

Oxford House Chapter Manual[©]

*"Sharing The Experience, Strength, and Hope of Oxford Houses For
The Common Good"*

Oxford Houses are a network of self-run, self-supported recovery houses for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts. Each Oxford House is autonomous and holds a weekly democratic house meeting to assure the smooth operation and financial viability of the house. On a monthly basis, the houses in a geographic area get together to share their common experiences in order to assure that all Oxford Houses operate in a way that preserves the good name of Oxford House and encourages more experienced houses to help newer ones

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The Chapter Committee of Oxford House World Services Council reviews the policies, procedures and text of the Oxford House Chapter Manual on an on-going basis. If you find any errors or have suggestions of ways and means to improve the Chapter organization, the manual, or the forms, let the Chapter Committee know. The toll-free telephone number to get in touch with the World Service Council Chapter Committee is 1-800-689-6411. The facsimile toll-free number is 1-888-689-6411.

Chapters

The primary purpose of each Chapter is to assure that each Oxford House operates in a way that is consistent with the Oxford House Traditions and system of operations as described in the Oxford House Manual[©]. The guidelines for making a Chapter work are set forth in this manual. Chapters have become the front-line building blocks of quality control and mutual assistance for the continued success of all Oxford Houses. Experience has shown that both the individual houses and Oxford House, Inc. as a whole are more likely to succeed and last if every house belongs to a Chapter.

When there were just a few Oxford Houses there was no need for Chapters because each Oxford House President was a member of the Board of Directors of Oxford House, Inc. and met once a month in order to share the experience, strength and hope of each house. By 1988, the number of individual Oxford Houses had become so great that it became difficult to have a meeting at which everyone would get a chance to speak. Some longed for the "old days" when there were fewer houses and the combined group of houses was smaller. Others recognized that the success of Oxford House made it clear that there would be more and more houses and there was no turning back the clock.

Oxford House, Inc., a non-profit corporation, belongs to the residents of Oxford Houses nationwide. Residents democratically make their voices heard through the individual houses, the Chapters, the World Council and the Oxford House, Inc. Board of Directors. The legacy of Oxford House is forever secure as long as the concept, Traditions and system of operations is assured by control of its members through participation in an effective democratic system of organization.

Chapters are important links in the effective democratic system of operation guiding Oxford House as a whole. They are one way to solve the problem of keeping combined groups of houses small enough to permit each house to share its experiences, strengths and hopes with other houses. This manual describes how chapters work and are organized to strengthen the world network of Oxford Houses.

Principles

Three principles underlie the formation and operation of Oxford House Chapters and explain why individual Oxford Houses group together to start Chapters:

Oxford Houses share their experience, strength, and hope with each other.

The common welfare of Oxford House requires that all Oxford Houses follow the conditions of their charter.

Oxford House Chapters foster expansion of the number of Oxford Houses in order to provide safe, sober, supportive living environments for a greater number of individuals recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction.



Experience, Strength, and Hope

The principle of Oxford Houses sharing their experience, strength and hope with each other is an extension of a basic principle underlying the twelve step self-help programs of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts -- AA and NA. While an individual's "program" benefits by helping others through sharing of individual recovery experiences, so too Oxford Houses benefit from the individual houses in an area sharing their successful (or unsuccessful) experiences with each other. Since every Oxford House has as its primary purpose achievement of comfortable sobriety and follows a standardized system of operations, a common ground exists for houses to learn from each other.

Each Oxford House operates democratically and is financially self-supported following the Oxford House Manual[©] and the traditions designed to perpetuate the house as an alcohol and drug-free recovery environment. The similarities among houses range from day to day operations such as maintaining financial integrity through weekly reports concerning the house checking account to expulsion of residents who relapse. Living problems range from personality conflicts to keeping a house clean. Often the way that one house resolves such problems helps another house having similar problems to resolve them. The sharing of experiences among houses helps all Oxford Houses to become safe havens to assure comfortable recovery from addiction -- which is the sole reason for Oxford House.

Experience: this is what happens in our house.

Strength: this is what we do to solve our group living problems, to keep our house socially and financially strong and to gain individual long-term, comfortable sobriety.

Hope: someday there will be enough Oxford Houses so that every recovering alcoholic and drug addict has the opportunity to live in an Oxford House to attain comfortable, long-term recovery.



Common Welfare

Oxford House works because it has a system of operations and traditions which permit a group of recovering individuals to live together in a self-run, self-supported recovery environment. It also relies upon having a good reputation for providing an alcohol and drug free living environment in which recovering individuals are able to learn how to develop responsible lifestyles without using either alcohol or drugs. That means that each individual Oxford House must adhere to the conditions of its Charter -- namely --

- 1. The house must be self-run on a democratic basis;*
- 2. The house must be financially self-supported; and*
- 3. Any resident who drinks alcohol or uses drugs must be immediately expelled.*

In a nutshell, every Chapter has a responsibility to assure that its member houses are in compliance with the conditions of their charters. For example, if one house is not paying its bills or not expelling residents who relapse, it reflects badly on all Oxford Houses. In order to protect the good reputation of Oxford House, a Chapter has to intervene promptly if a member house has gone astray. Most Oxford Houses adhere to the conditions of their Charters but, in the rare case when a house does not, the Chapter is guided by the principle that the common welfare of Oxford Houses is of paramount importance and should take the corrective actions suggested in the Oxford House Chapter Manual.

