PREVENTION FIRST
Substance Use Treatment Training
& Technical Assistance Center (SATAC)

HOUSING & RECOVERY

Why Housing Matters in Substance Use Recovery

Key Takeaway

Housing itself isn't treatment, but providing safe, stable housing creates an environment in which recovery is more feasible and sustainable. People experiencing homelessness face higher risks of substance use, overdose, health issues, and interrupted treatment. Stable housing can enhance treatment participation, reduce stress, improve safety, and promote lasting recovery.

Housing as a Recovery Support

Research and policy recommendations increasingly recognize housing as a critical recovery support because stable housing can:

- Improve treatment engagement and retention
- Reduce exposure to high-risk environments
- Increase access to healthcare and social services
- Decrease emergency department utilization
- Reduce justice-system involvement
- Promote overall health, wellness, and community integration
- Support recovery capital and quality of life

Housing Options Along the Recovery Continuum

Emergency & Low-Barrier Shelters

Purpose: Immediate safety and shelter

Key Features

- Improve treatment engagement and retention
- Reduce exposure to high-risk environments
- Increase access to healthcare and social services
- Decrease emergency department utilization

Best Practice

- Provide access regardless of treatment participation or abstinence status
- Maintain overdose response protocols and naloxone availability

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

Purpose: Long-term housing stability for individuals with chronic homelessness and significant support needs

Key Features

- Affordable housing
- No time limit on residency
- Voluntary supportive services
- Housing not contingent upon treatment participation or abstinence

Benefits

- Increased housing stability
- Improved access to healthcare
- Better treatment engagement opportunities

Recovery Residences

Purpose: Recovery-supportive living environments

Examples

- Recovery homes
- Sober living homes
- Oxford Houses
- Therapeutic communities

Benefits

- Peer support
- Accountability
- Recovery-oriented culture
- Skill-building opportunities
- Connection to treatment and recovery services

Important Consideration: Recovery residences should support access to evidence-based treatment, including FDA-approved medications for addiction treatment when clinically indicated.

Recovery-Oriented Housing Principles

Person-Centered: Housing services should respect individual goals, strengths, and preferences.

Risk Reduction: Programs should support safety, engagement, overdose prevention, and improved health outcomes.

Medication-Inclusive: Residents receiving medications such as buprenorphine or methadone should not be excluded solely because of their prescribed treatment.

Recovery Support Integration
Housing programs should connect residents to:

- Treatment
- Peer support department
- Employment supports
- Healthcare
- Transportation
- Community resources

Questions Providers Should Ask

When working with individuals with SUD, consider:

Housing Stability

- Where are you currently staying?
- Is your housing safe and stable?
- Are you worried about losing your housing?

Recovery Supports

- What recovery supports do you have where you live?
- Would recovery housing be helpful?

Health & Safety

- Do you have a safe place to store medications?
- Do you have access to naloxone?
- Do you know what to do in an overdose emergency?

Service Connections

- Have you been connected to local housing resources?
- Are transportation or documentation barriers preventing access?

Action Steps for Community Providers

Treatment Programs

- Routinely screen for housing instability.
- Develop partnerships with housing providers.
- Include housing goals in recovery planning.

Recovery Community Organizations

- Maintain updated housing referral lists.
- Educate housing partners on recovery support services.

Housing Programs

- Support access to medications for addiction treatment.
- Implement overdose prevention practices.
- Strengthen connections with healthcare and behavioral health providers.

Communities

- Expand affordable housing options.
- Increase recovery housing capacity.
- Promote housing-first and recovery-supportive approaches.

Core Message

Recovery is strengthened when people have a safe place to live, access to care, supportive relationships, and opportunities to thrive. Housing provides the foundation upon which recovery can grow.

Source: American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), Housing's Role in Addressing Substance Use and Facilitating Recovery (January 2025). [asam.org]

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