

CHAPTER HOUSING SERVICE COMMITTEE

Chapter Housing Service Committees are made up of outreach individuals in the Chapter who devote a portion of their time for very special service work – helping those individual Oxford Houses in the Chapter that need help. For example, the Chapter Housing Service Committee always helps the new house in a Chapter get off to a good start, as well as existing houses that may encounter challenges.

The Housing Service Committee consists of the Chapter Housing Service Committee Chairperson, the Chapter Vice-Chairperson, and an elected Housing Service Committee Representative from each house in the chapter. The Housing Service Committee provides suggestions and help to the members of a new house or a house in trouble. Since each house is autonomous, the Housing Service Committee always offers suggestions first – not orders. “Bossism” works no better on the Chapter level than it does within an Oxford House. Remember, the Committee’s collective experience, strength and hope is a very powerful voice.

A significant role of the Housing Service Committee is to impress upon the new house – or house in trouble – the importance of meeting the conditions of an Oxford House Charter. Oxford House relies on having a good reputation in the community and one “bad apple” can adversely affect the welfare of Oxford House as a whole. By skillfully carrying the message, the Housing Service Committee can prevent problems from arising and quickly provide suggestions for those problems that do arise.

The Housing Service Committee should avoid acting out on control issues or becoming a court for disputes that may arise among residents of a new or troubled house. Tradition Five clearly states: “Each Oxford House should be autonomous except in matters affecting other houses of Oxford House as a whole.” What that means in a nutshell is that if a house is operating in accordance with its charter and their Chapter guidelines, the Housing Service Committee is limited to making suggestions. On the other hand, if a house is in violation of any of the three conditions of its charter, or otherwise adversely affecting Oxford House as a whole, the Housing Service Committee can take corrective action. Whenever corrective action is necessary it is a good idea to call the Outreach Services Representative for your area or the State Association Housing Services Chairperson, and remember that Oxford House, Inc. must approve any action that infringes upon the autonomy of a house.

Some Pointers:

- Read and be familiar with your Oxford House Manual and Chapter Manual.
- Always schedule a follow up visit after the initial visit. Consistency is important.
- Be accessible - return phone calls.
- Share your experience, strength and hope.
- On your first visit your primary role is to observe and develop a plan of action.
- Encourage members to **identify problems** briefly, and then **concentrate on the solution**.
- **Use your Committee.** All too often the Housing Service Committee Chairperson tries to do everything on his/her own.
- Use your regularly scheduled Housing Service Committee Meeting to help share information, discuss prior house visits and plan future Housing Service Committee activities.

What is the Housing Service Committee?

The Housing Service Committee is a branch of service that works in three areas of Oxford House Operations:

- 1.) Propagation of new Oxford Houses – expanding to meet the needs of the recovery community, (housing the recovering addict/alcoholic).
- 2.) Attracting prospective members of Oxford House – at treatment centers, 12-step meetings, and other referral agencies and sources.
- 3.) Reaching out to existing Oxford Houses through the fraternal domain of the Chapter to help establish the traditional structure/model of Oxford House and to assist with achieving the financial and community stability of each house.

There are three levels of Housing Services within the territory of the State:

- 1.) State Association Housing Services Chairperson
- 2.) Chapter Housing Service Committee Chairperson
- 3.) Housing Service Committee Representatives – one from each house in the Chapter. These Housing Service Committee Representatives, the Chapter Housing Service Committee Chairperson, & Chapter Vice-Chairperson together form the Chapter Housing Service Committee.
- 4.) In addition to these roles of service a Housing Service Committee Secretary should be elected to record the minutes of the Housing Service Committee meetings.

The Housing Service Committee Representatives have the following responsibilities:

- 1.) Participate in scheduled presentations at area treatment centers and other referral sources.
- 2.) Assist in the various tasks of opening a new house as needed.
- 3.) Attend a regular monthly Housing Service Committee meeting.
- 4.) Help their individual house maintain a healthy image in their immediate community.
- 5.) Assist the HSC Chairperson and HSC Committee in troubleshooting problems with houses in the Chapter as needed.
- 6.) Lend support to their individual house in helping house officers realize their expected duties (educate).
- 7.) Inform their individual house about Housing Service Committee endeavors regularly.
- 8.) Represent their house and its consensus opinions to the Housing Service Committee when/if needed.
- 9.) Compile monthly statistics/data about their house to submit to chapter.

The Housing Service Committee Chairperson has the following responsibilities:

- 1.) Hold a regular monthly Housing Service Committee meeting.
- 2.) Generate an agenda for the Housing Service Committee.
- 3.) Provide leadership to the Committee and the Chapter regarding Housing Service issues; delegate to the Chapter Vice-Chairperson when needed.
- 4.) Report to the Chapter, monthly, the outcomes and activities of the Committee.
- 5.) Report to the State Housing Services Chairperson concerns and positions of the Chapter Housing Service Committee.
- 6.) Schedule and participate in treatment center presentations.
- 7.) Spearhead and coordinate the opening of new houses.
- 8.) Encourage all Oxford members to get involved with Housing Service Committee activities.
- 9.) Be an available contact for any house in the Chapter asking for help.