Oxford House Tradition Five

**Each Oxford House should be autonomous
except in matters affecting other houses of
Oxford House, Inc., as a whole.**



Expanding To Meet The Need

The third Oxford House Chapter Principle is that Oxford House relies on the concept of expansion rather than limiting the time that a member can live in an Oxford House. Tradition Three of Oxford House underlies this Chapter principle --

No member of an Oxford House is ever asked to leave without cause -- a dismissal vote by the membership because of drinking, drug use, or disruptive behavior.

Because the number of applicants for every Oxford House always exceeds the space available, very few individuals would ever benefit from living in an Oxford House except for the principle of expansion. The principle of expanding to meet the need of other recovering individuals has been at the heart of the Oxford House experience right from its earliest days.

Once an Oxford House has been established it quickly becomes full. New applicants, no matter how deserving, are not able to be accepted for membership in a house because there is no room. After a few months, some of the members in the house will look around to rent another house because each recovering member of an Oxford House wants other recovering individuals to be able to share the benefits of living in a supportive, alcohol and drug free Oxford House.

Oxford House Tradition One

Oxford House has as its primary goal the provision of housing and rehabilitative support for the alcoholic and drug addict who wants to stop drinking or using and stay stopped.



Starting A Chapter

An Oxford House Chapter may be started in two ways. First, two or more Oxford Houses may form a Chapter by deciding to become a Chapter and notifying Oxford House World Services Office of their action. The World Services Office will acknowledge the notification by sending each house in the new Chapter a kit including a copy of the Oxford House Chapter Manual[©] and a certificate of recognition. Second, a Chapter may subdivide into two Chapters whenever the number of individual Oxford Houses in the existing Chapter reaches twelve (12). When a Chapter subdivides, the existing Chapter should notify the Oxford House World Services Office and the Oxford Houses forming the newly created Chapter will be sent a new Chapter kit.

The reason for forming Chapters in the first instance is to benefit from the principles embodied in the Chapter concept. The reason for keeping Chapters small is to give each Oxford House the full benefit of being part of a Chapter. Experience has demonstrated that when the number of Oxford Houses in a Chapter becomes too large the Chapter lacks cohesiveness and should be divided into two chapters. If a Chapter wants to have more than 13 or 14 houses, a chapter officer should call Oxford House World Services Office to discuss the reasons for not subdividing into two chapters. Sometimes, when a Chapter has a number of fairly new houses, it is reluctant to subdivide into two chapters until the group of houses gains some experience.¹

Membership by an individual Oxford House in a Chapter is important because each Oxford House understands the importance of sharing experience, strength and hope among houses. Because a Chapter may take corrective action if an individual house is not adhering to the conditions of its charter, every house should take an active role in Chapter business. The World Services Office can be consulted to make certain that all options are considered when corrective action is necessary to get an individual house back on track.

Oxford Houses that participate in a Chapter help themselves and Oxford House as a whole. Chapter membership reflects both gratitude and common sense.

¹See the last two Q. & A.'s in Appendix I [P. 22].

Chapter Officers

Chapters operate democratically just like Oxford Houses do. In order to conduct meetings and get things done Chapters elect the following officers:

- Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Chairperson, Housing Services Committee

The officers should be elected once a year and be guided by Tradition Two in the Oxford House Manual[©] even though the term of office is for a year rather than six months:

All Oxford Houses are run on a democratic basis. Our officers are but trusted servants...

The duties of the officers are similar to the duties of officers in an Oxford House but the term of office is one year. The Chairperson of the Chapter leads the monthly meetings. He or she opens the meeting by having the minutes of the last meeting read by the Secretary. Then the Treasurer reports on the balance in the Chapter's checking account and the dues paid by the individual houses. Then each member house reports on (1) the house financial condition and (2) the number of vacancies in the house. The Chairperson of the Chapter Housing Services Committee reports. Then special problems of houses are discussed. Then new Chapter applicants are considered and finally other new business is considered and the meeting is adjourned in the usual way.²

The Treasurer is responsible for maintaining the Chapter checking account and reporting income and expenditures to the rest of the Chapter members. The Vice Chairperson serves in the Chairperson's absence and serves on the Chapter Housing Service Committee. (See "Chapter Housing Service Committee" beginning at page 11.)

When a Chapter is small it is not unusual that more than one officer may come from the same house. In larger Chapters, the group usually spreads the offices around so that various houses are represented among the Chapter officers.



