

Safe Housing Network

A Profitable Approach to Transitional Housing based on a Foundation of
Community Service and Charitable Investing.

Overview:

Concept: Assemble a collection of single family fixers in the Studio City area and hold them at a positive cash flow for two years, then fix and flip

The unique key to this strategy is to set the properties up as "Sober Living Houses". Unless you live in, know a friend or family member, or are associated with the field of recovery, the term "Sober Living Home" may be somewhat of an enigma to you. Sober living homes are often mistakenly referred to as a Halfway House, Rehab Home, Recovery Support Home, Boarding Home, Shelter, Hostel or "Transitory Housing".

Sober living homes are affordable, alcohol and drug free environments that provide a positive place for peer group recovery support. Sober housing promotes individual recovery by providing an environment that allows the residents to develop individual recovery programs and become self supporting.

The Sober living market in the Los Angeles area is going through a transformation from a cottage to a professional industry. We intend to exploit that opportunity to go into the Sober Living business with the support of the established providers of Sober Care Services (CriHelp and the Salvation Army) and provide a critically needed social service for the community while making a substantial profit. Furthermore, assuming that the Sober Living operation would be set up as a Non Profit, a number of tax advantages and charitable giving opportunities can be created giving the investors an additional incentive to participate.

Living is very communal in a sober living home. Depending on the size of the home or unit, the occupancy can range from 6 to 30 residents per home or unit. All residents share a bedroom with at least one other resident. The range of roommates can go from 2 to 10 per room (The later living in barracks style bunk beds). Most sober homes are gender specific. There are very few co-ed sober homes.

The Deal:

We are looking to find a group of investors who will put up the Cash Equity and Loan Guarantees to fund the purchase of the homes, their repair and furnishing, and the startup of the Sober Living operation. We are assuming that we will operate the homes for two years and then Fix and Flip thereby making a profit from both the hold period and the rehab. At that point, we would decide whether to repeat the cycle, invest in different types of property or whatever. Our long term target is ten investors putting up 125,000 each to create a portfolio of 10 homes. Assuming a portfolio of 10 houses with a starting value of

6,000,000 a 20% market increase and a 10% rehab cost, there is a chance of making 70 to 90% IRR over two years.

The basic structure would be a LLC Holding Company as the “Owner/Manager” of the Sober Homes. The Holding company would hire the general staff of Professional Counselors, House Keeping, Gardening and Maintenance people who would serve all the houses. Each home would be managed democratically by the occupants with a representative from the owner attending weekly meetings to ensure that responsibilities were being met and resources needed for the operation of the home were available (in the case that this model doesn’t work out, an allowance has been made for a free bed in each house to be given to one tenant who would take personal responsibility as the “house manager” and insure all chores were done, people were going to meetings, a house meeting was done once a week and so forth).

The Holding Company would ensure that the homes were being marketed correctly, rental rates set at the market, and rents collected on time.

The Holding Company would arrange the finance, purchase the homes, perform any required repairs or upgrades and furnish them completely so that they were ready for move in and habitation.

At the end of the holding period, the Holding Company would wind down the housing operation; develop a marketing plan and related design package for the repositioning and resale of the houses. The houses would then be rehabilitated, staged and placed on the market for sale. The cost of the rehab prior to sale would be funded by second trust deeds secured by the increased value of the homes.

However, our first step will be a single home to test our assumptions, build our staff and establish the operating systems.

The economics work very nicely at the 600,000 price range of homes in the Valley. At a market rental rate of 600 to 700 dollars a month for a bed, the house will cover all expenses, taxes, mortgage costs and generate an after tax profit in excess of 50% on a cash investment of 160,000 and a loan guarantee of 400,000.

Sample Home: 12137 Oxnard St North Hollywood, CA 91606 6 beds, 5 baths



11/8/2013

Size Lot Built
2,760 8,020 1936



<u>Total Project Costs</u>		\$ 788,003
<u>Sales Proceeds</u>		\$ 857,756
<u>Net Income during Holding Period</u>		\$ 297,605
<u>Total Project Profit</u>		\$ 367,358

Sober Living Houses		
Master Development Pro Forma		
Cash Flow Summary & Returns		9/30/13
		Total
Equity Appreciation per Annum	20.0%	
Inventory Value	577,500	
Vacancy	10%	
(+) Rental Revenues (Net of Taxes and Expenses)	297,605	\$297,605
(-) Purchase and Development Costs	577,500	\$577,500
(-) Rehab prior to Sale	10.0%	\$91,739
(+) Sale Revenues (Value plus 2X rehab invest)	917,387	\$917,387
(-) Sale Costs: Commision and Fees	6.5%	\$59,630
(-) Developer Fee	5.0%	\$33,462
(=) Unleveraged Cash Flow (IRR)	28.03%	\$452,660
Cumulative		
FINANCING		
Total Project Cost	702,701	
Equity Required	30.00%	\$171,268
Investor Contribution	\$156,830	\$156,830
Developer Contributions (50% of Fee)	\$16,731	\$16,731
Cumulative	\$171,268	
1st T/D Debt Financing (intrest only)		
Beginning Balance		
Loan Draws	399,625	\$399,625
Principal Repayment		(\$399,625)
Interest	8.00%	\$85,303
Ending Balance		
Construction/Rehab Financing (intrest rollup)		
Beginning Balance	80%	
Loan Draws	91,739	\$91,739
Principal Repayment	100.00%	\$91,739
Interest	8.00%	\$0
Ending Balance		
Leveraged Cash Flow (IRR)	68.20%	\$367,358
Cumulative		
PARTNERSHIP CASH FLOWS		
1. Overall Equity		
Beginning Balance		\$0
Equity Contributions		(\$173,561)
Income Distributions (net of intrest)		\$212,302
Equity Distributions		\$361,806
Ending Balance		

Proposed Portfolio of 10 Homes

The following are the numbers for a portfolio of 10 homes set up as Sober Living Facilities and operated for two years and then rehabed and sold.

**Acquire Homes
and Fix Up**

**Run as Sober
Homes**

**Rehab and
Sell**

Cost:	Profit from Operations:	Profit from Sale:
\$ 8,669,702	\$ 1,576,362	\$ 2,241,274
Purchase and Fix Up	Net Income during Hold	Sale minus Commissions

Debt	\$ 6,172,041	71%					
Equity	\$ 2,497,661	29%					
<u>Sources of Equity</u>			Share of Profit	Return On Cash	Net Return	Return On Cash	
Investors	\$ 1,097,505	80%	\$ 3,054,109	278%	\$ 1,956,604	198%	
Developer	\$ 182,742	20%	\$ 763,527	418%	\$ 580,785	398%	
2nd T/D on Increased Value over 2yrs	\$ 1,217,414						

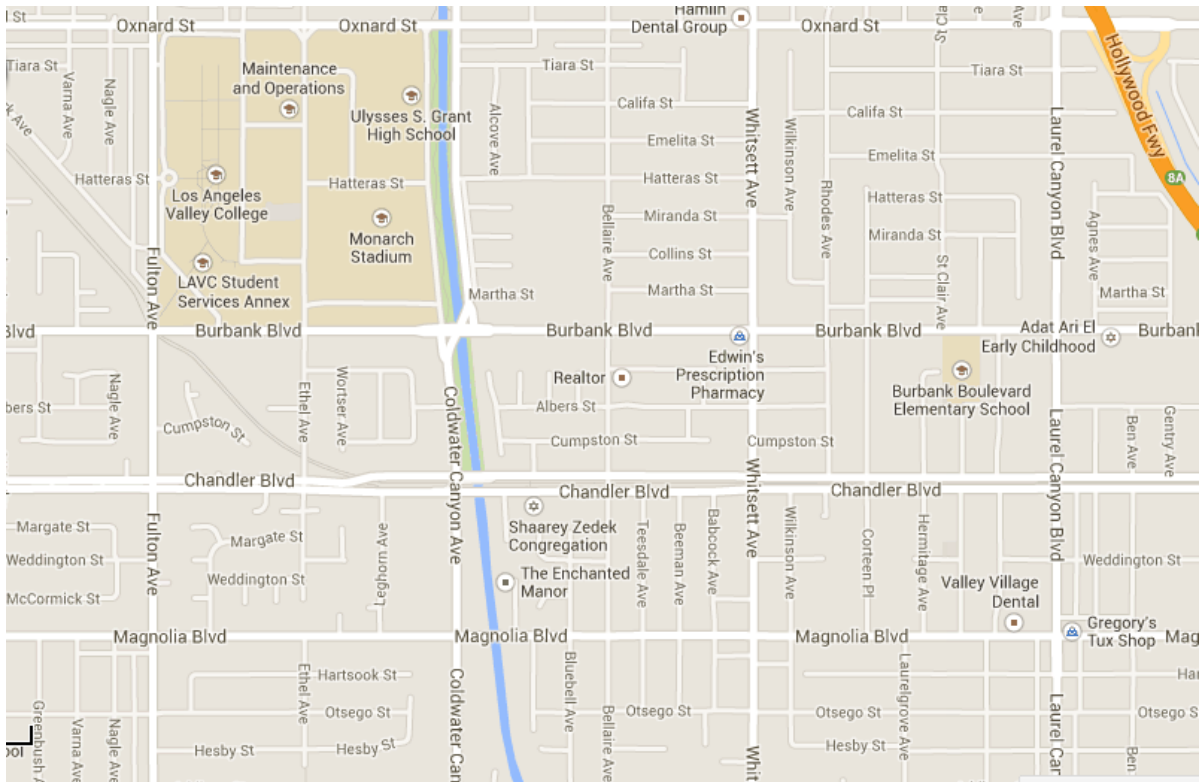
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Summary - Sober Living Network									
Basic Cost					Cost per Bedroom				
10 Single Family Homes			\$	5,885,695	68%	\$ 115,406			
Startup Construction Costs									
Sitework (Landscaping, Patios, etc.)			\$	30,000	0%	\$ 588			
Exterior Repairs and Improvements			\$	50,000	1%	\$ 980			
Interior Repairs and Improvements			\$	100,000	1%	\$ 1,961			
Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment			\$	77,045	1%	\$ 1,511			
Hard Construction Subtotal			\$	257,045	3%	\$ 5,040			
TOTAL COST			\$	6,142,740					
Rehab Prior to Sale									
Sitework (Landscaping, Patios, etc.)			\$	100,000	1%	\$ 1,961			
Exterior Repairs and Improvements			\$	141,653	2%	\$ 2,778			
Interior Repairs and Improvements			\$	400,000	5%	\$ 7,843			
Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment			\$	466,949	5%	\$ 9,156			
Hard Construction Subtotal			\$	1,108,602	13%	\$ 21,737			
Indirect and Soft Costs									
Entitlements, Design and Permits			\$	58,347	1%	\$ 1,144			
Developer's Fee and Overheads			\$	365,484	4%	\$ 7,166			
Interest			\$	994,528	11%	\$ 19,501			
Soft Cost Subtotal			\$	1,418,360	16%	\$ 27,811			
Total Project Costs			\$	8,669,702	100%	\$ 164,954 100%			
Sales Proceeds			\$	10,910,976					
Net Income during Holding Period			\$	1,576,362					
Total Project Profit			\$	3,817,636					
Debt		\$	6,172,041	71%					
Equity		\$	2,497,661	29%					
Sources of Equity				Share of Profit		Return On Cash	Net Return		Return On Cash
Investors		\$	1,097,505	80%	\$	3,054,109	278%	\$ 1,956,604	198%
Developer		\$	182,742	20%	\$	763,527	418%	\$ 580,785	398%
Cash Flow		\$	1,217,414						
Proforma second year NOI			\$	661,021					
Cash on Cash			52%						
Project Internal Rate of Return			83%						
Developers Cap			7.6%						
Market Cap			5.7%						
Market Value			\$	11,660,402					

Market – General Demographics:

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While the general market for investment is the San Fernando Valley, the target market is the area around “Valley Village”.



The 2.09-square-mile Valley Village lies north of Studio City, south of Valley Glen, east of Sherman Oaks and west of North Hollywood. It is bordered by the Ventura Freeway to the south, the Hollywood Freeway to the east, Coldwater Canyon Avenue to the west and Burbank Boulevard to the north. The district contains parts of the 91601 and 91607 ZIP code areas

As of 2008, there were a reported 25,665 people with a median household income of: \$55,470. Rental units account for 68.7% of the occupied housing units, while ownership amounts to 31.3%.

