

A Community Case for Recovery Housing



Facts About Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

- **SUD is a national issue that requires coordinated, collective action in the community.** Over 108,000 individuals lost their lives to overdoses in 2021, a 15% increase.¹ Although this challenge is a common one, each community is different, and therefore, response efforts must be centered within each community in order to be successful and sustainable long-term.
- **SUD can affect anyone.** Nearly half (46%) of U.S. adults indicate they have experience with substance use problems in their family, with little variation across lines of gender, race, age, education, veteran status, or political affiliation.²
- **SUD is a serious issue, but it can be addressed.** 80% of people who recovered from addiction accomplished at least one major achievement associated with self-improvement and family engagement – getting a new job, completing a university degree, or volunteering.³

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Why Invest in Recovery Housing

Recovery housing is a productive environment for people to recover and support the recovery of others.

“At the end of the day, a recovery house is the last step for an individual before they go out into the community to live their best lives.”

Angel Traynor, Founder and Executive Director of Serenity Sistas

“Being able to see people go through their struggles, and when life shows up, having that support system that they built helps them be more successful...It gives them hope. If they can do this, then I can do it.”

Michelle Eddings, Facilities Coordinator at Recovery Network (Baltimore)

Recovery housing provides individualized guidance and supports the overall wellness of those in recovery.

“[Our goal is] stabilizing people in early recovery and helping them re-enter life. Giving them a place where they can be comfortable with people that are like them and helping them learn the skills that they need...[Those supports include] employment, reunification with children, completing probation, schooling.”

Michelle Eddings, Facilities Coordinator at Recovery Network (Baltimore)

Housing programs on campus show promise too.

“What we’ve learned through CRCs [collegiate recovery communities] is that when you get a program like this, they tend to be way more successful in terms of keeping students sober; we’ve been really successful. There was a 2014 study of all CRC programs and they showed a 0-24% relapse rate with an annual relapse rate of 8.2%...There’s huge advantages: you have a great, positive peer group, there’s high expectations, are fully involved in the local area and they do a lot for their recovery.”

Dr. Jason Whitney, Program Director of ROAR House

Supporting individuals in recovery helps the community.

“Researchers have documented cost savings of \$29,000 per person, when comparing residency in a peer-run Oxford House to returning to a community without recovery supports.”²⁵

Individuals in recovery contribute positively to our economy.

According to the National Safety Council, workers in recovery help employers avoid \$8,175 in turnover, healthcare, and replacement costs and miss 13.7 days less per year than employees with an untreated SUD.⁶ Another study found the percent of individuals in sober living homes who were arrested dropped from 42% six months pre-baseline to 26% at 6-month follow up and 22% at 12 months.⁷

Housing programs combat the stigma that comes with seeking help.

“There’s a stigma to having this problem and there’s also a stigma to getting help for it. One of the things with this program that helps reduce the stigma is that students help each other feel as cool as the typical student. To feel cool and feel successful, you need other people to recognize you.”

Dr. Jason Whitney, Program Director of ROAR House

Make recovery housing a central topic of discussion across the community, with the opinions of those who have firsthand experience at the forefront.

“I want the voice of recovery at every single table where there are people making decisions for us.”

Angel Traynor, Founder and Executive Director of Serenity Sistas

Support Peer Recovery Specialists.

“[An important factor] is having a peer, an ally working directly with them. All of my residential aids are in recovery or are allies, so they have knowledge of it...We’re having a hard time getting certified peers. The state laws are changing...They have to have a high school diploma or their GED, and that’s one of the requirements that has been a huge barrier for us.”

Michelle Eddings, Facilities Coordinator at Recovery Network (Baltimore)

Ways to Support Recovery Housing

Increase the availability of recovery housing.

A study in Ohio claims that there is an “almost limitless” (p. 41) need for recovery housing, but that “the availability of recovery housing resources is severely lacking across communities” (p. 42). It is difficult to anticipate all costs of maintaining a recovery home, and “smaller programs would benefit from funds to assist them in securing and preparing homes for use” (pg. 38).⁸

Support recovery housing owners and operators.

“There are few opportunities for recovery housing operators to connect, share challenges and learn best practices from each other. Providing training is important to help recovery housing providers, who may be unfamiliar at first with the existence of quality standards.”⁹

Build more coordinated, integrated support systems that concentrate resources in recovery houses.

