

Safe, stable housing is essential to a person’s health and well-being. For people in recovery from a substance use and/or mental health condition, housing is a vital recovery support¹ and a key social determinant of health.² Various housing models provide supportive environments for people with substance use and mental health conditions. This fact sheet reviews two common models: **recovery housing** and **supportive housing**. Research has shown that these housing models can help people obtain and sustain recovery,³ increase employment outcomes,⁴ and improve housing stability.⁵ They also reduce systemic reliance on costly approaches⁶ such as hospitals, emergency services, and prisons and jails.

	Recovery Housing	Supportive Housing
DEFINITIONS	“Recovery houses are safe, healthy, family-like substance free living environments that support individuals in recovery from addiction. While recovery residences vary widely in structure, all are centered on peer support [and] connection to services that promote long-term recovery.” ⁷	“Permanent supportive housing is permanent housing in which housing assistance (e.g., long-term leasing or rental assistance) and supportive services are provided to assist households with at least one member (adult or child) with a disability in achieving housing stability.” ⁸
RECOVERY AND SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abstinence-based approach, which requires a commitment to not use alcohol or illicit drugs • support for residents who take prescribed medications, including medications for opioid use disorder • social model of recovery,⁹ which emphasizes the setting’s supportive and therapeutic role, the connections and culture among residents, and the integrated peer support¹⁰ • some expected engagement in recovery supports, house meetings, and activities • other services and supports in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • housing first approach, which does not require a person to engage in services, reduce substance use, or otherwise demonstrate their readiness to live independently • voluntary services, which are offered assertively either directly or through linkages • centralized case management • other services and supports in the community
HOUSING STYLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • congregate—shared—living environments • typically in single-family residential homes • four levels of support:¹¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Level 1/Type P (Peer-run) is fully peer-run; often Oxford Houses¹² » Level 2/Type M (Monitored) & Level 3/Type S (Supervised) are monitored or supervised, may have designated resident or staff roles, and provide access to services and supports » Level 4/Type C (Clinical) provides clinical treatment with integrated social model and peer support, such as a therapeutic community • variable length of stay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • independent apartments • voluntary shared housing arrangements, such as apartments or townhomes • should be scattered site across a community, with no more than 25% of supportive housing units in a single building or complex • standard resident leases or subleases • not time-limited, except as defined by standard resident leases or subleases

Shared Values: Promoting Choice and Recovery

Over time, recovery housing and supportive housing have emerged from distinct systems. Even with some differences, both models reflect these *shared recovery values*:¹³

- emphasis on choice and self-determination
- access to voluntary, individualized services and flexible supports
- availability of peer support and valued roles for peers
- opportunities for social connection
- recovery orientation, including support for trauma recovery
- focus on housing stability and homelessness prevention
- commitment to equity and inclusion
- emphasis on quality and best practices
- opportunities for rental assistance

Individuals working across different systems may not have awareness of or access to these and other housing models. This limits equitable choice and access.



Be a Champion of Housing Choice for People in Recovery

- Find out what types of housing are available in your community
- Work toward solutions to improve local housing options
- Educate others about different housing options and how to find them

Learn More

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

SAMHSA's [Dialogue on the Intersection of Recovery Housing & Housing First](#)

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) [Recovery Housing Program](#)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [Choice Matters: Housing Models that May Promote Recovery for Individuals and Families Facing Opioid Use Disorder](#)

SAMHSA's [Permanent Supportive Housing Brochure](#)

Administration for Community Living's [Permanent Supportive Housing](#)

HUD's [What is Permanent Supportive Housing?](#)



This fact sheet is part of an introductory series issued by the SAMHSA Office of Recovery SAMHSA Program to Advance Recovery Knowledge (SPARK). To learn more, visit <https://www.samhsa.gov/spark>