The percentages of divorced men and women and widowed women are among the county's highs. The percentage of white people, at 66.7%, is high for the county. Other ethnicities are Latino, 18.9%; black, 5.5%; Asian, 4.4%; and other, 4.4%.

Valley Village People Data

	Valley Village	Los Angeles	National
Median Household Income:	\$55,470	\$36,687	\$44,512
Single Males:	21.7%	20.3%	14.6%
Single Females:	17.4%	16.8%	12.5%
Median Age:	37	33	36
Homes With Kids:	19.9%	32.3%	31.4%
Average Household Size:	2.0	2.8	2.6

Who Lives in the Area? - Groupings based on the demographic and socioeconomic composition of each city and neighborhood.

1. Power Singles
—High-income urban singles.
Highly educated professionals, many with advanced degrees. They draw a handsome salary and have reasonable living expenses while living a hip, upscale life in an urban center.
2. Multi-lingual Urbanites
—Urban dwellers who speak more than one language.
Some have a high school or college education, and they work in a variety of occupations. Moderate to upper-scale earning potential.
3. Bright Lights, Big City
—Very mobile singles living in the city.
Singles ranging in age from early 20s to mid-40s who have moved to an urban setting. Most rent their apartment or condo. Some have a college education and work in services and the professional sector.

Sober Living Market:

More than 25 million Americans are alcoholics and/or drug addicts. In today's world, these individuals not only suffer personal enslavement to addiction but also cause chaos and often violence for family, friends, communities and the nation.

Almost every family knows of a relative or friend afflicted by alcoholism and/or drug addiction. Since 1956 the American Medical Association have recognized both as diseases because one addicted the use of any alcohol or addictive drugs causes compulsive use. Compulsive use causes irrational behavior, self-harm, and heartbreak to loved ones and families and a terrible waste of otherwise good people.

In 2006, about 3.3 million [15%] of those needing treatment received some. Nearly two-thirds of such treatment was limited to self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Of the rest receiving treatment, most is either limited outpatient treatment or three to seven days of in-patient detoxification. Of the treated most stay clean or sober for less than a year.

In the 1970s, a new form of support for recovering Alcoholics sprang up on the west coast – Sober Living homes. A place where a recovering Alcoholic could go to get his act back together in a supportive sober environment. In some cases, the chances for long term recovery are increased by 66% by the simple step of living in a properly run Sober Living home during recovery.

The estimated total number of beds in the United States in the 45,000 to 60,000 range. The bed availability is not evenly distributed between men and women. It is estimated that fewer than 20% of the beds are for women, a substantially lower number for mothers with children, and virtually none for fathers with children. Over 25,000 men and women in Southern California find safety and support in certified sober living homes each year – guessing an

average stay of six months that would put the number of beds at roughly 12 to 15,000 in Southern California).

There is no clear-cut answer for the disproportionate allocation of beds between men and women. There are, however, several conjectures including. A lower demand for sober living for women because women have a better network of family and friends to find a place to live. Women in recovery typically have greater access to individual state, local, and federal assistance for independent living.

Considering the majority of the sober living homes are privately owned and operated. Women entrepreneurs have greater difficulty in obtaining financing for what is perceived to be a risky venture. Women in recovery have "higher maintenance" requirements, thus demanding more resources. Men can live independently in a communal environment better than women can.

The majority of sober living homes are privately owned and operated by an individual or small partnership. Less than a third are registered as a "Non Profit Organization" registered under United States IRS code 501(c) (3). Most do not receive government subsidies or grants. However, some of the residents may qualify for individual social benefits.

Quality assurance is achieved and maintained through membership in a sober living coalition or network (The local chapter of the Sober Living Network or the National Association of Recovery Residences). These coalitions and networks proved self-governance and self-regulation through peer reviews and inspections. Members are required to meet excellent standards in health, safety and management guidelines. The homes maintain alcohol and drug free environments with resident initiated and maintained recovery support activities.

None are acute detoxification or treatment centers but several have a referral listing of detoxification hospitals and outpatient treatment centers. This is not to say that you would not find a newly arrived resident in their first 24 to 72 hours of sobriety still shaking, sweating or sleeping off their last drunk or hit of crack.

The typical sober living home is a single-family residence, duplex or multiunit complex located in a quiet residential neighborhood. The residents are required to follow a strict set of house rules. Violation of the rules can result in assessment of minor financial fines, writing an essay, to immediate ejection from the home.

There is one major difference between living in a sober living home and sharing an apartment with another person. The residents of the sober living home are not considered tenants and as such are not protected under tenants' rights laws. Hence, a resident can be ejected on a moment's notice without the due process of eviction procedures. (From an owner's perspective, this solves many of the problems with rental properties when the time comes for sale).

The single most common rule is a zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol. This includes normal everyday medicine cabinet items as, mouthwash, cold

medicines, and after-shave or food items such as vanilla. Most sober living homes do random or surprise drug and alcohol testing. The use of 52 proof mouthwash (Listerine and Scope, to name a few), 70 proof vanilla, opiate or alcohol based cold medicines will cause a false positive test. Not to mention intoxication if consumed in quantities.

Other zero tolerance rules include, violence, threats of violence, fighting, harassment, theft, sex on the premises and unexcused absence or violation of curfews.

Each resident is required to be financially self-supporting, paying their own rent, and purchasing their own food. The residents are required to work, actively seek employment, or be a student enrolled in an accredited academic or trade school. Those who are permanently disabled and on federal, state, or local assistance are required to become involved in service to the home or the community. All residents are required to attend a minimum number of weekly 12 Step meetings, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or Cocaine Anonymous.

Each resident performs an assigned daily chore around the house. A well-run house is cleaned from top to bottom each day. There are no dirty dishes left in the sink, clothes, or towels lying around. I have personally visited some sober homes, as well as lived in two, and found many of these homes to be cleaner than private residences.

Rent in a sober living home in the San Fernando Valley can range from \$550 to \$2,000 per month, with the norm ranging from \$600 to \$750 per month. Location, occupant density, and services provided are the primary factors affecting rents. There are no security deposits, no first and last month, and no credit checks performed. Utilities are included. Many homes allow rent to be paid on a weekly basis. Moreover, many will give a 14 to 21 days grace period to come up with the first month's rent. The only requirement for residency is a desire to stay clean and sober, follow the house rules and pay your rent timely.

Many homes also provide probation/parole housing for non-violent alcohol and drug offenders. In California, under "Proposition 36" the courts sentence individuals from 90 days to a year in a sober living home, in place of jail. Most of the homes work directly with the courts, defense attorneys and district attorneys and have approved monitoring programs in place.

In recent years "boutique" sober living homes have emerged. Some charging \$10,000 and up per month (\$350 per day) and include personal lifestyle coaches, yoga and fitness trainers, and five star chefs. A few of the more expensive sober living homes have full time attorneys on their staff to assist their residents. While some sober living homes may provide some of these services, most do not. The residents are not "rock-stars", but most typically business people and professionals who are familiar with paying \$1,000 per night in a New York or London hotel. Most who reside in these homes are seeking absolute confidentiality and anonymity. Of those high-end homes I

have visited, all had three requirements in common with lower cost homes: A zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol, attendance at 12-step meetings and sharing a room with at least one other addict/alcoholic. This Luxury Sober Living Market may offer a whole other business strategy to explore, but the quality staffing and marketing techniques are beyond our scope at the moment.

Sober Living Market Segmentation

Teen and Young Adults: 16-25 years old

One of the biggest challenges for young adults in a residential treatment program is transitioning from treatment back into everyday life. Most treatment programs focus solely on getting them off drugs and alcohol, and then discharge them without the necessary tools and experience needed to prevent relapse.

Places like the Sober College have shown that when an appreciation for Sobriety, Productivity, Life Skills, Physical Fitness and Emotional Intelligence, are developed and practiced, they will ensure long term sobriety for young adults, and provide them with the tools needed to maintain sobriety long after they leave the home.

The goal of our program should not be to keep young adults in treatment, but to facilitate their success and gradually transition them to independent living. Our clients, with the help of their peers and staff, have the opportunity to identify and develop their passions, continue their education, and relearn how to live free from drug and alcohol.

Unfortunately, the achievement of these objectives is made difficult by the cost and difficulty of finding the right staff that is both capable and committed to the job of working with young people who are suffering from a variety of emotional problems and lack of life skills. Accordingly, the youth market must be approached with care. Admissions policies and pricing must be tailored to balancing the needs of the youth with the capabilities of the staff with the economic cost of providing the services needed. Furthermore, the supervision requirements needed to build the discipline of regular housekeeping, personal hygiene and sober living might not be appropriate in a seniors environment – accordingly, segregation by age may be needed. A small minority of residents would be in this group – say 10 to 20% at any given time.

Adults: 25-50 years old

The core market is Adults recovering from alcohol and drug addiction who have taken the initial steps in regaining sobriety and are committed to becoming Sober and Productive members of society again.

Living in a Sober House is an appropriate intervention for people with long and chronic addiction histories. The longer an individual remains in treatment, the better chance their opportunity for maintaining a lasting recovery afterwards. Several months in treatment in a modified therapeutic community afford participants the opportunity to examine and modify layers of behavioral patterns formed over many years during addiction. The peer relationships that develop between participants provide quality social and therapeutic value.

Professional group and individual counseling facilitate movement towards the resolution of significant though sometimes hidden issues, often involving family members. Residential treatment effectively prepares participants for re-entry into productive community living. At recovery-appropriate stages, education, skill development, job training and readiness and employment search are initiated. These are vital components to each participants plan for independent living.

Most adults can afford the low cost of a group living Sober House and require a normal amount of supervision. At the same time the requirements for behavioral support, vocational redirection and personal skill rebuilding require professional staff. To the extent required, personal treatment plans can be developed and paid for by the resident or their insurance plan. Adult residents would probably make up between 50 and 66% of the population.

Seniors: 50-80 years old

The stress of retirement on a limited income, death of spouses, unemployment and health problems lead many seniors into drinking problems. Furthermore, the high cost of living has forced thousands of seniors out of their homes and the high cost of rental housing in the area (1,500 to 2,000 for a small one bedroom) has made many seniors in the area boarder line homeless.

For this segment, Sober Living Homes offer a wonderful alternative to a County Facility or Homelessness. A clean, safe environment in their old neighborhood with it's good bus and subway transportation and living with the company of other seniors makes a Sober Living house ideal. Furthermore, the seniors are clean, quiet know how to take care of themselves and need minimal supervision. They do need help with processing paperwork for retirement and health benefits and mobility via a house van to take them to meetings and appointments is a great add on service. But seniors tend to be long term residents with steady incomes making them excellent tenants. In the Valley Village area, almost 50% of the market could be seniors.

Operational Plan

Oxford House, a publicly supported, nonprofit corporation, is a network of drug free, democratically run and self-supporting houses or apartment complexes. It was established in 1975 to serve as the next step in the process of alcohol and drug recovery, focusing on sober community living as an effective and low cost method of preventing relapse. They have developed over 800 active facilities. While it is not our intent to actually set the houses up as Oxford Houses (they are typically rental not owned and are long term establishments), we are going to use the operational guides, bookkeeping methods and organizational models that Oxford has developed.

The most unique thing about the Oxford model is that the operational rules and guides are based on the principles of AA making the structure of the home a perfect complement to the recovery process of the 12 Step Plan of AA and NA. (See the Appendix for reference)

Risk Factors:

Rental Income: While the potential gross rental income is high, the reality is uncollected rents can run as high as 40% if not managed correctly. Therefore, careful and diligent collection procedures must be followed.

Turnover: The typical stay for a resident is 90 days to a year, with very few staying more than one year. You are constantly marketing and looking for new residents. Accordingly, web sites, listings on Craigslist, postings at AA Meetings must be kept up to date and liaison with the Outpatient operations at Rehab centers must be maintained to keep the beds full.

Utilities: Utilities are a danger area. As an example, if you have 10-12 adult residents living in a home, the utilities may be running up to 20 hours a day. This includes; lights, showers, laundry (gas, water & electricity), television (s), ovens and stoves, air conditioning and heat. Care must be taken to install the most energy efficient equipment and ensure that energy use is minimized.

