oxford House, Inc. [OHI] to provide trained field workers and to provide start-up loans for expansion of the statewide network of Oxford Houses. Between 2009 and the end of 2017, the number of Oxford Houses in the state has grown from ten to sixty-five. The number of recovery beds has grown from about 70 to 519.

The outreach worker is trained by Oxford House Inc. for the following tasks:

- ◆ Finding a suitable house to rent
- ◆ Getting a charter from OHI
- ◆ Getting an FEIN number from IRS
- ◆ Recruiting initial residents
- ◆ Teaching residents how to operate house
- ◆ Building mutually supportive chapters
- ◆ Balancing supply of houses to demand
- ◆ Developing linkages to providers
- ◆ Developing employment linkages
- ◆ Documenting success/failure

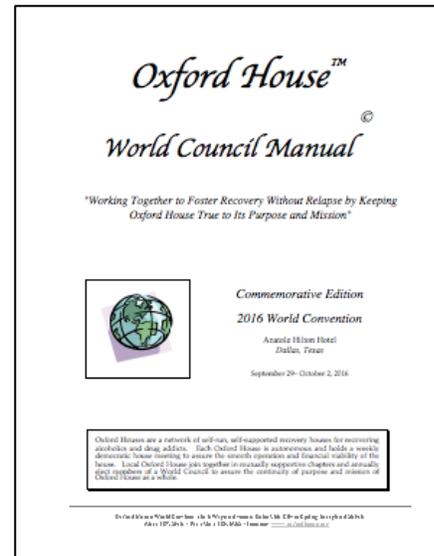
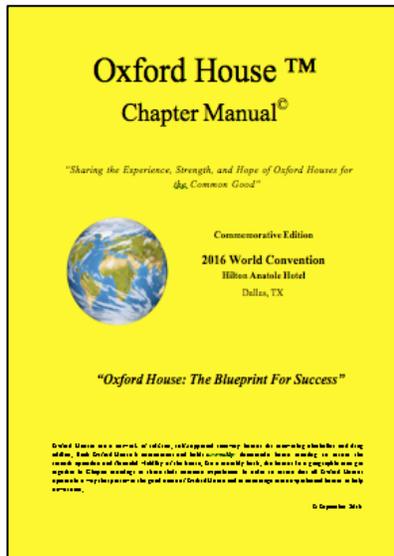
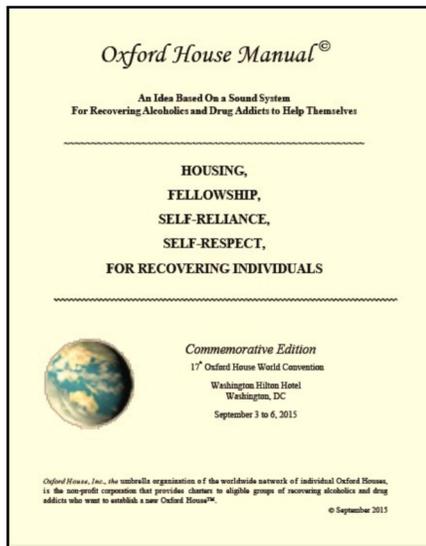
Thirty years ago when Congress passed §2036 of the 1988 Federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act<sup>4</sup> toward the end of that year, Oxford House was faced with learning how to expand from basically a small cluster of 13 Oxford Houses to a large national network of self-run, self-supported recovery homes. To achieve that goal Oxford House, Inc. – the national umbrella organization – used a two pronged approach: centralized start-up loan management and utilization of trained outreach workers. Today there are 2,470 houses in forty-four states because residents and alumni of Oxford Houses go to those states to help recovering individuals to learn the standard system of operation. The box at the left shows the things taught the outreach workers to enable them to do their job. Moreover, each outreach worker is supervised and managed by the Oxford House central office in Silver Spring wherever he or she is assigned to work.

This type of supervision assures that all records are recorded in accordance with A-133 requirements of the federal government because often all or part of funding involves federal funds.