² Appendix I [PP 21-24] further describes the role of a Chapter and see page 24 for chapter officer duties and chapter meeting procedures.

Chapter Self-Support

Chapters generally do not have very many expenses -- but they do have some. For example, notices of Chapter meetings involve postage, copies of manuals and other material must be paid for, and special events such as food at Chapter meeting and so forth cost money. Moreover, many Chapters keep a reserve fund with which to make emergency loans to houses which need them.³ To raise money for miscellaneous Chapter expenses each house is charged dues based on the number of members in each house.

The Chapter also has a moral obligation to provide Oxford House, Inc. with a portion of its dues in order to defray the cost of the Oxford House World Services Office. This is generally an amount in addition to the amount from individual houses, although some houses have decided to provide their monthly support of the Oxford House World Services Office through their Chapter. In those cases, the Chapter simply makes sure that the monthly dues are large enough to permit it to forward a monthly check to the Oxford House World Services Office equal to \$50 per month per house.⁴ In such cases, the Chapter should note that the “monthly contribution includes contributions from the following houses (list by house).”

From time to time, some Chapters make special assessments for the purpose of keeping state loan repayments current for houses within their state that have failed. Such contributions are voluntary but reflect the gratitude members of Oxford Houses and their desire to protect the good name of the Oxford House program. Repayments to the state revolving funds are in the interest of all Oxford Houses and help assure that start-up funds are available to expand the local Network of Oxford Houses to give other recovering alcoholics and drug addicts an opportunity to develop comfortable sobriety.

“Oxford House is built on the principle of self-help.”



³Every Chapter should be careful in making loans to houses in trouble to avoid becoming an “enabler” of sloppy or irresponsible operations by a troubled house. However, there are times when a chapter loan is justified. See “The Oxford House in Trouble” in this manual for guidelines in making loans to houses.

⁴ The \$50 contribution per house is the amount agreed upon by the delegates at the First World Convention on October 9, 1999.

Housing Service Committee

Chapter 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 which need help. For example, the Chapter Service Committee always helps the new house in a Chapter get off to a good start. One or more members of the Chapter Service Committee will attend the regular weekly business meeting of the new house for a few months in order to offer guidance about how Oxford House works.

The Chapter Service Committee generally consists of the Vice Chairperson of the Chapter, a Chairperson of the Committee itself and three or four individual volunteers from other houses in the Chapter. The five or six-member Chapter Service Committee provides suggestions and help to the members of a new house or a house in trouble. Since each Oxford House is autonomous the Chapter Service Committee always offers suggestions -- not orders. "Bossism" works no better among houses than it does within an Oxford House.

The help needed by new houses or houses in trouble generally falls into three categories:

- (1) operation of weekly house meetings;
- (2) getting utilities hooked up and working; and
- (3) managing finances and paying bills.

A new house may initially need help in recruiting residents so that the house can be filled quickly to help pay the costs of the house. The Chapter Service Committee can help spread the word and teach house residents how to make contact with rehabilitation facilities and within the recovery community in order to get applicants for membership in the house. The new house may also need assistance in establishing a checking account for the house and setting up records to keep track of house finances.⁵ For example, two signatures are always needed to write checks on the house account and all expenditures by the house must be run through the house checking account in order to make certain that all members of the house know exactly how house money is being spent.

⁵The World Services Office will probably have sent a start-up kit to the new house that includes an application for the Federal Tax Identification Number (necessary for setting up the house checking account) and specific instructions about how the checking account for the house should be established. If not, the Chapter Service Committee should give the Oxford House World Services Office a telephone call to get the material necessary for the new house to start operations on the right foot.

Every new house will tend to have a shake down period before it operates smoothly -- which is the primary reason that the Chapter Service Committee volunteers to sit in on meetings as advisors for the first few months. All houses democratically operate following the Oxford House Manual[©] but it takes guidance for a new group to understand how democratic procedures assure a smoothly operated house.

The first step in a new house involves the election of house officers -- each of whom must learn the responsibilities of their office. A common pitfall in the early days of a new house is that some individuals will tend to be bossy. Democracy works best when leaders make suggestions and set good examples rather than give orders. The Chapter Service Committee members have experience which often provides valuable lessons about how leaders in a democratically run house can provide effective leadership. Sharing the experiences and growing pains of other houses provides guideposts for new leaders in a new house.

A significant role of the Chapter Service Committee is to impress upon the new house -- or the 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 effect the welfare of Oxford House as a whole. By skillfully carrying the message, the Chapter Service Committee can prevent problems from arising and for those problems that do arise the Committee can quickly provide suggestions for solving them. However, the Chapter Service Committee should avoid becoming a super-power or high 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, Inc., as a whole." What that means in a nutshell is that if a house is operating in accordance with its charter, the Chapter Service Committee is limited to making suggestions. On the other hand, if a house is in violation of the any of the three conditions of its charter, the Chapter Service Committee can take corrective action. Whenever corrective action is necessary it is a good idea to call the Oxford House World Services Office to let them know or to get advice.