The Housing Service Committee is both a responsive and proactive arm of the Oxford House Chapter and is intended to be the chief modality for growth of Oxford House in the community at large. It is through the legacy of the Housing Service Committee that Oxford House keeps its vitality and profound traditional integrity. The dynamic of each house's relationship with the Chapter is an integral part of our continued success. This is an ideal area of service and a great opportunity to give back some of what you have freely been given.

HOUSING SERVICE COMMITTEE DUTIES

1. Promotions and Presentations
 - a. Presentations at treatment centers and other referral agencies
 - b. Literature
 - c. Display boards
 - d. Hotline

2. Assist Houses in Trouble
 - a. Attend house meetings
 - b. Educate them in proper guidelines
 - c. Help with monthly audits and reports
 - d. Be available for questions
 - e. EDUCATION – teach the members how it works
 - f. Don't tell the members – show them
 - g. Please don't be a dictator – it's their house

3. Open New Houses
 - a. Find a suitable house
 - b. Tour house and determine acceptability
 - c. Negotiate lease
 - d. Apply for loan
 - e. Make flyers to attract new members
 - f. Furnish house – donations

4. Assist the New House
 - a. Attend their house meetings for at least two months
 - b. Teach them to run a house business meeting
 - c. Make up new member information packets
 - d. Set up their files
 - e. Be available to answer questions

HOUSING SERVICE COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE

Each House shall have its own duly elected Housing Service Committee Representative (HSC Rep). The HSC Rep must be a resident of the particular house and shall serve for a term not to exceed six months. A resident may not serve as HSC Rep for two consecutive terms, but may be elected to HSC Rep again six months after the completion of one term.

Housing Service Committee Representative's Duties:

- The HSC Rep will participate in scheduled presentations at area referral agencies; distributing vacancy flyers for their individual house or other houses in the Chapter.
- The HSC Rep will assist in the various tasks of opening a new house as needed.
- The HSC Rep will attend all regularly scheduled Housing Service Committee meetings and other Housing Service Committee activities.
- The HSC Rep will assist the HSC Chairperson and Committee with troubleshooting problems within houses in the Chapter as needed.
- The HSC Rep will inform their individual house about the Housing Service Committee's needs, endeavors and service work opportunities.
- The HSC Rep will represent their house and its group conscience to the HSC Committee as necessary.
- The HSC Rep will lend support to their individual house in helping house officers realize their expected duties.
- The HSC Rep will help their individual house maintain a healthy image in their immediate community.

HOUSING SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON DUTIES

Housing Service Committee Chairperson shall serve a term of one year and abide by the majority vote of the membership.

1. The Housing Service Committee Chairperson shall serve as the chairperson of a committee selected from members of the individual houses within their Chapter. They shall also conduct and record all committee meetings. (A member of the committee itself may be voted in to assume the role of Housing Service Committee Secretary to take minutes of the meeting.) In the event of the Housing Service Committee Chairperson's absence, the Chapter Vice-Chairperson shall assume his/her responsibilities.
2. Hold regular meetings once per month to implement Housing Service business.
3. The Housing Service Committee Chairperson **and** the committee shall be responsible for:
 - A. Approving any new facility, reviewing the lease and assisting in processing of the loan application, (except, when an Outreach Services Representative is responsible).
 - B. Assisting a new house by attending their weekly meetings, teaching the concepts, training the new house officers, and helping in finding new prospective members.
 - C. Assist, however necessary, any house experiencing problems. (Remember, each house is autonomous – the committee is there to help, not control.)
 - D. Promote Oxford House by scheduling presentations with treatment centers, recovery houses, community drug and alcohol centers, corrections, churches, outpatient treatment centers, etc.
4. The Housing Service Committee Chairperson shall report at the monthly Chapter meeting, any activities the committee conducted and what the results were.
5. Shall submit an accurate account of approved expenses and receipts to the Chapter Treasurer monthly.

Oxford House

Chapter Housing Service Committee Chairperson and Committee

HSC Chairperson Duties:

- 1. Form a Committee consisting of:**
 - a. Housing Service Committee Chairperson
 - b. Chapter Vice-Chairperson
 - c. One member from each house – Housing Service Committee Representative

- 2. Educate your Committee**
 - a. Know your treatment centers and other referral agencies
 - b. Know your contacts at each treatment center and other referral agency
 - c. KNOW ABOUT OXFORD HOUSE & pass it on!

