

# OXFORD HOUSE, INC.

1010 WAYNE AVENUE, SUITE 400  
SILVER SPRINGS, MARYLAND 20910  
1-800-689-6411

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS from Oxford Houses

**Q.** When an emergency meeting is held to vote on expulsion of a member for using or disruptive behavior, does the member in question have a right to attend the meeting and vote?

**A.** Yes. In a democratically run Oxford House, every member has the right to vote, even if they are suspected of breaking house rules. Emergency meetings should not be held without the member in question being present (unless, of course, this member cannot be found within a reasonable time).

**Q.** Does Oxford House, Inc.'s status of being a "tax exempt" nonprofit mean that individual Oxford Houses don't have to pay state sales tax on house purchases?

**A.** No. All state taxes have to be paid on house purchases. "Tax-exempt" in the case of Oxford House means that Oxford, Inc. does not have to pay federal taxes on income they receive to start Oxford Houses and that contributions to Oxford Houses or Oxford House, Inc. are considered tax deductible by the IRS.

**Q.** When a member is expelled from the house and owes money on phone bills, fines, etc., can the house keep that member's unused rent paid to the house in advance and the security deposit to cover unpaid bills?

**A.** No. By law, unused rent must be returned to the expelled member. It is up to a house vote as to whether or not to return the Sobriety Deposit.

**Q.** Can the house keep an expelled member's belongings in return for unpaid rent or other expenses?

**A.** No. Houses cannot legally keep belongings in lieu of unpaid bills. The goods should be kept in a safe place and if not picked up within a reasonable amount of time, a certified return receipt requested letter should be sent to the individual or his/her family giving them a time (at least two weeks) when the goods will be given away to a nonprofit organization such as Goodwill or the Salvation Army if not picked up. The certified letter will protect houses if an expelled member decides to sue for the belongings.

**Q.** What if a zoning inspector from the city shows up at our door? Do we let him/her in?

**A.** Politely ask the inspector to call the telephone number of the Oxford, Inc. office at (301) 587-2916 before they do an inspection of the house.

**Q.** What if our house receives a document stating that our house is being sold or foreclosed?

**A.** Call Oxford House, Inc. on the toll-free number (1-800-689-6411) and the office will advise you on how to proceed.

**Q.** If our house is moving to another location or shutting down, can we use the security deposit as the last month's rent?

**A. No.** The landlord's security deposit is meant to cover damages to the house only. It is never to be considered as rental payment unless the landlord agrees to this arrangement – in writing – after the walk-through inspection is completed.

**Q.** Can residents have locks on their bedroom doors?

**A. No.** Boarding houses have locks on doors because people rent rooms and do not participate in the managing of the house directly. Oxford Houses are run by the residents and behave like families. The residents share the entire house. By locks, we mean dead bolts, hasps, padlocks or other heavy duty hardware of this type. This does not mean the hardware that is part of a doorknob for privacy (such as in bathrooms).

**Q.** Can an Oxford resident take prescribed narcotics while living in the house?

**A.** There may be occasions when an individual has serious surgery that requires pain medication. There are non-narcotic pain medicines. If the resident must have a narcotic medication, the house group conscience should consider if this might trigger or have a negative affect on any member's recovery. It is suggested that the person having to take the medication have a letter from his/her doctor acknowledging that they are aware of the individual's addiction and that in their professional opinion, there is no other alternative or suitable medication. Certain safety measures should be taken such as a two key lock box. The key holders would be the individual and another safe household member. The medicine must be dispensed as prescribed; no prescription medication should ever be shared or sold to another member.

**Q.** How much time must elapse before a relapser can return to a house?

**A.** The Manual suggested that members should not be readmitted until there is a clear demonstration that he/she has returned to solid sobriety. Each house develops its own rules of what constitutes "solid sobriety". Some accept successful completion of a rehabilitation program; others require at least a month of no drinking or drugging and regular attendance at 12 step meetings as requirements for reacceptance into a house.

**Q.** Can a resident be put on a contract.

**A.** This is a house group conscience, but should only be used as a last resort to help a person to change negative behaviors. The house must vote, including the person in question, and the terms should be documented in the minutes and with the person in question. Contracts are strictly a matter between the house and its members. Oxford House, Inc. does not have a position on contracts. Tough Love Works.

**Q.** Does the President of a house have a vote?

**A. Yes.** The President pays an equal share of rent and has an equal vote like all other residents.