



## Fact Sheet:



# Alcohol- and Drug-Free Housing (Sober Living)

## General Information

Alcohol- and drug-free houses (also known as sober living) are important in supporting treatment and recovery services in a community by helping recovering persons to maintain an alcohol- and drug-free lifestyle. Residents are free to organize and participate in self-help meetings or any other activity that helps them maintain sobriety. The house or its residents: do not and cannot provide any treatment, recovery, or detoxification services; do not have treatment or recovery plans or maintain case files; and do not have a structured, scheduled program of alcohol and drug education, group or individual counseling, or recovery support sessions. Persons typically become residents of an alcohol- and drug-free house after being in a licensed non-medical residential alcohol or other drug recovery or treatment facility. However, participation in a licensed facility is not necessarily a prerequisite for residency.

Alcohol- and drug-free houses are not required to be licensed nor are they eligible for licensure. By definition, they do not provide alcohol or drug recovery or treatment services and are, therefore, not subject to regulation or oversight by the State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP).

These houses have three things in common:

- They ensure that a person who is in recovery lives in an environment that is free from alcohol and drug use.
- The residents themselves reinforce their recovery through support with other recovering persons.
- The residents are free to voluntarily pursue activities to support their recovery, either alone or with others.

## If you need an alcohol- and drug-free house

General information about alcohol- and drug-free housing is useful; however, personal investigation is essential. If you are interested in a particular house, you may wish to consider whether:

- The house appears clean and well maintained.
- There is a rental agreement for each resident, signed by the owner, representative, or landlord, and the resident, that shows clearly the amount of any deposit, refund policy, rent payment schedule, policy on return of rent if a person leaves, and housekeeping duties.
- There are other conditions of residency.
- There is a written policy dealing with use of alcohol or other drugs.
- Local planning officials have any record of local ordinance violations at the house.
- Residents, or former residents, who are willing to speak with you about their experience with the house, have good things to say about it.
- It is recommended to you by the staff of a licensed facility, by the county alcohol or drug program administrator, or by other personal contacts knowledgeable about alcohol or drug abuse treatment or recovery.

## Landlord/Tenant Rules

Alcohol- and drug-free houses are subject to landlord/tenant laws in California, and may be subject to zoning and other requirements of the local jurisdiction. The "Guide to Housing" referenced below recommends that you check local laws carefully and, with the help of an attorney, determine how the laws might apply to your situation. For example, if you want to start an alcohol- and drug-free living house you might need to know how to design a rental agreement to allow for prompt eviction for violation of house rules when eviction is necessary. You may want to become familiar with the more applicable laws that include the following:

- California Civil Code beginning with Section 53 and California Government Code beginning with Section 12980 (nondiscrimination in housing);
- California Civil Code beginning with Section 1940 (landlord/tenant laws);
- California Code of Civil Procedure beginning with Section 1159 (eviction procedures); and
- Public Law 100-430 (Federal Fair Housing Amendments Act; forbids discrimination on basis of disability in sale, rental, zoning, land use restriction, and other rules).

## Other sources of information about alcohol- and drug-free houses

- **Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs  
Resident Run Housing Programs  
1700 K Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814-4037**

The ADP offers a loan program whereby a nonprofit organization may apply for a loan of up to \$4,000 to cover start-up expenses for a home with six or more residents. The loan is repayable over a two-year period, and is interest free.

- **California Association of Addiction Recovery Resources  
2129 Fulton Avenue  
Sacramento, CA 95821  
(916) 338-9460**

This association has a guideline for establishing and operating an alcohol- and drug-free house.

- **Sober Living Network  
P.O. Box 5235  
Santa Monica, CA 90409  
(310) 396-5270**

The network serves as an information resource for local community sober living coalitions and individual homes.

- **County alcohol and drug programs**

Each county in California has a program which can be found listed in the County Government Section of the telephone directory's white pages or by calling the County Health Department's general information number.

- **Oxford House Inc.  
P.O. Box 994  
Great Falls, VA 22066-0994**

An Oxford House is a self-governing alcohol-and drug-free house chartered by Oxford House, Inc. The first Oxford House was founded in 1975 by the residents themselves. Oxford House, Inc., will issue a charter to a group wishing to organize an Oxford House. They should be able to direct you to the nearest chartered Oxford House.

- **A Guide to Housing for Low Income People Recovering from Alcohol and Other Drug Problems. U.S. Department of Public Health Services, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857.**