“Recovery homes have traditionally lacked connections to other community-based recovery services and resources, but residents could benefit greatly from such collaboration.”¹⁰

Create housing opportunities that are more equitable.

“Continued housing and support for women and children has always been an issue. There needs to be some types of increased funding for women and children, especially for women with more than two children or children over the age of 12...[And] funding for special populations, such as transgender [people].”

Michelle Eddings, Facilities Coordinator at Recovery Network (Baltimore)

Support policies or legislation that improve access to recovery housing supports.

Establishing a recovery home is complex with federal laws like the American with Disabilities (ADA) and the Fair Housing Act and required compliance on accreditation, business licensure, insurance, rental regulations, zoning, health and safety, fire code, and even human services funding varying state to state and locality to locality.

Address the stigma that makes it difficult for recovery homes to fully integrate into their community.

“It’s really hard to find a landlord in the community that will rent to a recovery house provider because of the stigma – all the time...I just want my participants and the community to see us just like a regular neighbor. I don’t want to be seen as different; I just want to be seen as a community member.”

Angel Traynor, Founder and Executive Director of Serenity Sistas

Champion education and awareness efforts that highlight the benefits of recovery housing.

“I believe that we are a critical piece not only for the individual but for the community. We have been blessed to have very understanding neighbors. I have a good neighbor policy and my participants who live in my houses know about this policy (i.e. rides don’t pull up with loud music/horns, shovel snow for nextdoor neighbors, return empty trash cans, etc.). My participants have a requirement that they have to do a certain amount of service work...[and] I employ several people to make sure those houses are run correctly, to make sure that those residents are not only staying on track, but that their needs are being met.”

Angel Traynor, Founder and Executive Director of Serenity Sistas

“ Research Citations ”

1. NCHS, National Vital Statistics System. Estimates for 2022 are based on provisional data. Estimates for 2015-2021 are based on final data.
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3. Eddie, David and Kelly, John. “People recover from addiction. They also go on to do good things.” Stat News. 2021, May 3.
4. Laudet, Alexandre, Ph.D., et. al., “Collegiate Recovery Communities Program: What do we know and what do we need to know?” J Soc Work Pract Addict. 2014 Jan-March; 14(1): 84-100.
5. Martin, Eric, et. al. “National Overview of Recovery Housing Accreditation Legislation and Licensing: A Guide for Oregon Policymakers.”
6. NORC at the University of Chicago and National Safety Council. “New Analysis: Employers Can Save Average of \$8,500 for Supporting Each Employee in Recovery from Substance Use Disorder.” 2020, December 2.
7. Polcin, Douglas, et. al. “What Did We Learn from our Study on Sober Living and Where Do We Go from Here?” J Psychoactive Drugs. 2011, March 15.
8. Paquette, Kristen, et. al. “Recovery Housing in the State of Ohio: Findings and Recommendations from an Environmental Scan.” The Ohio Council of Behavioral Health and Family Services Providers and the Center for Social Innovation. June 2013.
9. Martin, Eric, et. al. “National Overview of Recovery Housing Accreditation Legislation and Licensing: A Guide for Oregon Policymakers.”
10. Martin, Eric, et. al. “National Overview of Recovery Housing Accreditation Legislation and Licensing: A Guide for Oregon Policymakers.”



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Angel Traynor, Founder and Executive Director of Serenity Sistas, which “offers a haven for the recovering individual, to facilitate a recovering individual re-enter life as a productive member of the community by providing an evidence-based living structure and sober environment.” - Serenity Sistas has been in existence since 2012 and is fully non-profit.
<https://serenitysistas.org/>



Dr. Jason Whitney, Program Director of ROAR House, a recovery housing community for Penn State University students participating in the Collegiate Recovery Community (CRC) Program. The Penn State CRC was started in 2011 and ROAR House in 2015. ROAR House is a set of suites that are provided in an on-campus apartment complex and includes weekly meetings, social events, peer-support seminars, and an alumni network.
<https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/recovery/addiction-recovery-housing>



Michelle Eddings, Facilities Coordinator at Recovery Network (Baltimore), which fosters a treatment environment that is both responsive and respectful to patients and families while providing a culturally competent continuum of evidence based substance abuse, mental health and case management practices. It was one of the first dual diagnosis programs in the city of Baltimore and currently includes 11 houses.
www.recoverynetwork.org