Maintenance: Even with the very best of residents, the heavier use and traffic requires more frequent cleaning, painting and repairs. Appliances wear out quicker and require frequent replacement. In addition, you will get a few bad residents that will cause damage to the property. A run down sober living home will not attract new residents.

Labor: Sober living is labor intensive requiring 24/7 attention. Provisions have been made in the cash flow for a live in resident manager to run the house on a day to day basis – with a Staff Manager who will be responsible for; maintenance, purchasing, professional support and marketing.

Neighbors: For the most part neighbors do not object to the existence of a sober living home in their community. Many don't even know that there is a sober living home on their block. However, it takes only one unenlightened or upset neighbor to cause problems. Accordingly, a program of community outreach and a “Good Neighbor” policy for the house will go a long way to prevent problems.

Appendix

1. House Management

For Reference, the following the Oxford House Management system:

Although a number of changes will need to be made to fit this to our situation this handbook reviews the issues and solutions of running a Sober Home and provides an excellent template to start from.

Oxford House Manual®

An Idea Based On a Sound System

For Recovering Alcoholics and Drug Addicts to Help Themselves

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**HOUSING,  
FELLOWSHIP,  
SELF-RELIANCE,  
SELF-RESPECT,  
FOR RECOVERING INDIVIDUALS**

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Commemorative Edition

13th Oxford House World Convention

Introduction

This is the fourth revision of the Oxford House™ Manual©, which has served thousands of Oxford House members since 1975.

Whenever the masculine pronoun is used in this manual, it means the female pronoun as well. There are Oxford Houses for men and there are Oxford Houses for women. There are no Oxford Houses for both men and women in the same house.

On November 18, 1988 President Ronald Reagan signed P.L. 100-690, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, which establishes a nationwide program to encourage the mass replication of recovery houses based upon the Oxford House Concept. At the request of Congress, Oxford House™ worked with them in crafting a simple, but workable, start-up loan program in each state.

Expansion of Oxford Houses began in June 1989. Within five years the number of Oxford Houses had grown from 18 primarily located in and around the Nation's Capitol to more than 500 located in 39 states.¹ Each individual Oxford House™ receives a charter from Oxford House, Inc., the umbrella organization of the national network of individual Oxford Houses. Oxford House™ has become a national self-help movement that provides a missing link in the recovery process from alcoholism and drug addiction.

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¹ The number of Oxford Houses reached 1,438 early in the third quarter of 2010 just prior to the 12th Oxford House World Convention held September 2nd – 5th at the Fairmont Chicago Millennium Park Hotel in Chicago, Illinois. The total number of Oxford Houses includes houses in Australia, Ghana and Canada.

The Oxford House™ Story

In October 1975, the first Oxford House™ was opened in Silver Spring, Maryland, by a group of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts, who had been living in a county government halfway house, which was being closed. Each of them had been clean and sober for but a short period of time when they learned that the halfway house was to be closed. Each of them was fearful that he would return to alcoholic drinking or drug use without the support of living in a group committed to staying sober and straight.

When the news reached them that the halfway house was going to be closed their first reaction was one of anger, resentment and panic. They had known that the halfway house had a "six month rule" which required an individual to move out after six months to make room for a newcomer. As a matter of fact, during their tenure in the halfway house they had watched 12 men move out at the end of six months. Eleven of the 12 had returned to drinking or using drugs within a month. That fact only added to the fears and insecurity they felt upon learning that the house they lived in would be closed and they all would have to move within thirty days.

A private individual, a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, held the lease on the house the county was closing. Several of the men faced with eviction approached him to see if there was some way the county could be convinced to change its decision. He felt such a change of heart was impossible. It was a matter of economics. County halfway houses cost a lot of money to run. The county budget was tight and Alpha I, as the halfway house was named, would definitely be closed. He then asked if the men had given any thought to taking over the house themselves.

Over the next several days, hope began to replace the despair shared by the men but a number of obstacles stood between the ideas of taking over the house themselves and the reality of being able to do it. Where would they get the money? All of them had drunk themselves out of good jobs and few of them had done more than day work since getting sober. How could they pay for the rent, the utilities, the food and a counselor to manage a halfway house? Who could they find to run the house, even if they could come up with the money? Day and night they discussed the possibilities among themselves and went to a lot of AA meetings in order to get the advice of AA members. Time and again AA members gave them encouragement. "Just don't drink and pay the rent," they heard over and over again. "Keep it simple" and "Remember—a day at a time," were offered as advice almost as frequently.

Slowly an idea began to form that maybe it could be done. The first task involved studying the costs of the halfway house to determine how much money was needed. The largest single cost was the paid manager, cook and counselor attached to the house. Someone suggested maybe they could live without a paid manager or cook or counselor. But who would be the supervisor or manager if they did not have a paid manager who lived in the house? Of the men in the halfway house to be closed, only one had gained six months of sobriety.

The men decided that the cost of a manager, cook and counselor was too great. If there were going to be any chance of maintaining a house on his or her own, a way would have to be found to learn how to stay sober and manage a house without a paid staff.

One man recalled that he had lived in a college fraternity with sixteen men and they had not had a paid manager. Of course there had been no requirement of not drinking in that house. As the men talked about the fraternity house concept fear of being able to enforce sobriety without the presence of a paid authority figure became the heart of the matter. They had been without real responsibility for so long there was considerable doubt about whether or not they could act responsibly as a group.

As discussions centered on whether or not they could run a house themselves, talk would inevitably drift into complaints about the halfway house way of life. There were a lot of rules. Lights out at eleven o'clock at night. Everybody up at six in the morning. Breakfast at exactly seven o'clock. Table setting, dishwashing, vacuuming, trash removal, bed making – all specific assignments to be done at a specific time and in a particular way. Any suggested changes to the rigid routine were dismissed with a lecture and a warning to shape up or ship out. As much as the residents of the halfway house resented the arbitrary rules, the fear of having no place to live was even greater.

After days and days of discussions an organizational plan began to evolve which gave the founders of Oxford House™ the confidence they needed to give it a try. Their experiences in the halfway house – both positive and negative – helped them develop an organization to carry the responsibilities for which the manager, cook and counselor had been responsible for in the county halfway house.

On the positive side of the ledger of halfway house experience was the reinforcement of sobriety that was gained by knowing that immediate eviction followed taking the first drink. From the start the founders recognized that there had to be an absolute rule against any alcohol or drug use by members of the house. The problem for a self-run group house was how to develop procedures to make sure that any resident who drank or took drugs would be thrown out. It was finally decided that the only way it could be done was to call a meeting of the house members and discuss the situation. If a member had taken drugs or a drink, there would have to be a vote to expel him from the house. If a majority of the members agreed that the member had in fact taken a drink or drugs, he was automatically out.²

Before the first relapse occurred there was considerable debate among the members about how one could tell if an individual has in fact returned to drinking or taking drugs. Some members thought that the house should purchase a breathalyzer to test everybody to guard against the "secret drinker" among us. Others suggested the election of an official "sniffer" (as a less expensive safeguard). New houses today will probably go through the same kinds of concern. The fact of the matter is that no member of a house is able to fool other members for very long. We are all professional alcoholics and/or drug

addicts who would have done anything to drink and take drugs. We really do know all the tricks of the trade and a relapse cannot be covered up by any one of us for very long.

Unfortunately, relapses can be a part of the disease of alcoholism and addiction. Some members of an Oxford House™ will return to their addiction. When they do, it is important for the other members of the house to act promptly. The worse mistake any house can make is to let a slip or relapse by one member slide. That slip endangers the sobriety of every other member of a house. Every Oxford House™ resident knows before he moves in that the use of alcohol or drugs results in getting kicked out. Oxford House™ members have the responsibility to use "tough love" and promptly expel the slipper – for his welfare, their own welfare and the welfare of the entire house³

Once a member has been expelled from a house because he has returned to drinking or taking drugs he cannot be readmitted unless there is a clear demonstration that he has returned to solid sobriety. Each house develops certain rules of thumb for determining a return to solid sobriety. Some accept successful completion of a 28-day rehabilitation program as a return to solid sobriety. Most generally require strong evidence of no drinking or taking of drugs and regular attendance at AA and/or NA as a minimum requirement for reacceptance into an Oxford House™⁴.

The founders of Oxford House™ developed a democratic way of operation. They had to – they could not afford to pay a house manager or supervisor to take responsibility for them. The early history of Oxford House™ showed that the Oxford House residents could run a house on their own. Today, Oxford House™ is still self-run and it still works.

Within six months of its beginning, the first Oxford House™ had helped finance and start the second Oxford House™. Soon those two houses started a third and the three houses then started a fourth. Over its first thirteen years Oxford House™ grew from one house to more than twenty houses and the expansion of a good idea had just begun.

In October 1987, an Oxford House™ for men was started in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania – far away from the cluster of houses in the Washington, D.C. area. It worked and the eleven men in that Oxford House™ followed the pattern begun the Washington area thirteen years earlier by finding another house to rent to start a second house in the Bethlehem area.

Early in 1988, all the members of the individual Oxford Houses decided to establish a full-time central services office to provide other individuals recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction the technical assistance necessary for them to start Oxford Houses in their communities. There is a strong belief that Oxford House™ will work anywhere. As Oxford Houses open around the country, the first Oxford House™ in a particular area will follow the tradition set by the original Oxford House™ of helping other houses get started. Between 1989 and 2011 the growth of Oxford Houses has been phenomenal – more than 1,500 individual Oxford Houses have been started in 46 states, Australia, Ghana and Canada.

Foundations, businesses, churches, individual and government agencies have helped fund technical assistance to help get the first few Oxford Houses established in an area. However, expansion of the movement continues to rely primarily upon the volunteer efforts of individuals living in existing Oxford Houses working with newly formed groups. Throughout the country clusters of Oxford Houses have organized themselves into mutually supportive chapters working together to expand the number of houses so that every recovering alcoholic and drug addict can gain the support of living in an Oxford House™.

Each Oxford House™ has its own history but all Oxford Houses share a common history of operating in a democratic fashion on a self-supporting basis. That common history is the key to why Oxford House™ works. The *System of Operations* and the *Oxford House Traditions* contain the blue print for any Oxford House™ to work well by following a tried and true path for success.

The *System of Operations* and *Oxford House Traditions*, which follow, are taken directly from the original Oxford House Manual[©] with very minor changes, duly noted through footnotes.

² The first Oxford House™ tried a system that distinguished drinking or taking drugs *in the house* from drinking or taking drugs *outside the house*. In the former case expulsion from the house was automatic; in the latter case expulsion was likely but if the membership felt it was warranted a member who had relapsed away from the house could be given probation. This was done in four cases and it did not work in any of them. In each case the member with the relapse had relapsed again within a period of a few days or weeks. Experience showed that probation did not work. Therefore any slip or relapse now results in automatic expulsion. The vote taken by the house membership is solely to judge if in fact a relapse has taken place. The third condition of a house's charter absolutely requires immediate expulsion and no house wants to lose its charter.

³ It is seldom easy to take action against the relapsing member but every Oxford House™ does. The first case is always the most difficult because all members in a house become friends and no one likes to have to throw a friend out. Nevertheless, principles must come before personalities and the member who has relapsed must leave the house right away. Otherwise the sobriety of every member of the house is threatened. More importantly, the good reputation of Oxford House™ is threatened. The first Oxford House™ used to be the subject of bets by outsiders about how soon it would fail. There was a genuine belief by many that a group house of recovering alcoholics and addicts could not work without a manager or counselor to enforce the edict against drinking or taking drugs. Those doubters all lost their bets because the members of Oxford House™ proved that they could act responsibly. The first responsibility of any Oxford House™ is to enforce sobriety.

⁴ Once a geographic area has opened several Oxford Houses, each house keeps in touch with the other houses so that a relapsing member does not simply move from one house to another. On the other hand, once a relapsing member regains sobriety, it may be advisable for him to "start over" in another house in the area if it has room. The group conscience of those for whom Oxford House™ is working generally has no trouble in guiding the recovered relapser into the house which can give the most support.

Oxford House™ System of Operations

There is a frequent saying among Oxford House™ Members that "Oxford House™ has no rules except 'Don't drink.'" For the most part, that saying is true. However, it does overstate the facts.

While rules at Oxford House™ are kept at a minimum, there are nevertheless rules. Unfortunately, it is impossible for any organization to function without having some system or procedures. The basic rule for all Oxford Houses is that they *must operate on a democratic basis*. Each member of the House has one vote. A majority rules except in the case of accepting a new recovering alcoholic or drug addict for membership when 80% of the current membership must vote its approval.

