Center for Community Engagement at Chestnut Health Systems

FINDING RECOVERY HOUSING 101

Recovery housing provides a safe, stable, and substance-free living environment that supports individuals working toward long-term recovery. Quality recovery housing offers more than a place to stay; it provides structure, accountability, peer support, and opportunities to build recovery skills that promote independence and wellness.

Below are some of the most important things to consider when looking for recovery housing:

A Safe and Substance-Free Environment

One of the most important features of recovery housing is a commitment to maintaining a safe, drug- and alcohol-free living environment. Ask about:

- Substance use policies and expectations
- Drug and alcohol screening procedures
- House rules and accountability measures
- How safety concerns are addressed

Residents should feel physically and emotionally safe within the home.

Recovery-Focused Culture

Quality recovery housing should actively support recovery through:

- Peer support and encouragement
- Recovery-oriented house meetings
- Connections to community recovery resources
- Opportunities for personal growth and goal setting

A strong recovery culture helps residents build healthy habits and maintain long-term recovery.

Appropriate Level of Support

Recovery housing is available at different levels of support. Some residences are peer-run with minimal oversight, while others provide structured services and professional staff.

Consider:

- Current stage of recovery
- Need for structure and accountability
- Access to treatment and support services
- Mental health and recovery support needs

Choosing the right level of support can significantly improve recovery outcomes.

Clear Rules, Policies, and Expectations

Residents should receive clear information about:

- House rules
- Curfews and visitor policies
- Fees and financial responsibilities
- Length of stay expectations
- Grievance procedures

Policies should be transparent, fair, and explained before moving in.

Respect for Resident Rights

Recovery housing should uphold the dignity and rights of every resident.

Look for residences that:

- Respect privacy and confidentiality
- Treat residents with dignity and respect
- Have non-discrimination policies
- Provide a process for resolving concerns or grievances

Residents should feel empowered and valued within the recovery community.

Clean, Well-Maintained Housing

The physical environment matters. A quality recovery residence should be:

- Clean and sanitary
- Well-maintained
- Free from hazards
- Comfortable and conducive to recovery

A healthy living environment supports both physical and emotional well-being.

Peer Support and Community

Recovery is strengthened through connection. Ask whether the residence provides:

- Peer mentorship opportunities
- House meetings
- Recovery support groups
- Community engagement opportunities

Positive peer relationships can reduce isolation and strengthen recovery efforts.

Access to Recovery Resources

Quality recovery housing should help residents connect with:

- Recovery support meetings
- Behavioral health services
- Employment resources
- Educational opportunities
- Transportation assistance
- Community support services

Recovery housing should serve as a bridge to long-term stability and community integration.

Ethical and Certified Operations

Whenever possible, look for recovery housing that follows nationally recognized standards, such as those established by the National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR).

These standards help ensure:

- Ethical operations
- Resident-centered practices
- Quality housing environments
- Consistent recovery support services

Certification can provide additional confidence that a residence is committed to best practices.

Questions to Ask Before Moving In:

- What recovery supports are available to residents?
- What are the house rules and expectations?
- How are conflicts handled?
- Are there house meetings?
- What are the monthly fees and what do they cover?
- Is transportation available?
- What community resources are residents connected to?
- Is the residence certified or accredited?
- How are residents' rights protected?
- What level of support is provided?

The best recovery housing is safe, supportive, recovery-oriented, and focused on helping residents build a meaningful life in recovery. Finding the right fit involves evaluating the level of support, quality of the living environment, peer community, resident rights, and access to recovery resources. Taking the time to ask questions and explore options can help individuals find a recovery residence that supports their personal recovery journey and long-term success.

The Center for Community Engagement is funded in full or in part through a State Opioid Response Grant (TI085769) to the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.