Charter Conditions

- 1. Each house should be democratically self-run,**
- 2. Each house should be financially self-supported, and**
- 3. Each house should immediately expel any resident who returns to using alcohol or drugs.**



The Oxford House in Trouble

Sometimes an individual Oxford House "gets off track." For example, vacancies may last so long that the finances of a house become insufficient to pay all the bills, or personality problems may develop which disrupt the smooth operation of the house. The elected officers of the house in trouble should ask the Chapter Service Committee for help at the first sign of difficulty. Even if they do not, the Chapter Service Committee (or any member of the Chapter) should volunteer to help at the first sign of trouble in a house. Early signs of trouble often include: unfilled vacancies, late payment of rent, late payment of the loan repayment, or rumors in the recovery community that a resident of a house is drinking or using drugs. Whenever, any of these problems occur the Chapter Service Committee should promptly find out what the real situation is.

The Chapter Service Committee follows a three step process for helping a house in trouble: (1) the problem is assessed and solutions are evaluated for suggesting to the house in trouble, (2) members of the Chapter Housing Committee meet with the leaders of the house in trouble to discuss the nature and extent of the problem, and (3) an appointment is set up for members of the Chapter Service Committee to attend a house meeting to discuss ways to get the problem solved. The house in trouble should schedule a house meeting and work with the Chapter Service Committee to develop and implement a plan of action to solve the difficulty facing the house. Only if absolutely necessary to keep the house going, should the Chapter make a loan to the house in trouble. If a loan is made it should be approved by a majority of the houses in the Chapter and a promissory note should be executed between the house and the Chapter. The note should be signed by at least two officers of the house and include a schedule for repayment of the loan to the Chapter. See the last form in the appendix for a copy of a promissory note.

Seldom has intervention by a Chapter Service Committee failed to result in correction of the problem facing a house. Just like a well-functioning family can help each other to solve problems affecting one member of a family, the problems facing an individual Oxford House can be solved by the Chapter Service Committee working with the house in trouble as part of the Oxford House family.

**By Working Together Oxford Houses Protect the
Good Name of Oxford House as a Whole!**



Chartering New Oxford Houses

Any group of six or more recovering individuals may receive a Charter for a new Oxford House. The group may be either men or women. Oxford House does not provide charters for co-ed houses. Each recognized Oxford House Chapter and Oxford House, Inc. may issue a Charter. When a Chapter wants to issue a charter, it must process the paperwork through the Oxford House World Services Office. This assures that world records are complete and provides Chapters with the knowledge and expertise of the World Services Office. Only the World Council of Oxford House, Inc. can revoke a Charter.

Generally, an Oxford House applies for a Charter once a suitable house has been lined up. A Chapter should ask the applicant questions concerning the steps they have taken to get a suitable house. Are there enough bedrooms? Are there enough bathrooms? Does the house have enough common space for the group to have room to have common space for members to socialize with each other? How is the parking situation?

If the applicant has not yet found a suitable house, the Chapter should take the time to provide advice about how to find a house. In general, every applicant -- who is on the road to recovery -- should be given encouragement rather than discouragement and a Chapter should issue a Charter unless the establishment of a new house in an area clearly is not necessary.

Once the Charter is issued the Chapter should notify Oxford House, Inc. so that a formal Charter certificate can be issued. The new house should be assigned to the Chapter approving the Charter so that it can get off to a good start by sharing the strength, experience and hope of existing houses in the Chapter. The Chapter should make the Oxford House Manual[©] available to the new house and the Chapter Service Committee should provide start-up assistance to the new house.

Great consideration must be given to the fact that even though the Oxford House System of Operations appears easy to understand for those who have been following it, the new group needs a thorough education about how it works. That thorough education requires hands-on assistance for the first several months. Sometimes a member of an existing house is willing to move into a new house. Generally the "old-timer" stays in the background and suggests that the new houses elect officers from other "newcomers." This avoids undue reliance on the "old-timer" and permits the "newcomers" to learn responsibility first hand. At the same time the "old-timer" is there to offer helpful advice on getting the new house started down the right track.

If an "old-timer" is not available to live in the new house, the Chapter Service Committee should make certain that an experienced volunteer attend the new house weekly meetings for several months. The volunteer should offer helpful advice but leave the decision making to the residents of the new house. Again sharing experience is the best tool for guiding a new house to the track which will result in success.

Chapters will know when the demand for Oxford House beds is greater than the supply -- the member houses of a Chapter will have first hand count of the number of applicants they are getting and too many applicants for too few spaces is a signal that another house is needed. Everyone should keep their eyes open for suitable houses and find members interested in helping to start a new house. The group conscience of the Chapter can provide a powerful force for helping to keep expansion in pace with demand.