The following discussion spells out the Oxford House System of Operations. It draws upon the experience of the existing Oxford Houses and tells any recovering alcoholic or drug addict who is interested (1) how to start an Oxford House™; (2) how to make an Oxford House™ run smoothly; (3) how to manage money in an Oxford House™.

Oxford House, Inc., is the umbrella organization for all Oxford Houses. Any group of recovering alcoholics who wants to form an Oxford House™ must obtain a charter from Oxford House, Inc. The charter confers on the particular Oxford House™ the benefits of being part of a non-profit corporation, which can offer the experience and guidance necessary for making an Oxford House™ work.

Any group of recovering alcoholics and/or drug addicts can apply for an Oxford House™ charter. Oxford House, Inc., has no hard and fast rules as to the length of sobriety required of applicants who want to charter a new house. As a general rule, however, several members of any charter group should have several months of solid sobriety.

1. Obtaining a Charter

Two or more recovering alcoholics can apply for a charter from Oxford House, Inc., by completing an application for a charter⁵ or simply writing a letter containing the pertinent information to Oxford House World Services. Pertinent information would include answers to the following questions:

1. Names of proposed charter members.
2. Length of sobriety for each proposed charter member.
3. The plans that the proposed charter group has for renting or leasing a house.
4. The number of beds contemplated for use in the proposed new Oxford House™.⁶
5. The anticipated charge per person per week, which would be needed to make the House self supporting.

⁵ One can get a form to apply for a charter by writing to Oxford House, Inc., 1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 300, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910 or by downloading a charter application form from the web site www.oxfordhouse.org by clicking “applications” under “Houses”.

⁶ To receive a charter the proposed house must be for a minimum of six residents. The largest Oxford House™ group to date has been eighteen. The best size group seems to be made up of eight to twelve members. Charters are only granted for single-sex houses. There is no “co-ed” Oxford Houses. Leases with landlords should make clear that no smoking within the house is permitted and no use of decorative candles, incense or other items that represent fire hazards should be prohibited. Group safety is important.

Once Oxford House World Services has reviewed the application or letter from the prospective charter members, they will either issue a charter or suggest additional steps for the prospective members to take in order to obtain a charter. A charter will be issued if, in the judgment of Oxford House World Services, the proposed new Oxford House™ would have a reasonable chance of success.⁷ All charters are issued conditionally. This means that the new group once started must demonstrate that it has learned the Oxford House system of operation sufficiently to be awarded a permanent charter.

In rare cases, Oxford House World Services will issue a charter prior to the actual acquisition of housing by the applicants. In such cases, the charter will be issued upon the condition that the charter members obtain a suitable house within a specific period of time.⁸

2. Obtaining a House

The Oxford House™ philosophy is one that relies on expanding capacity rather than limiting the length of time that a member can live in a House. To achieve sufficient capacity for providing enough rooms for all recovering alcoholics and drug addicts who want to live in an Oxford House™, it has been the custom for an established Oxford House™ to look for an additional house once it has become full and has applications which it is unable to accept because of lack of space.

The size, location and cost of a suitable house to begin an Oxford House™ depends more on what is available than any specific criteria. The charter members who are looking for a suitable house should make certain that any prospective house can be occupied without violating local zoning or health and safety laws. This does not mean that an Oxford House™ should not be considered simply as residential property. In practice Oxford House™ is no different from an ordinary family- except no one in an Oxford House™ drinks or takes mood- changing drugs and avoids fire hazards by prohibiting smoking in the house and use of candles.

As a matter of fact, most jurisdictions in the country do not have specific ordinances, which relate directly to an Oxford House™-type situation. Most group housing ordinances, if they exist at all, are geared to highly institutionalized situations. Most commercial zoning ordinances, i.e., rooming houses, apartments, or hotels or motels, are inappropriate for the Oxford House™ situation. Under the Federal Fair Housing Act local governments are required to make a reasonable accommodation for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts to live in the supportive Oxford House™ living environment.⁹

If the charter members have any doubt as to how their particular jurisdiction will view an Oxford House™, they should face the matter directly and clear their occupancy with the local zoning authorities. Oxford House, Inc., is willing to provide any assistance it can for the purpose of persuading local authorities to treat Oxford House™ the same as it would treat any other single-family residential property within its jurisdiction.¹⁰

Common sense should be used in selecting any house, which is to be used as an Oxford House™. It should have adequate plumbing, adequate kitchen

facilities, adequate laundry facilities, a sufficient number of bedrooms, and a pleasant common living space. In addition, the area should be surveyed to determine if parking of automobiles might cause a problem.

The amount of rent that a new group can afford depends on the number of beds that the house can hold. There is nothing wrong with putting more than one bed in larger rooms. New members moving into a house can be made to feel at home more easily if they share a room. Most Houses use a system of seniority for bed selection. "Old-timers" generally move into single rooms as new members move into the house. The single rooms are usually the smaller rooms in a house.

There are three reasons Oxford House™ encourages more than one to a room. First, newcomers maintain recovery better with a roommate. Loneliness continues to be a threat to sobriety and loneliness can be a problem for the newcomer adjusting to a new place to live. Second, the number of people living in a House directly affects the economics of an Oxford House™. The more people who live in a House the less each member has to pay for the House to be self-supporting. Third, roommates discourage having non-house members spending the night at an Oxford House™.

The size of the house has a direct relationship to the amount of rent a new group can afford to pay. In most areas the monthly rent will be the largest single cost for the members of a House to meet. For example, the very first Oxford House™ (Oxford House-Silver Spring)¹¹, held 13 members. The monthly rent was \$700; utilities ran about \$300 a month; staples about \$250 a month.¹² The charge per member had been set at \$30 a week. Since the House quickly became full and stayed full income exceeded expenses.¹³ As a matter of fact, after six months of operation the House had nearly \$2,000 in the bank. It used \$1,200 of that money to start a new Oxford House™ so that some of the recovering alcoholics who had applied to live in an Oxford House™ could live in one. Even today, most Oxford Houses have a backlog of applications. The tradition of some house members of an existing house helping to start a new Oxford House™ in an area continues.

As a general rule, it is easy to acquire furniture for a new House at little or no expense. Sometimes, however, it may be difficult to get beds and chests of drawers. Since beds produce the money, which makes an Oxford House™ self-sufficient, members in a new house might want to buy twin-size mattress and box springs sets. New twin-size mattresses and box springs cost between \$90 to \$120 per unit. Thrift stores, Good Will or Salvation Army often have chests of drawers at a reasonable price. The first and most effective way to get furniture, however, is to ask for it from AA members. Often they are upgrading their own furnishing and are pleased to give their old furniture to an Oxford House™.

Other start up costs often includes a month's rent in advance and a security deposit equal to one month's rent. New Houses often get a loan from AA members or other Oxford Houses in order to meet this expense. Whenever a loan is obtained the members of the new House should agree to pay it back

according to a definite schedule – at least \$100 a month until it is repaid.¹⁴ The good name of Oxford House™ is at stake whenever any House has a loan outstanding. Therefore, it is important to make payments on the loan on a regular basis.

⁷ The Board of Directors has delegated the decision-making authority to approve charter applications to Oxford House World Services.

⁸ This situation is more likely to occur when Oxford House™ is new to a geographic area. In those geographic areas where there is already an Oxford House™, those wanting to start a new House are more likely to find the available house first and then apply for a Charter. Following the tradition of early Oxford Houses each house tries to match supply of Oxford House™ recovery beds with the number of applicants wanting to live in an Oxford House™. Houses in an area always work through the chapter to make sure supply and demand stay in balance.

⁹ The United States Supreme Court on May 15, 1995 issued a decision in *City of Edmonds, WA v. Oxford House, Inc.* (514 U.S. 725) which confirms that recovering alcoholics and drug addicts living in an Oxford House™ are “handicapped” and therefore a protected class within the meaning of the Federal Fair Housing Act, as amended, and local jurisdictions must make a reasonable accommodation to afford them living arrangements supportive of recovery. A number of subsequent federal cases have affirmed that Oxford Houses are not commercial institutions and should be treated as single families for purposes of zoning.

¹⁰ In Bethlehem, Pennsylvania for example, Oxford House™ received a ruling from the Chief of the Bureau of Inspections that it is within the definition of “Family” as defined in the City Zoning Code. As a practical matter most jurisdictions so appreciate the useful service provided by an Oxford House™ that it is considered to have a “family” classification.

¹¹ Oxford House-Silver Spring was opened October 25, 1975 and continued to be an Oxford House™ until the end of 1984. It was located at 1219 Fiddler Lane, Silver Spring, Maryland. The building was razed to make way for another building in 1986.

¹² The first Oxford House™ and most subsequent Houses have bought milk, potatoes, spices, flour, coffee, bread, eggs and bacon on a group basis. Individual members get their own meals – either individually or as groups – but use the “staples” as needed. Note also that the figures used above are 1975 dollars or about one-half comparable 1987 dollars or one-third 2000 dollars.

¹³ By late spring a surplus of nearly \$2,000 was in the House treasury. The members met to decide whether to lower their weekly payment or to use the surplus to open a new House. They chose to open a new House in Washington, DC in May 1976.

3. Membership

The charter members of a new Oxford House™ constitute a basic core of membership for the House. Once the House has started, the charter members will want to bring in enough new members so as to fill all available beds. The higher the occupancy rate, the lower the rent, which must be paid by each Oxford House™ member.

One of the requirements under an Oxford House™ charter is that new members must be approved by 80% of the existing members in a particular House. An approval by 80% of the existing members is required because it is extremely important that all of the members living in an Oxford House™ feel comfortable with any newcomer. As a practical matter existing Oxford Houses have denied membership to very few individuals. Most members of Oxford House™ keep their memory green and few applicants are excluded from membership. Those who are excluded are generally excluded because there are no beds available¹⁵. A waiting list is maintained, but it is of little value after a period of time because when a person needs a room, he must get one immediately. On the other hand, the waiting list can become a useful resource for getting new members to help form another House.¹⁶ The waiting list also is a ready resource for filling vacancies as members move out to live elsewhere in the community or are evicted because of a relapse to drinking or taking drugs.

Oxford House™ works well for men and for women. However, it has been the experience of Oxford House™ that it does not work well with men and women in the same House.¹⁷ Relationships are bound to develop and will unnecessarily complicate the comfortable operation of an Oxford House™.

¹⁴ This is also true of loans received from a state revolving loan fund. Repayments on time is a must because it allows other groups to start houses and helps expand the opportunities for recovering individuals to stay clean and sober without relapse. State loans are usually \$4,000 and are repaid at \$170 a month for 24 months.

¹⁵ Not everyone is suited for living in an Oxford House but the existing members should never exclude anyone simply because of race, creed or a disability co-occurring with addiction to alcohol or other addictive drugs unless such disability would make it difficult for an individual to function in an Oxford House. For example, being HIV positive does not – in and of itself – preclude successful Oxford House membership because absent unprotected sex or needle sharing HIV or AIDS is not contagious and hundreds of recovering individuals afflicted by HIV or AIDS are and have been successful Oxford House residents. Also hundreds of recovering individuals with co-occurring mental illnesses or physical disabilities have been – and are – successful Oxford House residents. In considering whether an applicant will make a suitable Oxford House resident the group conscience should always error on the side of providing any recovering individual a chance to benefit from Oxford House living. In other words, if the group believes the individual has exhibited a sincere desire to develop sobriety comfortable enough to avoid relapse, pay an equal share of household expenses and help others in recovery, the applicant should be accepted if space is available.

¹⁶ Once an Oxford House™ has been established for a few months, there will soon be more applicants than there are beds available. The situation soon causes the members living in the House to start looking for an additional house to rent.

¹⁷ In 1978, Oxford House™ opened a House intended for women but started with a core group of four men from an existing Oxford House™. After eight women moved into the House, the four men moved out with the expectation that their spaces would be filled by the women

When a new Oxford House™ is established, the charter members of the House should make themselves known to quarterway houses, halfway houses, detoxification units, drug courts, rehabilitation facilities, AA groups and NA groups within the area. Included among those items which should be stressed are that the House is democratically run; it is self-supporting; drinking or the taking of drugs is not permitted; and that both the new and not-so-new recovering alcoholics are welcome to come and live at the House as long as they do not drink or take drugs and pay their equal share of household expenses. Oxford House™ is not in competition with any of these groups. It is a resource for them to use in the common goal of helping the alcoholic avoid relapses. Many of these groups will become supporters of Oxford House™ and will refer new members to the House. Remember to explain that a new member must file an application, and be interviewed and approved by 80% of the members living in Oxford House™.

