

Recovery Housing Legislative Briefing

Presented by the Tennessee Recovery Housing Transformation Team

What is Recovery Housing?

“Sober, safe, and healthy living environments that promote recovery from alcohol and other drug use and associated problems. The purpose is to **provide a safe and healthy living environment to initiate and sustain recovery**—defined as abstinence from alcohol and other non-prescribed drug use and improvement in one’s physical, mental, spiritual, and social wellbeing” (National Association of Recovery Residences, 2012).

Addiction is a Chronic Disease that Requires Long-Term Care - Addiction is a chronic, recurring disease that requires long term management. Acute, episodic treatment alone is generally not effective. Lifestyle changes, including housing, are necessary for most people, and returning to a former neighborhood or living situation often triggers biochemical responses that result in relapse. Individuals need places to live that reinforce recovery skills and provide sobriety supports while the brain heals from addiction.

Recovery Housing Fosters Long- Term Sobriety - It can take 2-3 years after stopping substance use for most cravings to subside. Stays of up to two years in recovery housing may be critical to internalize recovery lifestyle changes, chronic illness management skills, and to build the kind of support systems necessary for stable recovery. Research supports better outcomes with longer engagement in services.

“The progress clients make in treatment frequently is undermined by the lack of an alcohol and drug free living environment supporting sustained recovery...Even if clients are engaged in outpatient treatment, motivated for change, and making improvement, their progress may be mitigated if they reside in a destructive living environment that triggers relapse” (Polcin, 2004).

Housing Services Save Lives - Recovery housing programs provide a supportive environment where skills are recognized and reinforced by sober neighbors and peers. They provide an environment where triggers for substance use are mitigated while coping skills are mastered in a safe environment.

Tennessee is Currently Losing Recovery Residences - Federal policies like Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) “Housing First” have had a negative impact on Recovery Housing. Since 2012, **Tennessee has lost a third of available beds for recovery housing**. Since 2009, funding that supports recovery housing has been cut by 85%. The effects of the HUD Housing First policy implementation in Tennessee has been dramatic in reducing the number of sober living beds in the HUD Housing continuum.

Recovery Housing Saves Money! - Communities benefit when residents are in stable recovery with decreased emergency room and ambulance use, a stable tax base, fewer arrests and incarcerations, reduced child custody cases, and a stable work force. With federal funds for opioid treatment being cut, specifically Opioid State Targeted Response dollars, now is a crucial time to invest comprehensive, reliable funding for recovery housing.

“Reviews of cost-benefit studies suggest taxpayers save up to \$12 for every \$1 spent on adult treatment for addiction, primarily through reductions in criminal justice and healthcare expenses” (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2012).

Recommendations to Improve Recovery Housing

Expand Capacity for Recovery Housing Solutions – To improve recovery outcomes, both fiscal and personnel resources are needed. The TN Recovery Housing Transformation Team supports allocating staff and budget resources specific to recovery housing, including expanded research and collection of data on outcomes.

Fund the Full Continuum of Recovery Support Statewide – Many rural communities lack the resources necessary for stable recovery housing and support services. More funding and options are needed for **all** communities.

Host Statewide Forums to Educate, Inspire, Advocate, and Connect – Fostering communities among those interested in recovery housing is crucial in connecting advocates, people in need, and providers. The TN Recovery Housing Transformation Team is planning to host such forums in each Grand Division in 2019.

Recovery Housing: Stories of Success

Clients currently living in recovery residences in Tennessee communities had the following messages of hope about the role of housing in their overall attainment of long-term sobriety.

“I have struggled with guilt and shame my whole life. I never felt that I was good enough. Being in a recovery house has helped me to stay sober and learn that I can't be so hard on myself, letting go of the guilt and shame I've felt...I am learning to reach out to others, regardless how I feel, making deep and significant connections on relationships.”

“The recovery house I live at has been a safe haven from my disease until I learned exactly what it was and how to manage it.”

“Recovery housing provided the necessary platform for sincere and substantial growth to take place in my recovery. It help me being around people and having their support has made all the difference.”

“Recovery housing has given me accountability to help me make right choices and a safe environment where I can focus on my recovery. The reason is this program has given me the guidance and support that I've needed to remain clean, sober and self-sustaining throughout my entire stay here I could not ask for a greater outcome.”

“The biggest things for me was, going into a recovery house after treatment, gave me a place to go, instead of back home to the same people, places and things. It gave me time to get grounded in recovery, meet people in recovery, instead of going right back into the places and people I was around.”



Who We Are

The **Tennessee Recovery Housing Transformation Team** is made up of recovery housing providers, state officials, community leaders, treatment and housing trade association representatives, individuals who have received recovery housing services, and individuals with lived experience in addiction recovery.

Mission Statement: We envision access to safe, secure, and quality recovery housing as part of a recovery-oriented system of care available in all Tennessee communities.

Further Reading

National Association of Recovery Residences , A Primer on Recovery Residences, September 2012.
www.narroline.com

Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug, and Other Addiction Services, Recovery Housing White Paper, March 2018.
www.taadas.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse, Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide, December 2012. www.drugabuse.gov

Polcin DL, Galloway GP, Taylor K, Benowitz-Fredericks. Why we need to study sober living houses. Counselor: The Magazine for Addiction Professionals. 2004; 5:36–45.

Jason LA, Olson BD, Ferrari JR, & Lo Sasso AT. Communal housing settings enhance substance abuse recovery. American Journal of Public Health. 2006; 96(10), 1727-1729. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2005.070839.