Oxford House, Inc. [OHI] – the 501[c][3], umbrella organization – has experience and a successful track record in fully dealing with legal matter affecting individual Oxford Houses. In this respect, the trained OHI staff serves as a safety net and buffer for state or local officials. Sometimes not-in-my-backyard [NIMBY] problems that could cause political problems are averted by OHI mediation or in some cases litigation. Within individual Oxford Houses, operations run smoothly because of standardized procedures developed over 43 years.

<sup>4</sup> Now codified at 42 U.S.C. 300x-25.

## 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 a national advisory council.

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

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 about \$130 a week with a range from \$85 a week to \$175 a week.

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 2,300 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 encourage such studies. Since 1991, DePaul University researchers in Chicago have published more than 280 articles reporting findings showing the success of Oxford House living.

*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  
Chicago, 2010

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. Property insurance discrimination was subsequently overcome also.

## The Fall 2017 Survey



**Oxford House – Alderaan**  
6 Tulane Drive  
Rehobath Beach, DE  
7 Men • Established April 2014

Once a house is established it tends to continue year after year. Oxford House – Alderaan has existed more than four years and has already served over 50 men. Who are the residents at any one time is a question OHI asks in its periodic resident survey. The reason for this periodic survey is to assess whether residents represent a cross section of citizens in recovery. For example, when the six men then living in Oxford House-Alderaan pictured above in November 2017 the age ranged from 23 to 41. All were white, single men having about a year of sobriety. Only one had two years of education beyond high school. All had graduated from high school. One had moved from homelessness into the house; two from a rented room, one from an apartment and two from a rented house. Four of the six had done jail time ranging from 30 days to 6 years. Their common bond was their addiction, recovery and desire for long-term recovery without relapse. The time-tested standardized system of operation strengthens the common bond for each group home.

### **Age, Employment, Income and Education**

The average age of individuals in the statewide survey is 37.9 years. The median age is a little lower –35.0 years. The age range is from 21 to 79 years. This is comparable with Oxford Houses in other states although in some states where Oxford House works with community colleges and universities the lower age range begins at 17 or 18 years.

In November 2017, 79.2% of the residents were employed. They had an average monthly income of \$1,776 – \$21,312 per year. The 20% not employed were either between jobs or receiving social security, unemployment insurance or some other regular income. Since each house is

financially self-supported and each resident pays an equal share of household expenses, it is necessary for each resident to have a source of income. The average equal share of expenses in Delaware Oxford Houses is about \$120 a week with a range going from \$90 to \$140 a week. The biggest variable on the equal share of expenses is the amount of rent the group owes a landlord.

With respect to education level the highest level of education was asked of each surveyed resident. The range was from 4<sup>th</sup> grade through 2 years of post-graduate college work. [4 years through 18 years of education] The egalitarian nature of addiction is demonstrated by the varied educational backgrounds within the statewide network of Oxford Houses.

### **Marital Status, Race and Prior Living Situation**

Clearly addiction has an impact on marital status. First nearly 70% [68.3%] of the Delaware Oxford House residents have never been married. For the alcoholic and drug addict “First Things-First” means a focus on addiction rather than marriage! Second, more than a quarter of the residents who had been married were either separated or divorced – 18.5% divorced and 7.3% separated. Only 3.9% were still married and 1.9% are widowed.

About 10% of the survey respondents in the Oxford House resident survey are Black. This shows that Blacks are under-represented. The overall Black percentage of Delaware citizens is about 22%. Greater outreach is needed to overcome this disparity. Conversely while the percentage of Whites in the state is about 68%, the percentage of Whites living in Oxford Houses is 86.6%.

Where an individual was living immediately before moving into an Oxford House tells us a lot about what the recovery outcome is likely to be if there were no Oxford Houses. Almost 20% [18.9%] of the residents were homeless immediately before moving into an Oxford House. Seldom does homelessness equate with long-term recovery without relapse. Another 15% were living in rented room. Another 4.9% were in jail. One person came into an Oxford House directly from a mental hospital and 6.8% from a halfway house. About half came from their owned home, a rented house or an apartment.

While it may not have been where an individual was living just before moving into an Oxford House, homelessness on the street or in a shelter has been experienced by a high percentage of all Oxford House residents ° 70.4%. The average length of homelessness was about six months and the median was three months. The range was from a day or two to eight years.