Once an Oxford House™ has been established for a few months, applications for membership will exceed the space available. At that point in time, consideration should be given to opening a new Oxford House™ using some of the current members as a core group for the new House.¹⁸ Generally, a few members in a House will begin thinking about opening another House in response to a House's inability to accept all the deserving applicants. They will discuss the matter at a House meeting and everyone will begin to look for a suitable additional house to rent. When such a house is found several existing members will volunteer to become the core group for a new House. The existing House begins to figure out ways to come up with the necessary money for starting the new House and checks with applicants to see if they would be willing to live in the new House. This is the way that Oxford House™ is able to comfortably exist with the principle of letting members live in an Oxford House™ for as long as they want provided they do not drink or use drugs and pay their rent.

4. Rules

Alcoholics and drug addicts by nature seem to dislike rules. There is only one rule applicable to all Oxford Houses; i.e. membership is conditioned on not drinking. It is impossible for a house of recovering alcoholics to stay sober if even one person is permitted to drink or take drugs. The presence of a practicing alcoholic among those who are trying to stay sober invites other relapses. As a matter of self-preservation it is necessary for the membership of an Oxford House™ to confront the relapsing member immediately. A meeting of the House should be held and if a majority of the members believe that a member is drinking or taking drugs that member should be asked to leave.

The rule relating to the use of alcohol or drugs grows out of common sense. That rule is the only rule considered mandatory once a group of recovering alcoholics has received an Oxford House™ charter. Other rules will tend to evolve from the membership of the House itself. Those rules should come into being only if they are absolutely necessary. The fewer the rules, the more likely it will be that a house will be successful. Different Houses will tend to have different rules. For example, one Oxford House™ has a rule that requires unanimous consent before

any pet can be brought onto the premises. Another Oxford House™ has two cats and a dog and would probably require unanimous consent before either the cat or the dog could be evicted.

In many alcoholic rehabilitation units, there are rules covering a multitude of activities. Those rules include curfew hours; clean-up details; mandatory attendance at AA or NA meetings; and other rules almost inherent in institutional living. Oxford House™ is not an institution. It is more analogous to a family. However, certain rules may be required to assure an equitable distribution of the work in keeping the house clean and at times there may be the need for rules to keep some individuals from disrupting other individuals.¹⁹

Since the success of an Oxford House™ depends on having enough income to meet expenses, it is important that members pay their equal share of household expenses in a timely manner. Rules may be required that force the eviction of members who do not keep their equal share of household expenses up to date. All members should be encouraged to pay their share of household expenses at least one week in advance. The weekly house meeting becomes the idea time to discuss any resident that is not up-to-date in paying the equal share of household expenses. It helps neither the individual resident nor the house group to let anyone get behind.

accepting four additional women. Instead the women accepted four additional men as replacements and the House began to have problems. A number of relationships evolved between the men and women and soon a number of the members had returned to drinking. Oxford House, Inc. closed the House and reopened it as a House for men. It was clear then and continues to be clear today that men and women living in the same house operating under the self-support system of Oxford House™ creates an unnecessary additional stress to group living. All women Oxford Houses work well; all men Oxford Houses work well; Houses with both men and women do not work and will not be granted a charter by Oxford House, Inc.

¹⁸ In the first Oxford House™— Oxford House - Silver Spring— members felt confident enough after six months to start another House. They started the first house in Washington, DC by having four of the thirteen members in the original house move to form a core membership for the new House.

5. Officers

For an Oxford House™ to run successfully on a democratic basis, it must have certain elected officers. It is part of the Oxford House tradition to make sure that officers do not become so entrenched that other members of the house do not have an equal voice in its management. Therefore, it is an Oxford House tradition that no officer shall serve longer than six months in the same office for one continuous period of time.²⁰ All officers are but trusted servants of the entire membership. The number of officers may vary from House to House but all Houses generally have the following elected officers:

- ☐ President
- ☐ Treasurer
- ☐ Secretary
- ☐ Comptroller
- ☐ Coordinator

The election of both a treasurer and comptroller emphasizes the importance each Oxford House™ places on money management. The two officers are able to divide rent collection and help each other with the payment of bills. Houses elect a "Coordinator" to help schedule daily and weekly work details to keep the house clean – inside and outside.

The election of officers is necessary because they provide the leadership for the House to work well. The officers can serve continuously for only six months in any particular office,

i.e. after an intervening six-month period an individual can be re-elected to an office in which he or she has already served. The duties of the various officers are to keep Oxford House™ running smoothly, conduct regular meetings of the House membership, assure that the Oxford House Traditions are followed, and keep the finances of the House in good order.

¹⁹ For example, if a resident's non-attendance at AA or NA meetings is causing problems – for the individual or the house – the residents may vote at a meeting to require meeting attendance as a condition of living in the house. In this situation the "group conscience" should be the determining factor. It is guided by the fact that the welfare of the house must always come first. Long-term recovery is the primary reason for the house to exist.

²⁰ See Tradition Two.

6. Meetings

It is important to have a House meeting at least once a week. After some experimenting, an Oxford House™ will find the particular hour or half-hour, which is the most convenient for most of its members. A meeting should be used to:

- report on the current financial status of the House;
- consider new applications for membership;
- resolve any problem affecting members in the House;
- resolve general complaints about maintenance of the house; and
- consider proposals or projects to be undertaken by the House.

A special meeting should be called, just as soon as possible, whenever there is any suspicion that a member is drinking or taking drugs. Such meetings are the most difficult of any held in an Oxford House™. Some Houses have decided to use three of the elected officers as a screening committee for determining if an individual has violated the rule against drinking or taking drugs. In such cases, the screening committee makes its report to the full membership of the House for their consideration. The individual suspected of violating the rule against drinking or taking drugs should be directly confronted with the facts leading to the suspicion. The membership of the House then must vote on whether or not the facts support the conclusion that a member has violated the rule.

The decision by the House membership should be viewed simply as a factual determination. If a majority of the House membership, attending the special meeting, believes that the individual did in fact drink or take drugs, expulsion of that member is automatic.

The Secretary should take notes about what takes place at each House meeting. The notes of the previous meeting should be read at the beginning of the next meeting so that all the members can agree with the record of what the House had previously determined. If the Secretary has made a mistake in recording what had happened, it should be corrected and the minutes of the meeting should be made a permanent record of the House. The Secretary should also verify that he or she has logged onto the website: www.oxfordhouse.org to update vacancy information for the house.²¹ The next item of business should be the report on House finances by the Treasurer. That report should include (a) the amount of the bills outstanding, (b) the cash on hand, (c) member's rent paid in advance, and (d) member's rent due. To the extent possible the Treasurer should project what the House finances are likely to be over the next month. Take into account the expectation of any large utility bills or unusual expenses.

The House meeting should then take up new applications and listen to each member who has met or talked to the applicant. A vote should be taken on each applicant whether or not space is available. If the applicant is rejected he or she should be told right after the meeting. If the applicant is accepted, and space is available, he or she should be informed as to when to move in and given a copy of the manual so as to understand how Oxford House™ works. If the applicant is

accepted, but no space is immediately available, he or she should be put on a waiting list and told his or her prospects of getting in. Each new member should be told that the completed application constitutes agreement to follow the rules of the House.

Meetings also include the wide range of decisions facing an Oxford House™ from purchases of wastebaskets to plans for opening a new House. The House meeting is the place to resolve any conflicts, which arise from living together as a group. It is also a good place to pass on information about new AA or NA meetings or upcoming AA/NA related events. Staying sober and enjoying life is at the heart of Oxford House™ living.

²¹ Keeping vacancies accurate on the website is essential if a house is to have any credibility with treatment providers, drug court judges or the recovery community. The newcomer relies upon accurate vacancy data and every house should make sure that the Secretary updates the website at least once a week.

7. Money

Oxford House™ is built on the principle of self-help. When it comes to money matters, this simply means that any House must operate from its rent receipts. There may be exceptions when a House is first getting started. After a few weeks or months, a new Oxford House™ should be able to pay all of its operating expenses out of its equal share of household expenses.

Some expenses associated with an Oxford House™ are not controllable after a commitment has been made to begin a House. For example, the monthly rental payment will be a fixed amount. In addition, utilities (electric, gas or oil, telephone and often water) will for the most part be fixed expenses. One area where expenses are controllable involves the purchase of food and supplies. All expenses, whether fixed or controllable, must be carefully watched so that any member at any time can know the exact financial condition of the House. Particular attention must be paid to the telephone expenses. Each member should pay for his or her own long distance calls. Usually the Comptroller is responsible to see that the members pay their share of the telephone bill promptly so that the House is not faced with an unwanted and unwarranted expense.²²

The President, the Treasurer, and Comptroller all have a responsibility for making certain that accurate records are maintained showing expenses and income of the House. Every Oxford House™ should have its own checking account and make certain to run all income and outgo through the checking account as the main control point for keeping track of money flow. The very first thing a new Oxford House™ does is to establish a checking account. At least three officers of the House should be authorized to sign checks with two signatures required on each check in order for it to be valid. Promptly deposit member's rent in the checking account and pay all bills by check.²³ That is the easiest and safest way to assure good record keeping. Do not use electronic payment except for start-up loan repayment and contributions to Oxford House World Services.

Each Oxford House™ should maintain (1) a membership ledger; (2) a cash receipts journal and (3) a cash expenses journal. The Treasurer is responsible for keeping these records and for posting the "Weekly Financial Status Report".

²² As a general rule an Oxford House™ gets a telephone for the house that has long-distance and other toll lines blocked. If residents want to make long-distance calls they can get a debit card (Sprint, MCI etc.) that prepay for long distance calls. Do not have long-distance or toll service on a telephone used by the group. After a house is established for some time, residents may want to get their own individual telephone – which is agreeable to most houses.

²³ Sometimes petty cash is useful for buying the staples the House will use. Usually petty cash is less than \$100 and can be run through the checking account by making out a check for "cash". Receipts should then be kept for purchases made out of petty cash and on a weekly basis the Treasurer should balance the cash against the receipts in the petty cash fund. The Treasurer is usually the person who has control over the petty cash and pays individual members who make the purchases of staples for the House. A separate little book for petty cash is useful to maintain showing income and outgo. A small amount of petty cash is a good idea because checks for only a few dollars can become expensive when the bank charges for checks written.

The "Weekly Financial Status Report" lets everyone in the House know exactly the current financial condition of the House. It shows:

- money on hand on the week before;
- money on hand that week;
- bills paid during the last week;
- bills due during the current week;
- bills due by the end of the current month;
- member's rent paid in advance (total dollars);
- member's rent behind (total dollars) and
- list status of individual members (paid in advance, up-to-date and behind) by member.²⁴

The Treasurer and Comptroller are the two officers primarily responsible for assuring sound financial management for an Oxford House™. Together with the President, they should continually check and crosscheck the books so as to assure the accuracy of the true financial status of the House. At each weekly meeting, a report should be made to the full membership of the House for the membership to determine whether the equal share of household expenses is correct and to decide if a member is too delinquent in paying to continue in the house.

Oxford House Traditions

- 1. Oxford House™ has as its primary goal the provision of housing and rehabilitative support for the alcoholic who wants to stop drinking or using and stay stopped.**
- 2. All Oxford Houses are run on a democratic basis. Our officers are but trusted servants serving continuous periods of no longer than six months in any one office.**
- 3. No Member of an Oxford House™ is ever asked to leave without cause – a dismissal vote by the membership because of drinking, drug using, or disruptive behavior.**
- 4. Oxford House™ is not affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous, organizationally or financially, but Oxford House members realize that only active participation in Alcoholics Anonymous 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 although financially secure houses may, with approval or encouragement of Oxford House, Inc., provide new or financially needy houses a loan for a term not to exceed one year.**
- 7. Oxford House™ should remain forever non-professional, although individual members may be encouraged to utilize outside professionals whenever such utilization is likely to enhance recovery from alcoholism.**
- 8. Propagation of the Oxford House, Inc. concept should always be conceived as public education rather than promotion. Principles should always be placed before personalities.**
- 9. Members who leave an Oxford House™ in good standing are encouraged to become associate members and offer friendship, support, and example, to newer members.**

TRADITION ONE

Oxford House™ has as its primary goal the provision of housing and rehabilitative support for the alcoholic and drug addict who wants to stop drinking or using drugs and stay stopped.