- 3. Monthly Planning Meetings**
 - a. Outline objectives
 - b. Assign tasks
 - c. Review previous assignments & discuss results

- 4. Supervise Chapter Hotline**
 - a. O.K. to assign task to someone else – follow up – check on it

- 5. Make Appointments at Treatment Centers**
 - a. Schedule presentations same time & day each month/week
 - b. Schedule several months/weeks in advance

- 6. Monthly Reports**
 - a. Record all activities of the Committee for the month
 - b. Written report
 - c. Read at Chapter meeting
 - d. Copy to Chapter Secretary for Chapter minutes

- 7. Acknowledge and appreciate your committee members!**

- 8. Assist in Regional Workshops**

SIGNS OF A SICK HOUSE

A gradual change occurs as a house moves away from Oxford House principles and moves toward individuals who believe they have a better way of doing things. Oxford Houses function best when the members follow the principles of democracy, financial self-support and zero tolerance for using. Below are listed some telltale signs to indicate a house is not functioning well. Are one or more of these signs occurring in your house? If so, it is time to take corrective action. If you are unable to reach a solution, then it might be time to call in your Housing Service Committee or another house in your area for help.

Signs:

- Someone is using and not asked to leave or may leave for only a few days and the house accepts him/her back.
- Rents are not being collected; the house accepts excuses for non-payment.
- House bills are not being paid in a timely fashion.
- Monthly audits are not conducted on the books.
- House meetings are not being held regularly, or if they are, it is a race to see how fast it can be completed.
- “How goes it” or personal processing time after house meetings is being ignored.
- Every effort is not being made to fill empty beds.
- The house is dirty inside and out.
- There is no participation in chapter or other Oxford House activities.
- Individuals are not working or are not practicing an active program of recovery.
- One or two individuals are running the house.

House Check Up

Adhering to the Oxford House System of Operations is the responsibility of all Oxford House residents. All houses need to check the status of their house regularly. Each member and the house as a whole should read this and take positive action.

1. How is the outside of your house? is it the best in the neighborhood or at least one of the best? Are the lawn and shrubs trimmed, leaves raked, weeds gone, and all unnecessary junk removed? You have several adults in your home, probably more than your neighbors and this is the first impression people have of Oxford House and its residents.
2. Is it time to repaint, wash the walls and really deep clean everything inside? A thoroughly clean house makes for a healthy environment physically and mentally. Does your house need maintenance, caulking in the bathrooms, replacing broken hardware, shampooing carpet, etc.? Take care of your home.
3. Are your house finances in good order and following the Oxford House guidelines? Is your loan current? This repayment makes it possible for other houses to open. Does the house insure the safety of its funds by signing authorized checks (approved by majority vote) at the house meeting only; by giving receipts for all income; by conducting a regularly scheduled monthly audit and reconciling house records when your bank statement arrives; and by sharing all bills and receipt expenditures at your meeting? Do you use a two key lock box for your checkbook? We trust everyone but not their addiction. Good accounting practices keep your house and its individuals healthy.
4. Does everyone participate in house and chapter activities or do they just use your house for cheap living? Do you participate in regular presentations to treatment centers and referral agencies?
5. Are you adhering to the three basic Oxford House charter rules? Is everyone paying his or her equal expense share (EES) on time? Is your house at zero tolerance for alcohol and drugs, including prescribed narcotics? Does

everyone participate in the decision making process in your house?
Remember we have no bosses and each residents vote is equally important.

6. Are your house files and notebooks in good order? Are all your forms in order?
7. Do you make new members feel welcome by walking them through all the house guidelines and physical aspects of cupboard, refrigerator, etc.? Have you tried the "buddy system"?
8. Is everyone attending your weekly house meetings? Are you rushing through the meeting or do you allow time for the democratic process to work? Do you allow ample time to hold a "How Goes It"? This has proven to be one of the critical aspects of a stress free home.
9. Do your house members make recovery, attitude and behavior change a priority by practicing principles in all their affairs? Oxford House is a privilege for individuals in recovery not cheap digs for dysfunctional people.

If you are experiencing difficulties in any of these areas contact your Housing Service Committee Chairperson or outreach services for suggestions on improvement. We call ALL make the time to clean up and sharpen up our homes and our lives for a better chance at long term recovery.

Oxford House is
RECOVERY,
RESPONSIBILITY,
AND
REPLICATION

Oxford House
Presentations to
Treatment Centers/Professional Boards

- Start by introducing yourself and telling about your experience with Oxford House. Keep it brief and if you are comfortable let people know you are a recovering individual.
- Then explain that you are going to show the 60 minutes DVD as it gives a great overview on Oxford House. Mention that the numbers have changed over the past few years and that we have more houses now.
- When the tape is over ask if there are any questions so far.
- At this time discuss some of our talking points, such as the DePaul University NIDA and NIAAA studies' findings, and review the history of Oxford House in your state.
- Go over basics of how Oxford House works: democratic processes, officer positions, business meetings, caring and sharing, relapses and disruptive behavior, sample guidelines, probationary periods, and the interview process.
- If you were presenting to Treatment Professionals this is a time you hand out the directory and accompanying information (ask your outreach worker for promotional literature if you are unsure what to include). Go over criteria and explain that we understand that they may want some clients to go to a halfway house environment and that is understood by us, however Oxford House can be a very valuable place for people who are ready.
- Open for questions.