In his or her heart every resident of an Oxford House realizes that there will never be "too many" Oxford Houses as long as there are still alcoholics and drug addicts enslaved to addiction. Therefore, only in the most unusual circumstance should a Chapter consider closing an Oxford House. Sometimes when a house is in trouble because there are too many vacancies in a particular house or the Chapter as a whole, it is tempting to think about reducing the supply of recovery beds. Such temptation should be carefully examine before a Chapter acts on it. The first test of whether or not it is right to close a house is to honestly ask each other if we doing all we can to recruit residents. Are treatment providers in the area being visited on a regular basis to carry information about Oxford Houses to those newly in recovery? Are newcomers at 12-Step meeting being educated about the values of living in the supportive recovery environment of an Oxford House? Are all the houses in the Chapter actively looking for new residents to fill the beds in the house that has vacancies? Are older residents in existing houses willing to move into a house that is having a hard time filling vacancies?

The reason these hard questions are necessary is that in most cases an area does not have enough recovery beds to serve all those who could benefit from living in an Oxford House. Therefore, it is important not to give up on a dwelling that is already an Oxford House.

Fancy buildings alone do not make an Oxford House a functional family; only the residents themselves make an Oxford House a great place to live and master comfortable sobriety.



Revocation of Oxford House Charters

The Oxford House Charter is the official document that makes a self-run, self-supported recovery house part of the Oxford House network of houses. The Charter is provided free of charge but it carries with it the responsibility for the new house to comply with three conditions:

1. The house must be self-run on a democratic basis;
2. The house must be financially self-supported; and
3. Any resident who drinks alcohol or uses drugs must be immediately expelled.

Only Oxford House, Inc. through its World Council can revoke a Charter but the Chapter also has an affirmative obligation to make certain that each member house adheres to the conditions of its Charter. Generally any violation of Charter conditions is spotted quickly by the other houses in a Chapter. The most serious Charter violation is the failure of a house to immediately expel any resident who has relapse into using alcohol or drugs. Likewise a clear cut problem is apparent whenever a house gets behind in paying its bills. In both of those cases the Chapter Service Committee should immediately intervene and help a house in violation of its Charter to correct its problems.

Sometimes personality differences within a house will cause one or more residents to complain that a house is not being run on a democratic basis. A Chapter is wise to ask several questions in order to determine the facts of a particular case when such an issue arises. For example, is the house in question having its regular weekly business meeting? Have the officers of the house been duly elected or is another election in order because the officers have served for the six month limit suggested in Tradition Two of the Oxford House Manual? A first step to providing corrective action for a house in trouble is to get the facts straight up front. Armed with the facts the experience of the Housing Service Committee and the other Oxford Houses in a Chapter can usually bring effective help to a house to correct any problem it may have with democratic procedures, financial self-support or maintenance of an alcohol and drug-free living environment.

If corrective action is not possible, a Chapter may want to recommend to Oxford House, Inc. that the Charter of a house be revoked. Only when corrective action is not possible should a Chapter decide to recommend that the charter of a local Oxford House be revoked. When such an action of last resort is taken, Oxford House, Inc. through its World Council

will independently investigate the facts surrounding the house in question and promptly act upon the Chapter's recommendation. There is a presumption that a Chapter has a proper basis for requesting a Charter revocation and generally the recommendation of the Chapter will be followed but only if corrective action is not possible. The knowledge that there are many alcoholics and drug addicts still using should always force us to do everything possible to keep as many Oxford House recovery beds in existence as possible. Getting a house “back on track” is always better than closing a house and thereby reducing the number of possible beds that exist in the local, national and world network of Oxford Houses.

Every Oxford House realizes the importance of Tradition Five in the Oxford House, Inc. By-Laws.

Tradition Five

Each Oxford House should be autonomous except in matters affecting other houses of Oxford House, Inc., as a whole.

It is the autonomy provided by Tradition Five that makes the network of Oxford Houses truly self-run. Oxford House is a “Bottom-Up” democracy with the Chapter and the World Council elected by the individual houses. The entire organization belongs to the men and women in Oxford Houses. Once a house receives a charter it has rights equal to the rights of every other Oxford House. It is the protection of this autonomy that allows every resident of every Oxford House to gain comfortable sobriety through the acceptance of new values, behavior and assumption of individual responsibility.

Oxford House residents can pursue comfortable sobriety with a true sense of long-term security. No individual is ever asked to leave an Oxford House without a specific cause. No Oxford House Charter is ever revoked without a specific cause.

Keeping In Touch

Oxford Houses can remain part of a strong and successful world-wide family if every Chapter keeps in touch with the Oxford House World Services Office. The Chapter Secretary should send the Monthly Chapter Report⁶ to the World Services Office each month. Doing this will not only develop linkage between all the members of the Oxford House family but will also be an important step in recognizing those individuals who voluntarily move out of an Oxford House clean and sober. These individuals -- the clean and sober Oxford House alumni -- provide good role models for all who follow them. They are the successes of our family.