By the time many of us had stopped drinking, we had lost jobs; we had lost families, and some of us either had no place to live or no place to live which was not an invitation to start drinking again. Oxford House™ was founded not only to put a roof over our head, but also to create a home where the disease of alcoholism and drug addiction was understood and the need for the alcoholic and drug addict to stay away from the first drink or drug fix was emphasized.

Oxford House™ is group housing. The bond that holds the group together is the desire to stop drinking or using drugs and to stay stopped. Modest rooms and living facilities can become luxurious suites when viewed from an environment of alcoholics and drug addicts working together for comfortable sobriety.

When we stopped drinking or using drugs, we began to realize that in order to stay stopped, our lives would need to change. Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous provided a framework for us to change physically, mentally, and spiritually. The degree to which we were able to successfully change our lives had a direct relationship to Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. Many of us soon learned, however, that living alone or living among our old drinking companions made it more difficult to practice the principles necessary for continued sobriety.

Some of us had lived for a time in alcoholic and drug rehabilitation facilities. Those facilities provided us with shelter, food, and therapy for understanding alcoholism and addiction. Initially, the structure and supervision of such facilities were acceptable because physically and mentally, we were exhausted. Later, some of us were to move into halfway houses, which provided shelter, food, and supervision. As our recovery progressed, the supervision and dependency on a halfway house created dissatisfaction. The dissatisfaction was in part the realization that we were shirking responsibility for our own lives and in part a resentment of authority. The third factor affecting us both in the rehabilitation facilities and the halfway houses was the realization that the duration of our stay must be limited because space must be made for others in need of help.

Oxford House™ grew out of the need for many of us to begin a new life without fear of backsliding because of loneliness leading to renewed dependency on former drinking companions or drug dealers. Throughout its tradition, Oxford House™ has combined the concepts of self-support and responsibility with a fellowship having the common purpose of continued and comfortable sobriety. Oxford House™ must always have as its primary goal the provision of housing and rehabilitative support for the alcoholic who wants to stop drinking and stay stopped and the drug addict who wants to stop using drugs and stay stopped.

TRADITION TWO

All Oxford Houses are run on a democratic basis. Our officers are but trusted servants serving continuous periods of no longer than six months in any one office.

During the last days of our drinking or using drugs, most of us ceased to function as responsible individuals. We were not only dependent upon alcohol and/or drugs, but were also dependent on many others for continuing our alcoholic and/or drug addicted ways. When we stopped drinking or using drugs, we began to realize just how dependent we had become. For those of us who had been in institutions or halfway houses, resentments against authority were common.

A major part of the Oxford House philosophy is that dependency is best overcome through an acceptance of responsibility. In Oxford House™, each member equally shares the responsibility for the running of the House and upholding the Oxford House tradition. All aspects of Oxford House operations, from the acquisition of the house to the acceptance or dismissal of members, are carried out under democratic procedures. Each member has one vote and majority rule applies except that 80% of the members must agree in accepting new persons for membership.

During our drinking and drug use years, and even before, many of us found it difficult to accept authority. Many individuals in society are able to abide by the strict letter of any rule, regulation, or law. Alcoholics and drug addicts seem to have a tendency to test and retest the validity of any real, potential, or imagined restriction on their behavior. As alcoholics and drug addicts, we became experts at outwitting "the system." As recovering alcoholics and recovering drug addicts, it has become important for us to learn how to live, without *the use of alcohol or drugs*, within a society– which relies on a wide variety of rules.

By running Oxford House™ on a democratic basis, members of Oxford House become able to accept the authority of the group because the group is a peer group. Each member has an equal voice in the group and each has an opportunity to relearn responsibility and to accept decisions once they are made.

The opportunity for a house to democratically function requires periodic meetings within the house – at least once a week. Such meetings should be used to resolve any operational or personality problems facing the house.

Any group, in order to function effectively, needs leaders. Misguided leaders can create dependency and usurp self-responsibility. Oxford House™ should rely on democratically chosen leaders, but the leaders must always be but trusted servants. To discourage an excessive dependence on leaders, it is a principle of Oxford House™ that no member should serve in the same office for a continuous period of longer than six months.

TRADITION THREE

No member of an Oxford House™ is ever asked to leave without cause – a dismissal vote by the membership because of drinking, drug use, or disruptive behavior.

During early recovery for alcoholism and drug addiction, some members had to leave an institution in order to make room for an alcoholic or drug addict just beginning the recovery process. Other members were asked to leave halfway houses in order to make room for a recovering alcoholic or recovering drug addict who was ready to move into a halfway house. Only the very fortunate are able to make such a transition upon demand. Each individual recovers from alcoholism or drug addiction at a different pace. All too often, an abrupt transition from a protected environment to an environment, which places considerable glamour on the use of alcohol and drugs, causes a return to alcoholic drinking or addictive drug use.

There is no reason to believe that society as a whole has the responsibility to provide long-term housing within a protected environment for the alcoholic and drug addict. However, there is every reason to believe that recovering alcoholics and drug addicts can do for themselves that which society, as a whole has no responsibility to do for them. Oxford House™ is built on the premise of expanding in order to meet the needs of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts. This principle contrasts sharply with the principle of providing the alcoholic or drug addict with assistance for a limited time period in order to make room for a more recently recovering alcoholic or drug addict.

One of the greatest threats to the sobriety of a recovering alcoholic or drug addict is loneliness. At a time when we acquired a serious desire to stop drinking or using drugs, many of us had lost our families and friends because of our alcoholism and/or drug addiction. Too often, newly recovering alcoholics and drug addicts are faced with the necessity of living alone and of relying solely on contacts with Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous to stay sober. Some are able to keep from drinking in spite of the loneliness with which they were faced. Others are not so fortunate. The alcoholic or drug addict alone begins to compare himself to those members of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous who still have family and friends. Loneliness and self-pity soon lead such individuals back to alcoholic drinking or drug use. With Oxford House™ there is no need for a recovering individual to live in an environment dominated by loneliness.

The only members who will ever be asked to leave an Oxford House™ are those who return to drinking, use drugs, or have disruptive behavior, including the nonpayment of an equal share of household expenses. No Oxford House™ can tolerate the use of alcohol or drugs by one of its members because that threatens the sobriety of all of the members. Neither can an Oxford House™ function if some do not pay their fair share of the costs.

It is obvious why Oxford House™ must strongly protect the sobriety of its other members by asking the drinking member or member using drugs to leave. The line between an Oxford House™ of recovering alcoholics or drug addicts and an Oxford House™ of active alcoholics or drug addicts is a thin one. A member's tenure is absolutely secure in an Oxford House™ as long as he does not drink or use drugs and keeps his share of household expenses up to date and is not disruptive.

TRADITION FOUR

Oxford House™ is not affiliated with Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, organizationally or financially, but Oxford House members realize that only active participation in Alcoholics Anonymous and/or Narcotics Anonymous offers assurance of continued sobriety.

Every Oxford House member attributes his sobriety to Alcoholics Anonymous and/or Narcotics Anonymous. Each Oxford House member, as an individual, considers himself a member of AA and/or NA. Without that, sobriety would be short-lived.

As individual members of Alcoholics Anonymous, Oxford House members are keenly aware of the Sixth Tradition of AA, which is:

An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

In deference to that tradition, Oxford House™ has never sought nor obtained sponsorship from any AA or NA group. Oxford House members value the Sixth Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous (and Narcotics Anonymous) too greatly for themselves to try to get either movement deeply involved in the organizing, financing, or sponsorship of any Oxford House™. However, Oxford House members firmly believe that the Oxford House concept can expand as an independent entity, while fully utilizing the benefits of Alcoholics Anonymous and/or Narcotics Anonymous.

In fact, Oxford House™ creates an environment whereby each member can more fully realize the benefits available from active AA or NA membership. A house full of sober, recovering alcoholics and drug addicts invites informal AA or NA "meetings after the meeting" and each day finds many informal AA or NA meetings before individual members each go off to their regular AA or NA meeting.

An underlying principle of Oxford House™ is that each individual member has the ability to be responsible for himself. Living within an Oxford House™ provides both the opportunity and motivation for all residents to regularly attend AA and/or NA meetings. The example of Oxford House members going to AA or NA meetings on their own is contagious. It has been the experience of Oxford House™ that participation in AA and NA is extremely high in an environment where one individual can see another individual, with the same disease, reaping great benefits from AA and/or NA participation.²⁵

As an organization Oxford House™ is not part of AA or NA. However, the members of Oxford House™ have found only by being active in AA

and/or NA have they found comfortable, long-term sobriety – for themselves and the Oxford House™ in which they live.

²⁴ If a resident's non-attendance at AA or NA meetings is causing problems – for the individual or the house – the residents may vote at a meeting to make meeting attendance for a particular member a condition of living in the house. In this situation the “group conscience” should be the determining factor. It is guided by the fact that the welfare of the house must always come first.

TRADITION FIVE

Each Oxford House™ should be autonomous except in matters affecting other houses or Oxford House, Inc., as a whole.

Each Oxford House™ is self-supporting and self-run. The members of an Oxford House™ assume full responsibility for the operation of the House. The House is theirs and in no way is it part of any other organization. The members themselves in a democratic fashion determine the equal share of household expenses that is charged the members. The rules, which govern the house, are for the most part also made by those who live in a particular Oxford House™²⁶ Such autonomy is essential for the Oxford House system to work.

The reason that each Oxford House™ is independent arises from the very practical consideration that those who are closest to a situation are best able to manage it. If an Oxford House™ follows the democratic principles and traditions of Oxford House, Inc., it should have no difficulty in running smoothly. Those democratic principles will also enable the members of a particular Oxford House™ to take pride in their newfound responsibility.

The charter of each Oxford House™ requires that an Oxford House™ meet certain minimum requirements of Oxford House, Inc. First of all, no Oxford House™ may permit individuals to remain as members if those individuals are drinking or using drugs. Second, an Oxford House™ must follow the democratic principles in running the house. Third, an Oxford House™ must, in essence be a good member of the community by obeying the laws and paying its bills.

Failure to adhere to any of these three requirements would bring the entire Oxford House concept into question. Therefore, it is important that each Oxford House™ meet these minimum responsibilities in order for its charter to be continued.²⁷ Oxford Houses are both autonomous and self-supporting. All Oxford Houses have been careful to avoid undue dependence on government or other outside funds.

Each local Oxford House™ votes annually in convention to elect the national Oxford House World Council. In fact, nine members of the Oxford House World Council not only are elected by all the individual Oxford Houses but also must be a resident of an Oxford House when they are elected. Three of the World Council members are alumni and are elected by the houses and the alumni in attendance at the annual world convention. The organization was deliberately set up to assure that each Oxford House™ is autonomous and that overall policy of the Oxford House movement reflects the will of the majority of individual Oxford Houses.

²⁶Rules against anyone living in an Oxford House™ who uses alcohol or drugs are universal with all houses. For obvious reasons, an individual house cannot establish different rules in this regard because such rules would run entirely counter to the primary purpose and functions of the Oxford House System.

²⁷At this point in the text the original Oxford House Traditions, which were written when the first Oxford House™ began in the Fall of 1975, stated: "At this time, it also appears that Oxford Houses can be totally self-supporting. By that, we mean that a minimum amount of government support or private support may be accepted for start-up purposes." Some states have recovery house revolving loan funds to help a new house get started. This grew out of §2036 of PL 100-690, the federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, and has served as an important catalyst for the expansion of Oxford Houses.

TRADITION SIX

Each Oxford House™ should be financially self-supporting although financially secure houses may, with approval or encouragement of Oxford House, Inc., provide new or financially needy houses a loan for a term not to exceed one year.