Some helpful hints:

- ✓ Always dress professionally.
- ✓ Take packets of information with you to hand out.
- ✓ If someone asks a question you are unsure of don't be afraid to tell him or her you will check on it and get back to him or her later.

Presentation Preparation Outline

The more you know about our unique concept and your house operation, the more comfortable you will be in making these presentations, so before you go:

1. Learn about the Oxford House organization
2. Suggested reading:
 - a. The Oxford House Manual
 - b. Oxford House-the model
 - c. Oxford House Q/A
3. Make appointment at treatment center
 - a. Get to know the contact people there
 - b. Call ahead of time to confirm appointment
 - c. Dress appropriately
 - d. Look like you've got something they want
4. Actual Presentation:
 - a. Show the Oxford House 60 Minutes video
 - b. Briefly share your story
 - c. Open for questions
 - d. Bring literature with you
 - Applications
 - Housing lists
 - Traditions
 - "Congratulations" flyer

Smile a lot! This is wonderful 12-step work and you will help in keeping the houses full. Remember: you've got something these people want—SOBRIETY! Share it and have fun!

Oxford House Guidelines for an Open House

Make this fun and not a chore. This is a chance for the whole house to work together, so get everyone involved in some part of it and make sure they attend. It is an opportunity to become part of your neighborhood and community, to promote Oxford House, to eliminate any neighborhood fears, and to share your home and experience with friends, family and recovery family. You can take pride in what you have accomplished.

An Open House should be held within a few weeks of opening. All Oxford Houses are encouraged to have one in their area during the National Recovery Month of September. It is especially important if you are aware of a possible zoning issue.

INVITATIONS

- Invitations should include What, Where, When (date and time), Who and Why
- Design: Use bold lettering, graphics, colors, the above information and keep it simple.
 - Add such information as refreshments, special guests and telephone number to RSVP or call for information. You may want to include directions or a little map
 - Time program will be held
- Mailing Lists: Mail at least 2 weeks prior to event.
- Hand deliver to neighbors (You may want to take either your brochure or the Concepts/Q&A document for people that aren't familiar with Oxford House)
- Include invitations to treatment counselors, probation, governmental officials and AA/NA groups
- Be sure you have approval before you list any person or agency on the invitations

FOOD

- Plan a menu: Could be potluck from other houses, cake & coffee or hors d'oeuvres. Donations work!
- It is nice to have a sheet cake with "Welcome to ____ Oxford House" written on it.
- Arrange to have all equipment and serving items on hand the day before.
- Items you may include: large coffee pot, punch bowl, hot water pot for tea, platters, hot & cold cups, napkins, forks, spoons, creamer and sugar containers.
- Prepare as much of the food as is possible the day before.

DECORATIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS

- Plan your food serving area so that it is not congested
- You may need to remove and rearrange some of the furniture in the food serving area and the area where the program takes place. Remember this is an open house and not everyone needs to be seated. You will want people to mill around and mix.
- It is nice to have a guest book at the door. A spiral notebook is fine. Name- tags are also helpful.

- **Have a table -cloth and flowers on the serving table. Balloons on the outside announce" this is the place."**
- **You may also want directional signs or a Welcome sign.**

PROGRAM

- **Confirm your main guest well in advance. This could be the Mayor or other council member, your county or state drug and alcohol representative or some other outside representative that supports Oxford House.**
- **Send letter 2 weeks prior to event to confirm. Include time they area to speak and location.**
- **Select an M.C. usually your house President or Chapter Chair.**
- **Introduce House members and any other Oxford House Officers i.e.: Chapter, State, World Council, and National. You may have them say a few words, but keep the speech part short.**
- **The most important part of the program is your house member that tells their story as it relates to Oxford House (allow 5 to 10 minutes)**
- **If you have a large crowd you may want to show the "60 Minutes Tape" off and on throughout the day.**
- **Designate members that will show guest through the house and act as hosts or hostesses.**

MEDIA

- **Contact your local newspapers. Generally the best results are from the reporter that covers the local news or living section.**
- **Either by mail, hand deliver or FAX, send them an invitation along with the Oxford House Concept/Q&A.**
- **Don't limit yourself to just the daily newspaper. Contact the weekly, radio(community service spot) and/or TV.**
- **Most media organizations require a follow-up a day or two before the event. A reminder**