### **Jail, Drug Court and Further Education**

Jail time is not unusual for alcoholics and drug addicts. Among Delaware Oxford House residents 74.8% have done jail or prison time. The range of incarceration goes from a few days to 15 years. The average time in incarceration is 21 months and the median is 8 months. On the good news side 3.4% of residents are in drug court and hopefully will avoid jail time. Another 2% of the residents are in continuing education programs to further their educational attainment.

### **Recovery, Fellowship and Fun**

In September 2018 more than 1,600 Oxford House residents from across the country gathered in Kansas City, Missouri for the 2018 Oxford House National Convention. Several dozen attended from Delaware. The periodic newsletter produced by Delaware Oxford House residents and its own state convention predicted that the theme of the convention “Recovery, Fellowship and Fun” were apt as far as Delaware Oxford House residents are concerned. The survey asked how important was Oxford House living as part of their recovery. The Delaware survey found that 94% of respondents found it to be “Very Important”. Less than 1% found it insignificant.

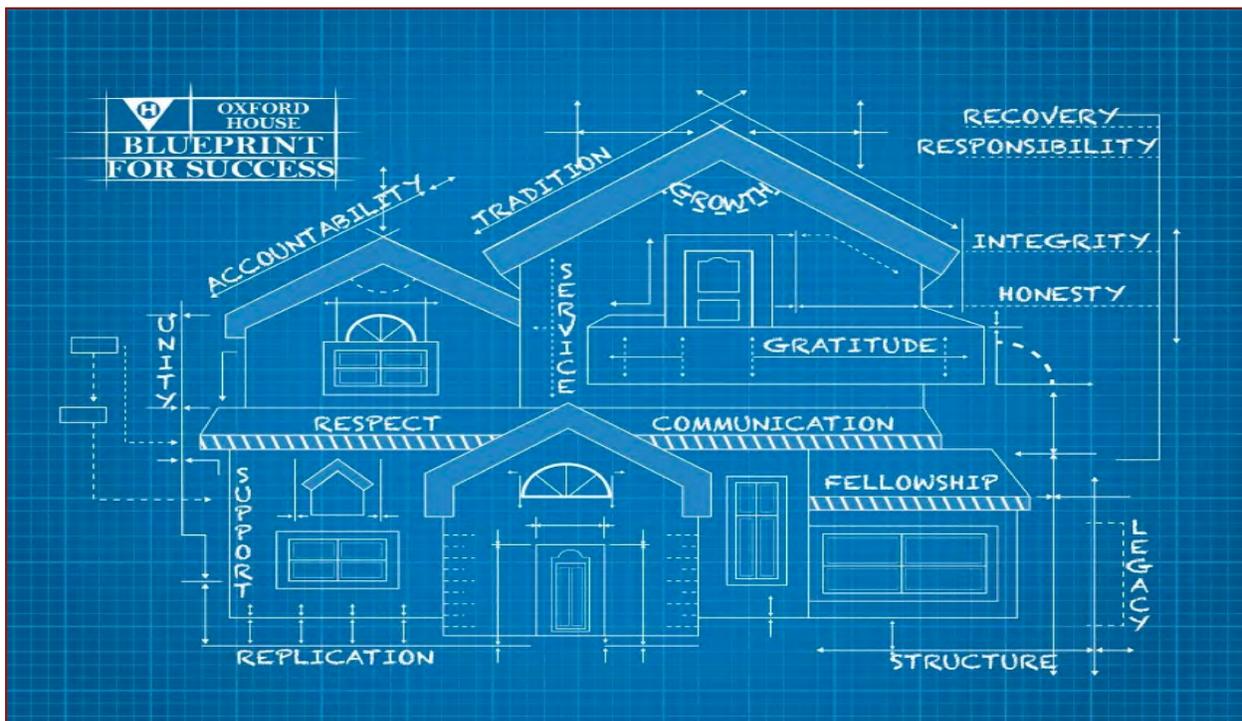
# *Behavior change takes:*

*Time,*

*Peer Support, and*

*Safe supportive living environments.*

Oxford House™ provides all that and more –



... at a very low-cost.

## **OXFORD HOUSE 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 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

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# 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.

Write or Call

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