Having the name and new address of the residents who move out of an Oxford House on good terms will enable the Oxford House World Services Office to recognize the successful Oxford House residents and enroll them in the World Tradition Nine Club.

<p>TRADITION NINE</p> <p>Members who leave an Oxford House in good standing are encouraged to become associate members and offer friendship, support, and example to newer members.</p>

The World Services Office will recognize the individuals who have moved out of an Oxford House on good terms as follows:

- **Provide the successful former resident with a Certificate that thanks him or her for being a successful Oxford House resident.**
- **Provide the successful former resident with Tradition Nine Club Membership.**
- **Place the individual on the *Oxford Grape*[®] mailing list so that he or she can continue to get a copy of the organization's newsletter.**

The sharing of information between Chapters and the Oxford House World Services Office keeps the entire Oxford House family in touch with each other. Together, the men and women in individual Oxford Houses can continue the expansion of the Oxford House World Network to enable every recovering individual to enjoy the benefits of living in an Oxford House for a long enough time to become comfortable with sobriety.



⁶ A copy of the Monthly Chapter Report is printed in the form section of this manual. Copies of the forms can be obtain from the Oxford House World Services Office.

Chapters and Oxford House, Inc.

Oxford House, Inc. is the umbrella organization for all Oxford Houses and all Chapters. It belongs to the individuals living in Oxford Houses. The twelve-member World Council is elected from among Oxford House residents⁷ and establishes broad policy for the operation of Oxford Houses nationwide and the World Services Office. Oxford House, Inc. through the World Council retains exclusive jurisdiction over the revocation of individual Oxford House Charters. That is the best assurance that each Oxford House is autonomous. However, whenever a Chapter reports that an individual Oxford House is in violation of its Charter, the World Council takes the matter very seriously and may revoke a Charter.⁸ It may also revoke a Charter, acting on its own, whenever it finds a violation of the conditions of a charter. The house that is not in violation of its conditions of Charter has no fear and the World Council acts on behalf of all houses in compliance with their charters.

Oxford House Headquarters sends each new Chapter a Certificate of Recognition and an operations kit which includes a copy of the Oxford House Chapter Manual[©] and various forms for keeping Chapter records. Once recognized each Chapter is able to get advice and counsel from headquarters to assure smooth operations of all Oxford Houses that are members of the Chapter. On a regular basis the Chapter reports to Oxford House World Services concerning the demographics of member Oxford Houses, vacancies and financial condition of individual houses within the chapter. Many Chapters also use their good offices to forward the monthly contributions to Oxford House, Inc. to help defray the costs of the World Services Office.⁹ Working together the Chapters and Oxford House, Inc.

⁷ To be eligible for election to the World Council an individual must be living in an Oxford House at the time of election. Once elected to the Council the individual serves a full term whether or not he or she continues to live in an Oxford House as long as he or she would be eligible to live in an Oxford House, i.e. has not relapse into using alcohol and drugs.

⁸ Oxford House, Inc., through the World Council or World Services Office, often makes a last ditch effort to get the house whose charter has been suggested for revocation to make changes necessary to coming to compliance with the conditions of the Charter. However, the presumption is that the Chapter had undertaken such efforts to no avail and therefore revocation is justified.

⁹ At the First Annual Oxford House World Convention the delegate houses voted to change the dues system from one in which the houses paid both Chapter dues and Oxford House, Inc. contributions to the Chapter. Effective January 15, 2000 each house sends a \$50 a month contribution to Oxford House World Services. This standard contribution per house preserves the “one house, one vote” concept of Oxford House. Many Chapters have reduced the monthly dues individual houses were paying to the Chapter. Other Chapters have kept the monthly Chapter dues at \$2.25 per resident per month in order to have sufficient funds to hold events for all residents of houses in the Chapter to celebrate sobriety. These events range from “pot-luck” dinners to monthly dances to organizing bowling leagues.

keep the reputation and effectiveness of Oxford Houses high and to continue the policy of financial self support and democracy from the bottom - up.

From time to time, Oxford House, Inc. will encourage Chapters to increase expansion efforts in order to better meet the needs of the recovery community in their geographic area. Having experienced the benefits of living in an Oxford House all Oxford House members are anxious to make Oxford Houses available to any recovering individuals who wants the benefits of living in a safe, supportive recovery environment.

Oxford House, Inc. is the sole organization which can authorize changes to the Oxford House Manual[©], the Oxford House Chapter Manual[©], or the Oxford House Traditions. While Oxford House, Inc. publishes the monthly newsletter for all Oxford Houses -- the Oxford Grape, individual Chapters may publish a local newsletter for their member houses and the recovery community. If a Chapter or group of Chapters within a State issues a newsletter, it should send a copy to the Oxford House World Services Office.