Oxford House™ was built on the unique concept that its members should try to expand the number of beds available – rather than turn existing members out of the house after a set period of time. In carrying out that concept, Oxford House-Silver Spring, shortly after it was six months old, put up over \$1,200 in order to start Oxford House-Washington. Later Oxford House-Washington did the same for the start-up of another House. From the beginning, existing Oxford Houses helped new ones get started. Once a new House gets on its feet, it pays back the older Houses, which had loaned it money, and stands ready to help another new House.²⁸

When an Oxford House™ first starts, it is generally necessary for the members to pay a slightly higher rent than what they pay once the House is established. There are two reasons for this pattern. First, there are start-up costs associated with the beginning of any new house such as security deposits, supplies and furnishings.²⁹ Second, when a House first starts it takes some time to fill all the beds. As all the available beds in a House become full the members can decide whether to lower the equal share of household expenses or begin to develop a small surplus. As a practical matter, most houses choose to have a surplus of one month's expenses. Once having obtained that surplus, it then decides whether to lower the weekly equal share of household expenses or to accumulate money for the beginning of a new house – or to do both.

Starting new Houses through the mutual assistance of existing Oxford Houses is a tradition because each House was started with the help of existing Houses and tends to pass on to others that which they received. Once more applications are received than there are beds available, the members of any Oxford House™ will begin to look around for another suitable house. When they find such a house they will bring it up with the other existing Houses and if there is a consensus they will attempt to find the start up money and members to fill the new house. Often several members of an existing House will move into the new House to provide a core group of new members who already know how an Oxford House™ works.

Oxford House, Inc. acts as the coordinating body for providing charters for the opening of new Oxford Houses. It also acts as the coordinating body to help individual houses to organize mutually supportive chapters. Through chapters individual houses are able to share their experience, strength and hope with each other to assure compliance with the Oxford House concept and its respected standardized system of operations.

²⁸ Numerous Oxford Houses have been opened since 1975. Some operate for several years and then, because of expiration of a lease, dissatisfaction with the facilities, or simply the finding of a better location, the members of a particular House will move into a new location. Other Houses often help that type of move as well as the start-up of new Oxford Houses. In both cases, financial assistance is in the form of a loan having a pay back schedule, not to exceed one year, defined up front. (Since 1989, many new Oxford Houses have taken advantage of state revolving loan programs. Repayment from those start-up loans assures the continuation of the revolving fund to enable other new houses to get started – just as repayment of loans to chapters permits the same resources to be used again and again.)

²⁹ For example, the landlord and phone company may require a security deposit and, while furnishings are generally donated, members will often have to rent a truck in order to pick them up. There may also be a need to buy more "staples" such as flour, sugar, coffee, cleaning supplies, etc. when a new House starts up.

TRADITION SEVEN

Oxford House™ should remain forever non-professional, although individual members may be encouraged to utilize outside professionals whenever such utilization is likely to enhance recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction.

It is inconsistent with the Oxford House system of democratic rule to have a professional manager of Oxford House™. Likewise, it is inconsistent with the Oxford House concept to have a requirement placed on members to utilize the services of psychiatrists, doctors, or even the program of Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous except in very special circumstances.

Within an Oxford House group, it is not unusual to find some members who have problems, which cannot be dealt with by the group. In those situations, it is not uncommon for the Oxford House members, at a meeting, to strongly suggest that a fellow member seek professional help. In those situations where a member's behavior is disruptive to the group as a whole, the member may be required to seek such professional help or more self-help meetings in order to avoid being dismissed from Oxford House™.

One can only be dismissed from an Oxford House™ because of drinking, using drugs, non-payment of rent, or disruptive behavior. Members should be careful not to abuse the dismissal process. Every opportunity should be given to a member who needs professional help to see that he obtains it.

Nearly all members of Oxford House™ utilize the AA and/or NA program in order to obtain and keep a comfortable sobriety. However, an Oxford House™ relies primarily upon example for assuring a high percentage of AA and/or NA attendance from its members. As a general rule formal AA or NA meetings are not held in an Oxford House™. However, every member who has maintained comfortable sobriety in an Oxford House™ makes it a practice to attend a lot of AA and/or NA meetings on a regular basis.³⁰ If a house member does not regularly attend AA or NA meetings, the house may – as a group conscience – decide that an individual residence should attend a set number of meetings each week for both the individual's well-being and the well-being of others who live in the house.

Individuals living in each of the Oxford Houses have also been responsible for starting many new groups of Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous having meetings near an Oxford House™. This not only helps those individuals to become more involved in AA or NA, and thereby reap greater individual benefits, but also helps to build strong bonds between local AA and NA groups and Oxford House™.

³⁰ The Spring 1988 Survey of Oxford House members showed that the average member attends six AA or NA meetings a week. Subsequent annual surveys of Oxford House residents all around the country have confirmed that Oxford House residents attend an average of between five and six AA or NA meetings a week.

TRADITION EIGHT

Propagation of the Oxford House, Inc. concept should always be conceived as public education rather than promotion. Principles should always be placed before personalities.

Those who have benefited from living in an Oxford House™ have acquired enthusiasm for the Oxford House concept. In their enthusiasm, they have been anxious to share Oxford House™ with any recovering alcoholics and drug addicts who want to establish an Oxford House™ in their community.

Every Oxford House member stands ready to explain the workings of his House and the benefits derived there to anyone anywhere. No personal gain is derived from any Oxford House™ promotion. It should also be pointed out that Oxford House, Inc. in no way gains from the creation of new Oxford Houses. It has been formed as a non-profit corporation and will continue to operate as one both according to the letter and spirit of the law.

It is not easy to spread the word of a new concept or an old concept with a new twist. Propagation, or spreading the word, of the Oxford House concept is given the highest priority by the members of Oxford House™.

Before spreading the word, an individual Oxford House™ should make certain that it is sufficiently established to undertake public discussion of its goals and mission. The best sales pitch for spreading the word about Oxford House™ is simply the establishment of a sound Oxford House™ and a straightforward discussion of what it is, how it works and why it is needed.

As with any group or organization, there will be some individuals who will be so impressed with the Oxford House concept that they will become "super salesmen." Each super salesman should be keenly aware that the Oxford House concept is one based on principles rather than personalities. The situation should be avoided whereby certain individuals will begin to equate their persuasive qualities with the Oxford House concept. The concept and the standardized, democratic, self-supported Oxford House system of operations itself are far more persuasive than any individual. Be honest and straightforward when sharing the Oxford House concept with others.

The Oxford House concept is a sound one, based on sound principles, and has demonstrated its worth with an established track record. We should spread the word about Oxford House™, but be wary of individuals who place their own personalities before the principles that made Oxford House™ work. Oxford Houses are dedicated to recovery and group support; not individual gain.

TRADITION NINE

Members who leave an Oxford House™ in good standing are encouraged to become associate members and offer friendship, support, and example to newer members.

While no one is ever asked to leave an Oxford House™ without cause, some individuals will simply outgrow living in an Oxford House™. They will return to their families; they may start new families; they may simply move into another living situation.

Once a member has left an Oxford House™, he should be encouraged to become active in the Oxford House Alumni Association. Many alumni members continue to be associated with their former Oxford House™ as an associate house member. The associate member should be encouraged to attend meetings, but a local house may decide that his voting privileges are somewhat less than those who live in the House. Such a restriction of voting privileges makes sense and should not discourage members who leave in good standing from becoming associate members of their former house or chapter.

Gratitude is a feeling that most alcoholics acquire sometime during their recovery process. Often, recovering alcoholics and drug addicts find it difficult to adequately express their gratitude. The alumni member of Oxford House™ is in the enviable position of being able to be of service in an environment in which he has total understanding. The alumni member can offer friendship, support, and an example to the active members of an Oxford House™.

Moreover, the alumni member can often provide assistance in forming new Oxford Houses or in recruiting new members who want to live in an Oxford House™. Above all the associate member serves as an example of one who lived in an Oxford House™ and "made it."

All Oxford Houses should encourage members who leave in good standing to maintain a continuous link with their Oxford House™ experience. The welcome mat should be out to any associate member and contacts between associate members and active members should be encouraged.³¹

To the extent possible each Oxford House™ should keep Oxford House, Inc. up-to- date with the current address of Alumni Members, who have left the House in good standing, so that they can receive the "Oxford Grape" and other Oxford House newsletters.³²

³¹ Many former residents of Oxford Houses, who left their particular house clean and sober, become members of the national Oxford House Alumni Association. The Alumni Association is a fellowship of former Oxford House™ residents who share their experience, strengths and hope in order to expand the Oxford House™ movement and keep it operating and expanding in a way to assure other recovering individuals the same opportunity they have enjoyed.

³² Names and addresses of Alumni Members and inquires concerning the Oxford House Manual[®] should be sent to Oxford House, Inc. 1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 300, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910. A cooperative effort by both alumni and active house members can help keep successful members of Oxford House™ in touch with the Oxford House family. Most Oxford Houses honor their members who leave in good standing by awarding them a certificate of accomplishment and the first year's membership in the Oxford House Alumni Association.

Forms:

The following standard forms and others — time-tested to be helpful in running an Oxford House™ — are printed at the end of this manual:

Membership Application

The standard form used by Oxford Houses to help evaluate the eligibility of applicants applying for membership in an Oxford House™.

Weekly Meeting Report

A simple form to record the minutes of the weekly meeting of the Oxford House™ family members so that the House has an on-going record of the democratic decisions made by the group.

Weekly Financial Reports

A simple form to report who have paid their share of expenses, a list of expenses paid during the previous week, the amount of funds available to the house and a list of regular or unexpected expenses coming due with the next few weeks.

Oxford System Checklist

A simple checklist used by some Oxford Houses to remind members of the Oxford House™ family about the basic steps that have to be taken to make the house run on a financially sound basis.

OXFORD SYSTEM CHECKLIST

MONEY

- **Set up checking account for each Oxford House™**
 - Obtain a federal tax identification number
 - Get name of House and address on each check
 - Require at least two signatures to write a check
 - Record all deposits, checks drawn and service charges
 - Run all income and expenses through account
 - Post monthly statement so all members of House can see
- **Set weekly equal share of household expenses at amount to cover costs**
 - Figure monthly expenses (rent, utilities, staples)
 - Divide by number of beds likely to be occupied
 - Add a small amount to enable House to have a reserve
- **Collect equal share of household expenses in advance**
 - Usually a House sets a rule of one or two weeks in advance
 - Do not let members get behind in equal share of household expenses
 - If a member is two or three weeks behind confront the member at the weekly meeting
 - Discuss hardship cases at a meeting before accepting a new member—sometimes, if a House can afford it, it may be necessary to take into account the fact that an individual just out of rehabilitation will have to get a job in order to get rent money
- **Utilities**
 - Remember electric bill is higher in summer
 - Remember fuel bill is higher in winter
 - Telephone long distance calls must be paid by user
 - Protect against telephone long distance abuse

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

- **Sobriety**
 - Sobriety is the primary purpose of an Oxford House™
 - Make no compromise
 - Frequently go to AA /NA meetings but rely on "attraction"; formal AA/NA meetings should be outside the house

- **Alcohol or drug use**
 - As soon as use is suspected call a special meeting
 - When a majority vote confirms use expulsion results
 - If drunk or high, member should leave immediately
 - If passive, leave the next morning
 - Make no exceptions
 - Establish a readmission guideline of thirty days sobriety
 - Accept the fact that the House welfare is more important than any individual
 - Accept the fact that "tough love" stops relapses

OFFICERS

- **House President**
 - Elected for six month term
 - Must be resident of House
 - Calls and leads weekly and special meetings
 - Cannot succeed himself but can be elected to the same office after six months have elapsed
- **House Treasurer**
 - Elected for six-month term
 - Must be resident of House
 - Responsible for maintaining House financial records
 - Keeps membership informed about financial condition
 - Cannot succeed himself but can be elected to the same office after six months have elapsed
- **House Secretary**
 - Elected for six month term
 - Must be resident of House
 - Responsible for recording minutes of House meetings
 - Keeps pending applications for new memberships
 - Sends thank you notes to contributors
 - Each week must update the main Oxford House website www.oxfordhouse.org for vacancies before the regular weekly meeting
 - Cannot succeed himself but can be elected to the same office after six months have elapsed

- **House Comptroller**

- Elected for six month term
- Must be resident of House
- Collects rent
- Deals with day to day expenses
- Responsible to Treasurer
- Balances books with Treasurer prior to each meeting
- Cannot succeed himself but can be elected to same office after six months have elapsed

- **House Coordinator**

- Elected for six month term
- Must be a resident of House
- Assigns and reviews house chores
- Cannot succeed himself but can be elected to same office after six months have elapsed.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- **Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous**

- Individual members should attend many AA/NA meetings
- Oxford House™ is not affiliated with AA or NA but members of the House know that only active participation in AA or NA offers assurance of continued sobriety
- Let AA/NA members know about Oxford House™ and how it is doing

- **Neighbors**

- Be a good neighbor
- Keep the outside of the House looking good
- Be considerate of where members park cars
- Get to know neighbors and be friendly
- Write thank you notes to those who give furniture and other things to the House

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*This Oxford System Checklist is simply a guideline used by some of the existing Houses. Your House may have better ideas and shorter or longer checklist. Use whatever helps to keep your Oxford House™ running smoothly so that all members have comfortable and long-term sobriety. Remember, however, to keep data about your house up-to-date on the Oxford House website: [www.oxfordhouse.org](http://www.oxfordhouse.org). A good reputation depends upon accurate information.*

## Protecting House and Chapter Finances

The key to making any Oxford House work well is to have a weekly house meeting. Avoid thinking that, "Things are going so well we only need to meet once every two weeks or once a month." Experience has shown that whenever a house fails to have a regular weekly house meeting, trouble is just around the corner. The standard forms in the Oxford House Manual®, the Oxford House Chapter Manual®, and on the website are blueprints or maps for staying on track during a house or chapter meeting. Use them and if you have any questions use the hotline or web contact form to get an answer or explanation from Oxford House World Services. Whenever in doubt about how to use a form or any other issue facing a house, get connected and get an answer.

