



National Drug Control Strategy

The White House
February 2006

President Bush included the following in his 2006 Drug Control Strategy as an example of effective healing for alcoholics and drug addicts.

Hope and Healing at Oxford House

The first Oxford House was founded in Silver Spring, Maryland, in 1975 by a group of recovering alcoholics. The idea was simple—provide a safe and supportive environment to maintain sobriety. The house was run democratically, and expenses were divided among the residents. News of the success of the first house caught on, and the Silver Spring home's founding charter became a handbook for setting up houses across the country that promote recovery from substance abuse. Today, there are more than 1,000 Oxford Houses for individuals recovering from alcoholism and drug dependency. The Oxford House model is considered by many treatment professionals to be a particularly successful recovery support program.

Paul Molloy was one of the founders of the original house in Maryland. He now works in the central office for Oxford House, Inc., supporting Oxford Houses across the country. He credits the success of Oxford House to the support that residents give to each other. Paul notes, “The concept underlying self-run, self-supported recovery houses is the same as the one underlying Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous—addicted individuals can help themselves by helping each other abstain from alcohol and drug use one day at a time for a long enough time to permit a new set of values to be substituted for the values of a lifestyle in which alcohol and drugs were used.”

To enter an Oxford House, an individual must pledge to remain sober. A relapse results in immediate expulsion from the house. This rule ensures that the house remains a safe and supportive environment for all the residents, and reinforces the notion that recovery requires a change of heart as well as changes in behavior and an affirmative decision to remain drug and alcohol free.

Oxford House is built on the principle of self-help. The houses are run democratically, which helps the residents learn responsibility. The typical house has 8–15 residents, who must be interviewed and voted into being a resident of the home. Although homes often have waiting lists, a group of six or more individuals may charter their own house. Oxford House has a policy that states as long as residents remain drug and alcohol free, pay the modest house dues, and maintain good behavior, they may remain in the house without pressure to leave.