Appendix I of this Manual is a Question and Answer Section that discusses the roles of a chapter, the duties of chapter officers, and outlines the procedures for a chapter meeting. Copies of forms include a form to apply for chapter recognition. Each chapter should send a recognition form to Oxford House World Services. There are also copies of forms for keeping minutes at a chapter meeting and for sending periodic reports to the World Services Office. A Monthly Chapter Report should be sent by the Chapter Secretary to the Oxford House World Services office each month; and the Chapter Annual Report of Resident and House Activity should be send to the Oxford House World Services Office once a year.

For more information about Oxford Houses, forms or the Oxford House Chapters write or call:

Oxford House World Services
1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 400
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Telephone (301) 587-2916

Fax (301) 589-0302

Hotline (800) 689-6411

Appendix I

Q. What is an Oxford House Chapter?

A. An Oxford House Chapter is an official group of individual Oxford Houses which meets monthly and provides a vehicle for individual houses to share their strength, experience and hope.

Q. How many individual Oxford Houses does it take to form a Chapter?

A. Three, usually located within a few miles of each other, although there have been Chapters made up of houses geographically separated by 100 miles or more.

Q. Does a Chapter have officers?

A. Yes. There is a Chapter Chairperson, a Vice Chairperson, a Treasurer, a Secretary and a Housing Service Committee Chairperson.

Q. How long can officers of a Chapter serve?

A. One year. Unlike officers of an individual house who are limited to terms of six months, Chapter officers may serve one-year terms.

Q. Does a Chapter have any permanent committees?

A. Every Chapter has a Housing Service Committee. That committee is the only required committee and serves the important purpose of helping new houses get started and existing houses who are having problems. The committee is generally made up of individuals who understand how Oxford House works and have the desire to help other houses gain what their house has achieved. Serving on this committee gives a house member the opportunity to share his or her experience, strength and hope. It is also rewarding to help another house to get or stay on track. The members of the Housing Service Committee should include individuals from several houses in the Chapter. It is also helpful if they hold or have held offices within their own house.

Q. Where are Chapter meetings usually held?

A. At one of the individual houses in the Chapter. Usually the Chapter meeting is held at a different Oxford House each month so that all Oxford House residents in the chapter can learn from each other about the things to do -- or not do -- in operating an Oxford House.

Q. How is a Chapter meeting opened?

A. The Chairperson calls the meeting to order and asks one of the persons at the meeting to read the three Oxford House Chapter Principles (page 4 of the Chapter Manual) . After one of the Principles has been read in its entirety, the Chapter meeting begins

Q. How are Chapter meeting conducted?

A. Chapter meetings are conducted just like house meetings. After the reading of a Tradition, the Chairperson asks the Secretary to read the minutes of the last meeting, and asks the Treasurer to give the financial report. Second, the Chairperson goes around the room to call the roll of the houses and asks each house representative two questions” (i) what is the financial condition of your house, and (ii) does the house have any vacancies? Third, new business ranging from the opening of a new house to having a Saturday night dance is discussed and decided by the group. Each house has one vote in a Chapter Meeting.

Q. How often do Chapters meet?

A. A Chapter meets once a month unless some emergency situation requires getting together immediately.

Q. What reports should a Chapter submit to Oxford House World Services Office?

A. A copy of the Monthly Chapter Central Office Report (printed as Appendix VI) should be sent to the Oxford House World Services Office. It helps the World Services Office to recognize successful Oxford House “graduates” and to form a strong world alumni group.

Q. When should a Chapter apply for recognition by the Oxford House World Services Office?

A. A Chapter should apply for recognition as soon as it begins to think about forming because recognition is provided quickly and the start-up kit can insure that the Chapter gets off on the right foot.

Q. When should a Chapter divide into two chapters?

A. Whenever a Chapter becomes too large to effectively operate it should divide into two chapters -- usually 13 or 14 houses in a Chapter is about as big as a Chapter can handle without becoming too big to be effective.

Q. How does a Chapter divide?

A. The best way is to list all the houses according to the date the houses started with the oldest house at the top of the list. Go down the list marking “A” by the first house on the list; “B” next to the second house on the list; “A” by the third house; “B” by the fourth house and so on. All the “A” houses would become one Chapter; all the “B” houses would be the other Chapter. That way makes certain that each of the new Chapters will have both older and newer houses as members. It also avoids splitting Chapters on the basis of friendships or some other reason that could weaken the Oxford House system of operations. The money in the original chapter is divided equally with each new chapter taking half. Both Chapters should apply for Chapter Recognition and notify the Oxford House World Services Office of the division.

Notes on the Housing Service Committee

Each Chapter establishes a Housing Service Committee. The roots of the Housing Service Committee are both *ideological* and *practical*.