When an Oxford House is established it gets its own unique Federal Employer Identification Number [FEIN] from the Internal Revenue Service because that number is needed to establish a house checking account. Write the FEIN number in the House Record Book so that future residents in the house will have it. Also, make certain that Oxford House World Services has a copy of the number in their database. When the House Secretary checks into the website to post vacancies, show voluntary departures or expulsions, he or she should verify house data on the World Services database. If the FEIN number is blank, please provide one. Your bank can tell you the FEIN number if your house has misplaced it.

All Oxford Houses require two signatures for checks drawn on their checking accounts. Most Oxford House write checks for paying bills during their regular house meeting. That way everyone knows that the house money – which belongs to all the house members – is being properly spent. Between house meetings, the house checkbook should be locked up in a safe place. A simple lock box can be purchased at office supply stores like Staples, Office Max or Office Depot. The President, Treasurer and one other officer should have a key or know the combination code for opening the lock box. This ritual underscores how important it is to keep house money safe. Remember not to use electronic payments for paying bills except for start- up loan repayment or contributions to Oxford House, Inc. That makes certain that all expenditures on behalf of the house are easily documented and approved by all the house members. Also do not vote the same person as treasurer of house, chapter or state association.

The best safeguard for protecting finances in a house or chapter or state association is to make the financial data available to all members of the house or chapter or state association. Transparency is the best safeguard against stealing by dishonest members. The audit forms and procedures ensure transparency. The Treasurer of the House should report current house finances at each weekly house meeting. The Comptroller should work with the Treasurer to conduct a monthly audit of house or chapter funds to make sure careless mistakes in addition or subtraction do not misrepresent how much money is on hand, paid out or due.

Finally, don't let residents get behind in paying their equal share of expenses. Everyone in recovery must be responsible. Our past addictive behavior often led us to put off doing things until tomorrow. When we were using, "tomorrow" never came; now that we are clean and sober, doing things we need to do today protects our sobriety.

## 1. Tenant Relations - Lease

For Reference, the following is a typical lease used by a Sober Living House in Los Angeles. While the same basic points would be followed in our lease, it would be modified to fit our philosophy of operation:

### **Clean & Sober Transitional Living Lease**

Synergy Sober Living House in Los Angeles is an adult communal sober living environment. The rules at Synergy Sober House are designed to accomplish several things. It can be tempting to see rules, regulations and expectations as restrictive or punishing. But like any of the new tools you've been learning in recovery, you should know that when we make a point to work it, not against it, we benefit from personal growth. It would be impossible to list every rule or situation, so some common sense must be used.

Any group of people living together requires organization and team work in order for the house to function smoothly. Many of the rules relate to these kinds of household details. In addition, and more importantly, each of these rules has a similar "rule" in the outside world of work, family, life, etc.

Breaking of these rules will result in a review and possible discharge from our home and termination of your Tenant Agreement.

Any Resident expelled for any reason will not be permitted to return to the premises as a Resident for a minimum of 5 to 7 days, Resident must have a clean drugs and alcohol test in order to return.

1. Any Resident found with possession or use of any illegal drugs on premises, will not be allowed to return to synergy sober house permanently.
2. Upon expulsion, personal belongings must be picked up within three days or the belongings become the property of Synergy Sober House.
3. Resident's Account must be current in order to receive personal belongings.
4. Prepaid rent monies and security deposits will not be returned to Resident if was asked to leave for rule violation or relapse expelled.

Often, people suffering from dependency have patterns of irresponsible behavior resulting in lost jobs, lost relationships, loss of self-respect, etc. By recognizing and using these rules as positive guidelines, each of us can strengthen our recovery by learning to live orderly and responsible lives.

### **PROGRAM**

Upon admission and at any time, if the staff deems necessary, your room and personal belongings may be searched for alcohol, drugs, or other contraband. Tenants will be subject to random drug and alcohol screenings any time. Any resident found using alcohol or drugs will be immediately discharged and the Tenant Agreement terminated. No refund of rent will be given for any violation of policies.

Leaving overnight requires completing a pass and turning it in to the manager. You may request an overnight pass after being at Synergy Sober Living house for at least thirty days. You are responsible for getting another resident to cover any household responsibilities you may have during your overnight out.

There is no "blackout" time; clients can have their cell phones and automobiles

Curfew Hour is at 11:00 p.m. Monday to Thursday, and 1: am. Friday and Saturday. and you are expected to be home on time. If work hours conflict, prior arrangements must be

made. If you anticipate being late, call your House Manager and advise as soon as possible. Any infractions will result in consequences and possible termination of residency. All violations will be noted in your file.

All residents are required to sign in and out, declaring their destination and approximate date and time of their return, on the Sign Out sheet provided daily. The purpose of Signing in and Out is for telephone courtesy, and in case of emergency to know whose home. Residents are strongly encouraged to exhibit an honest, open and willing attitude. Residents may not bring any valuable items to Synergy Sober Living House. Synergy Sober Living House is not responsible for any items brought by Resident to the house. The use of any unauthorized mood altering chemical is not allowed, either on or off the premises. Continuous sobriety is necessary for residents of Synergy Sober Living. Should a resident resume usage will be terminated immediately from residency. If you think another resident has been drinking or using drugs, inform a staff member so that the staff can confront her in a sensitive way and appropriate action can be taken. Anonymity will be respected.

Physical violence will be grounds for immediate termination. In addition, any language or gestures determined by staff to be consistently abusive or threatening may be grounds for termination. It is expected that residents will not engage in enabling behavior. Illegal activities are not condoned by Synergy Sober Living and are grounds for termination. All residents must be employed, seeking employment, attending school, or doing something conducive to recovery.

Residents are expected to abide by confidentiality and anonymity of peers. What is said in Synergy Sober Living House, Stays in Synergy Sober Living House.

Tenants are expected to be responsible, respectful and considerate of all others and the house at all times.

You are not allowed in another residents bedroom. Only staff and the tenant who is living in that bedroom are allowed in that bedroom.

You may not have any physical contact with another resident or guest on the property, other than a handshake or a 'greeting hug'. Relationships with other tenants may be grounds for termination.

Your pets may not live on Synergy Sober Living property.

### **FURNITURE**

You are not allowed to remove or move any furniture or fixtures from the house or from room to room. Do not bring any of your furniture or it becomes Synergy Sober Living property! All items in the house or hanging on the walls are Synergy Sober Living property. You may bring family pictures or recovery items only. These items are allowed ONLY in free standing frames. No wall hangings allowed. Notify the House Manager if you are donating something to your house with the understanding that the item stays after you move out.

### **HOUSE MEETING**

Our House Meetings are CLOSED meetings. Guests are not allowed.

### **MEDICATIONS**

Prescription narcotic medications are not permitted at Synergy Sober Living. All other prescriptions are allowed only if they are prescribed to you by a doctor and are taken as prescribed. All prescribed medications are to be locked and not shared with any other

Resident. Residents are responsible for taking care of their own prescribed medications. Synergy Sober Living does not administer medications.

Morphine and methadone are not permitted.

You may not consume anything nor bring to the property anything that contains alcohol, including but not limited to, over the counter medications and mouth wash. All residents are expected to provide an accurate accounting of the medications they bring to Synergy Sober Living. All medications must be listed on residents Medication Record with other pertinent information. At any time Staff deems necessary, medications may be counted to confirm the accuracy of dosages taken. Any changes in the dosage must be confirmed in writing or by telephone to staff from the issuing doctor. Do not leave medications out where they are in the open or unprotected. Keep in a dresser drawer or with you at all times. You are responsible for the control of your medications and any deviations are considered abuse. Abuse of medications will be considered a relapse and residency will be terminated.

### **PHONES**

Please answer the phones by saying "Hello". Do not give out any information to the caller. After thoroughly looking for the person, if they are not home, take a message. Write the message on the board including date, time, who the call was for, the caller's name, and phone number.

### **Upon Arrival and Before Admittance**

- Must be sober
- Must agree to all SYNERGY SOBER HOUSE TERMS AND CONDITIONS and sign all the contracts.
- Must make a full payment for the 1st month's rent. Price depends upon your choice of bed and availability.
- Must pay one-time \$150.00 as a Security Deposit.

Rent must always be paid in advance. Residents, who desire to continue their stay, must report to the manager and must pay for the following month at least three days before the last day of their rent cycle. Residents who would like to leave must notify the manager at least 7 days before the last day of their intended departure for a refund of their security deposit. Rent will not be refunded for those residents who leave before completing their commitment of a thirty days minimum. Any resident who leaves owing a balance will have their accounts referred to a collection agency.

1. **NO Smoking or Chewing in the HOUSE!** Smoking and chewing tobacco are permitted outside **only**; There are designated areas in the back of the house, not on the balconies.
2. Food and beverages should handled with care.
3. Hands must be washed before cooking in kitchen.
4. When leaving a room, **shut off all electrical equipment and lights**. Otherwise electrical equipment will be removed from your room.
5. For your safety, try to avoid using any electrical appliances in the bathroom.

6. Report problems with appliances, heat, water or problems in the rooms to staff or House Manager immediately.

7. In order to comply with our Good Neighbor policy, **do not loiter** in the driveway or porch.

8. **LAUNDRY:** Use appliances at your own risk. This Sober Living home provides laundry facilities as a convenience and does not assume responsibility for any damage to clothing or loss. Please do not overload machines. Irons must be unplugged when not in use. Use of Washer and Dryer are permitted during posted times. All tenants must be attentive to their laundry and may not leave their laundry in the machines for more than 15 minutes after the cycle has been completed. Our Sober Living is not responsible for lost valuables or cash.

9. **GUESTS:**

- are welcome in common living areas **ONLY** or patios for no longer than 3 hours and not more than 3 days in a row.
- Guests are expected to be clean and sober and may be subject to submit a urine analysis (UA) tests. They must be clean from all substances.
- NO guests allowed after 9:00PM.

10. **LEND/BORROW POLICY:**

It is against our Sober Living policy for a tenant to **lend or to borrow** other tenants' belongings or money. If you do lend or borrow anything, you do so at your own risk.

11. **PARKING:** You may have only **one** automobile on our property as long as it is in good working order, currently registered and insured. Park your car in designated parking only. **Parking spaces will be assigned on property**, and you may **only** park in your assigned parking area. Vehicles must not leak fluids in driveway.

12. **NOISE LEVEL:** If someone is picking you up, blowing their horn to get your attention is unacceptable. Be courteous to all including your roommates.

TV and stereo in common areas are to be kept at a minimum to be courteous to other Tenants that may be resting. If the volume can be heard outside of the common area, then it is too loud.

13. It is your responsibility to ask for a receipt for all rent payments. All checks are to be made payable to "Synergy Sober House", without exceptions.

14. Tenants may not display, nor wear anything that advertises alcohol beverages, drugs or gang related apparel.

15. Fireworks, firearms, knives, weapons, etc. are **NOT** allowed in your room or at any place on or around the property.

16. Pull all window shades down at night and turn off lights before going to bed.