References

1. Mericle, A. A., Miles, J., & Cacciola, J. (2015). A critical component of the continuum of care for substance use disorders: Recovery homes in Philadelphia. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 47(1), 80–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02791072.2014.976726>
2. Mathis, J. (2020). Housing is mental health care: A call for Medicaid demonstration waivers covering housing. *Psychiatric Services*, 72(8), 880–884. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.202000252>
3. National Council for Mental Wellbeing & Opioid Response Network. (2021). *Demonstrating the value of recovery housing: Technical expert panel findings*. <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/resources/demonstrating-the-value-of-recovery-housing-technical-expert-panel-findings>; Tsemberis, S., Kent, D., & Respress, C. (2012). Housing stability and recovery among chronically homeless persons with co-occurring disorders in Washington, DC. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(1), 13–16. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300320>; Prescott, S. (n.d.). *How stable housing supports recovery from substance use disorders*. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. <https://opioidprinciples.jhsph.edu/how-stable-housing-supports-recovery-from-substance-use-disorders>
4. Criss, L., Molloy, P., Polin, S. G., Post, R., & Sheridan, D. M. (2022). *Building recovery: State policy guide for supporting recovery housing*. The National Council for Mental Wellbeing. <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/resources/building-recovery-state-policy-guide-for-supporting-recovery-housing>; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2016). *Employment supports: What permanent supportive housing providers need to know*. <https://files.hudexchange.info/public/resources/documents/Housing-and-Employment-Works-Employment-Supports-What-Permanent-Supportive-Housing-Providers-Need-to-Know.pdf>; Reif, S., George, P., Braude, L., Dougherty, R. H., Daniels, A. S., Ghose, S. S., & Delphin-Rittmon, M. E. (2014, March). Recovery housing: assessing the evidence. *Psychiatric Services*, 65(3), 295–300. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201300243>; Corporation for Supportive Housing. (2013). *Dimensions of quality supportive housing*. https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/CSH_Dimensions_of_Quality_Supportive_Housing_guidebook.pdf
5. Aubry, T., Bloch, G., Brcic, V., Saad, A., Magwood, O., Abdalla, T., Alkhateeb, Q., Xie, E. C., Mathew, C., Hannigan, T., Costello, C., Thavorn, K., Stergiopoulos, V., Tugwell, P., & Pottie, K. (2020). Effectiveness of permanent supportive housing and income assistance interventions for homeless individuals in high-income countries: a systematic review. *The Lancet. Public health*, 5(6), e342–e360. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2468-2667\(20\)30055-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2468-2667(20)30055-4); National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *Permanent supportive housing: Evaluating the evidence for improving health outcomes among people experiencing chronic homelessness*. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25133>; Polcin, D. L., & Korcha, R. (2017). Housing status, psychiatric symptoms, and substance abuse outcomes among sober living house residents over 18 months. *Addictive Disorders & Their treatment*, 16(3), 138–150. <https://doi.org/10.1097/ADT.0000000000000105>
6. Vilsaint, C. (2019, October 16–18). *A systematic review of the scientific literature on recovery residences* [Conference presentation]. 2019 Addiction Health Services Research Conference, Park City, UT, United States. <https://medicine.utah.edu/sites/g/files/zrelqx356/files/migration/media/corrie-vilsaint.pdf>; Hunter, S. B., Scherling, A., McBain, R. K., Cefalu, M., Briscoe, B., Mcconnell, W., & Batra, P. (2021). *Health service utilization and cost outcomes from a permanent supportive housing program: Evidence from a managed care health plan*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4374-2.html; Raven, M. C., Niedzwiecki, M. J., & Kushel, M. (2020). A randomized trial of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless persons with high use of publicly funded services. *Health Services Research*, 55(S2), 797–806. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.13553>
7. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Recovery. (2023). *Best practices for recovery housing* (Publication No. PEP23-10-00-002). <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep23-10-00-002.pdf>
8. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.) *What is permanent supportive housing?* <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-program-components/permanent-housing/permanent-supportive-housing>
9. Mericle, A. A., Howell, J., Borkman, T., Subbaraman, M. S., Sanders, B. F., & Polcin D. L. (2023). Social model recovery and recovery housing. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 31(5), 370–377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16066359.2023.2179996>
10. National Council for Mental Wellbeing. (2021, October). *Demonstrating the value of recovery housing: Technical expert panel findings*. <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/resources/demonstrating-the-value-of-recovery-housing-technical-expert-panel-findings>
11. National Association of Recovery Residences. (n.d.). Levels (types) of recovery residences. <https://narronline.org/standards>
12. Jason, L. A., & Ferrari, J. R. (2010). Oxford house recovery homes: Characteristics and effectiveness. *Psychological Services*, 7(2), 92–102. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017932>
13. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Recovery. (2023). *The intersection of recovery housing & housing first - A dialogue on collaboration and partnership*. <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/intersection-recovery-housing-housing-executive-summary.pdf>; Homeless and Housing Resource Center. (2022, June). *Whole-person care for people experiencing homelessness and opioid use disorder: Toolkit part 2*. <https://hrctraining.org/knowledge-resources/toolkit/3139/homelessness-and-oud-part2>; Paquette, K., & Pannella Winn, L. A. (2016). The role of recovery housing: Prioritizing choice in homeless services. *Journal of Dual Diagnosis*, 12(2), 153–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15504263.2016.1175262>

Visit [samhsa.gov/spark](https://www.samhsa.gov/spark) for more information and email us at spark@c4innovates.com to join our e-newsletter for updates on SPARK trainings, events, products, and publications.

781-247-1724



[samhsa.gov/spark](https://www.samhsa.gov/spark)