On an ideological basis, the Housing Service Committee is based on the twin values of gratitude and service which are part of the important 12-Step self-help programs that are so important to those recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction. “We are able to help ourselves by helping others” is not only a basic golden rule but is an important value that helps those of us in recovery to enforce the belief that our own lives will be better if we learn how to develop comfortable sobriety. Within the Oxford House context we all realize that by living in a well functioning Oxford House we are able to buy the time and support we need to develop long-term sobriety without relapse. Knowing this, we realize that helping other Oxford Houses function well helps other individuals and helps keep the World Network of Oxford Houses to grow and stay strong.

On a practical basis, the Housing Service Committee includes individuals who have had experience in the operation of an Oxford House. By sharing their experience and practical know-how, the members of the Committee are able to provide good advice and support to Oxford Houses having problems. In addition to practical knowledge, a Housing Service Committee brings moral support a problem. Moral support makes it clear to the residents of a troubled house that they are part of the Oxford House family and do not have to face difficult challenges alone.

Knowing the roots of the Housing Service Committee helps keep the Committee from getting off track. As teachers, friends and family, the members of the Committee are able to avoid becoming big shot bosses. Instead, they carry out their work in a firm but caring manner.

Notes on Chapter Outreach

Chapter outreach consists of two parts: (1) outreach to Oxford Houses, and (2) outreach to the recovery community. The outreach to Oxford Houses is to help Oxford House as a whole family to function well. The outreach to the recovery community is to let members of 12-Step programs, treatment providers and the community at large know how Oxford Houses work and how they provide the “missing link” in the recovery process. Presentations, quiet conversations and the maintenance of a vacancy list are a few of the ways that Chapters can let the community at large learn about who we are and what we do.

After a Chapter has been organized for a few months, it is a good idea to have a workshop to teach all residents of Oxford Houses about Oxford House and how to provide good information about Oxford House to those in the recovery community and the community at large. Call the World Services Office to learn how to organize a good workshop.



Chapter Officer Duties and Procedure for a Chapter Meeting

Chapter officers are elected for a term of one year. There is a limit of one continuous year in any single chapter office. To be eligible, the officer must be living in a house at the time of election. If an elected individual leaves a house involuntarily, he or she is automatically out of office and a special election is held to full out the term of office. If a Chapter officer leaves a house voluntarily, he or she should serve out his or her term of office.

Duties of Chapter Chairperson: The Chapter Chairperson is chief executive officer for the Chapter. He or she makes certain that the Chapter meets once a month -- usually rotating the site of the meetings among the several houses in the Chapter. He or she is elected for a one-year term and must be an officer of a house that is in the Chapter at the time of election.

Duties of Vice Chairperson: The Vice Chairperson helps the Chairperson and conducts meetings when the Chairperson is unavailable.

Duties of Treasurer: The Treasurer should collect dues from the houses and deposit them as soon as possible in the Chapter Checking Account. The Treasurer and President should be required signatures on the Chapter Checking Account. All checks to pay bills or send contributions to the National Central Services Office should be written at the Chapter Business Meeting. The Treasurer should make sure to send the checks out the day after the meeting.

Duties of Secretary: The Secretary should take notes at the meeting using the standard forms. He or she should sent the monthly report to the National Central Services Office. He or she should also remind each house of the time and place for the monthly chapter meeting.

Duties of Housing Service Committee Chairperson: He or she should assemble the appropriate committee members to go to a house in trouble or to get experienced residents to help new houses get started. The Housing Service Committee usually meets more often than the Chapter because it meets whenever there is a problem to be solved.

Order of Business for Chapter Meetings:

1. Chairperson calls the meeting to order.
2. "Three Principles " from the Oxford House Chapter Manual are read to open meeting.

3. Chapter Secretary calls the roll of houses in the Chapter. During the roll call the Chapter Secretary asks the house to (i) report the number of vacancies, and (ii) state the financial condition of the house.

4. Asks Secretary to read the "Minutes of the Last Meeting." After the minutes are read the President asks: "Are there any changes or corrections?"

5. If there are changes suggested in the minutes of the last meeting, the Chairperson asks for a motion to accept the change. Once a motion is made it must be seconded. Once made and seconded the Chairperson asks who is in favor of the motion and who is opposed. (Each house has one vote in a Chapter meeting.)

6. If there are no changes in the minutes of the last meeting -- or once changes are rejected or approved -- the Chairperson asks for a vote to approve the minutes of the last meeting.

7. The Chairperson asks for the Treasurer to give the financial report for the Chapter. After the report, the President asks the group if there is any discussion or questions. The Treasurer should follow the Financial Report Form in making his or her report.

8. The Chairperson then brings up "old business" -- one item at a time. Old business is business which had been discussed at a previous meeting. Each matter should be open to discussion and decision by the group. During old business the Chairperson should ask for a report from the Housing Service Committee.

9. Following old business, new business may be considered. Each item of new business is discussed and where appropriate motions made and votes taken.

10. When business has been concluded the Chairperson calls for motion to adjourn and states when and where the next chapter meeting will be held.

