

Supported housing

Housing and housing supports are critical parts of a community approach to improve wellbeing for people in treatment or recovery for opioid use disorder. **Access to safe and stable housing is important to support people with substance use issues** as they start and sustain long-term recovery.

Overview of the models

Housing First is both an evidence-based model to address homelessness and a recovery-oriented philosophy based on the idea that people need access to basic necessities — including a place to live — before they can address behavioral health problems and meet other goals. The Housing First¹ model provides immediate access to housing without common barriers, such as requirements for income or rental history or exclusion based on minor criminal records.

Permanent Supportive Housing follows the Housing First approach, combining long-term rental assistance with case management and connection to additional supportive services to help people with behavioral health conditions who have experienced chronic homelessness.

Recovery housing generally refers to designated housing units often combined with services and social supports designed to meet the needs of residents. Depending on the recovery housing type, residents or paid staff manage the residence and structured clinical services or peer supports may be offered on- or off-site. Recovery residences offer substance-free living environments and use social model recovery principles to drive the overall framework for recovery housing. In recovery housing, recovery is viewed as a social process — the framework uses a peer-centered approach of mutual support, shared lived experiences, involvement in community activities, and healthy relationships. These principles help increase motivation and commitment to recovery, build a sense of purpose, and reinforce accountability to the community and others.

Focus population

Housing First and Permanent Supportive Housing programs are for individuals and families who have behavioral health conditions and have experienced long-term homelessness.

Recovery housing benefits people:

- Transitioning from detoxification, inpatient settings, or other treatment programs
- Seeking social support to maintain long-term recovery and who would benefit from the community and structure of a recovery residence
- Needing a safe and stable environment to focus on recovery²

About us

Healthy Minds Policy Initiative is a nonprofit LLC contracted by the Oklahoma Office of the Attorney General to support the Oklahoma opioid abatement grant program.

EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES FOR OPIOID ABATEMENT

Housing support as an opioid abatement strategy

People experiencing homelessness are at high risk for opioid overdose.³ Opioid use disorder significantly raises the risk of homelessness, and people with substance use disorder tend to experience longer periods of homelessness and are more likely to become homeless at a younger age. These risks are especially evident among veterans, who experience higher rates of both homelessness and opioid use disorder compared to the general population.⁴

The Housing First model has been recognized by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as a best practice for reducing homelessness.⁵ Individuals participating in Housing First and Permanent Supportive Housing programs are more likely to remain in stable housing than those in traditional treatment programs.⁶ Research has also found other positive outcomes for residents in recovery housing, including reduced substance use, a lower chance of substance use relapse, decreased incarceration rates, higher income, increased employment, and better family relationships.⁷

Implementation considerations

Housing First, Permanent Supportive Housing, and recovery housing are part of a continuum of care that includes providing affordable housing and evidence-based treatment for people with substance use disorders, along with FDA-approved, prescribed medications to treat opioid use disorder.⁸ It is illegal to deny housing to people because they are receiving medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD).⁹

Providing case management and coordinating care across housing, healthcare, and social service providers can help promote recovery and long-term stability.

Communities interested in recovery housing should consider the following:

- Levels of support at recovery residences vary. The National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) has defined four levels of support with different criteria for staffing, governance and on-site supports. A recent scan of Oklahoma's recovery housing inventory suggests that Oklahoma may benefit from additional lower-intensity settings and those serving specific populations such as pregnant or postpartum women and American Indian residents. Communities should carefully assess the local level of need and gaps in services for high-need populations when planning for the type of recovery housing to offer.
- Recovery housing entities should meet nationally recognized standards by receiving certification from NARR or Oxford House.
- Recovery residence operators should address barriers to support residents receiving MOUD by ensuring operational policies are in place for medication management and mitigating any misinformation or stigma related to MOUD treatment among residents. Guidance and training to support MOUD in recovery residences is available from NARR.¹⁰



Recovery residences in Oklahoma

In 2024, there were 280 certified recovery homes with 1,830 beds and 159 certified Oxford House recovery residences in Oklahoma.^{11, 12}

EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES FOR OPIOID ABATEMENT

- Some types of funding **cannot** be used to construct or purchase recovery housing units but may be used to support training, integrate case management and other support services into recovery housing programs, and facilitate care coordination efforts, such as assistance with health care, social services, housing transition plans, and other critical services.

Additional reading and resources

[Housing First Implementation Resources](#) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

“Supporting individuals using medications for opioid use disorder in recovery residences: challenges and opportunities for addressing the opioid epidemic,” [a 2020 paper published in the American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse](#).

SAMHSA’s [Best Practices for Recovery Housing](#)

The [Pathways Housing First Institute](#) offers training and other resources for communities considering implementing a Housing First approach

References

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- 6 Baxter AJ, Tweed EJ, Katikireddi SV, Thomson H. (2019). Effects of Housing First Approaches on Health and Well-Being of Adults who are Homeless or at Risk of Homelessness: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomised Controlled Trials. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 73(5): 379-387.
- 7 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Best Practices for Recovery Housing*. Publication No. PEP23-10-00-002. Rockville, MD: Office of Recovery, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2023.
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