

Best Practices for Recovery Housing Operators During COVID-19

WELCOME
NEW
RESIDENTS

Introduction

The global coronavirus pandemic has raised unique questions from recovery housing operators. Recovery homes come in different sizes, operate in numerous types of buildings, and provide varying levels of support to residents. The purpose of this document is to provide information that can help operators determine the most appropriate strategy for their individual operation. We are in unprecedented times.

The situation changes rapidly, and it is possible that new recommendations and resources may become available.

This document is not intended to replace the advice of state or local health departments or legal counsel. This document is intended to be reviewed in coordination with other quality standards and best practice recommendations that have been made by the National Alliance of Recovery Residences and Ohio Recovery Housing, the Ohio state affiliate of NARR. The exact implementation of guidance and recommendations will vary based on Level of Support available in the recovery home. It is important to keep track of any public health orders that may be issued by the state or your local government. It is important that you become aware of these orders and help explain what these orders mean to your residents.

The following are strategies and practices that can be used to help reduce the risk of spread of coronavirus as homes seek to welcome new residents during the coronavirus pandemic.

Establish a relationship with your local health department

Efforts around testing, distributing personal protective equipment, and other efforts are being arranged at the local level. [Find your local health department](#). Let them know that you are operating a congregate living environment and what your needs are. Keep in contact and communication with them and ask to be included in any alerts or other communications that they send out.

Review any protocols for welcoming new residents into the home with them and learn if you can establish a process to have any potential new residents tested for COVID19. This may not be possible in all areas. It is important to remember that if a person receives a negative test that does not mean that the person can not contract COVID19 in the future. Additionally, the test could have been administered at a time when they were too early in their infection and may test positive later during their illness.

Educate residents prior to moving in about the living environment

All recovery homes should educate potential residents about the living environment that is available in the home prior to them agreeing to move in.

Be sure to explain any potential areas of concern that may exist related to COVID19 including

- Shared kitchen and common areas
- Shared bathrooms and showers
- Shared bedrooms
- Shared appliances and other tools
- Visitor policies and protocols
- Policies and protocols for residents leaving and return to the home for work, social gatherings or other purposes

Similar to the way recovery homes need to explain any house rules or expectations that help keep the environment safe and free from illicit drugs or alcohol, be sure to explain any requirements or practices that are designed to help stop the spread of disease, including

- Your communicable disease policy
- Your visitor policy, including where visitors may be in the house and expectations around wearing masks
- Your cleaning schedules and chores
- Your expectations around resident handwashing
- Your expectations around residents wearing masks when out in the community
- Your plan for what would happen if they, or another resident were to become sick

Being sure to explain all these items to residents prior to moving in can help residents understand if the living environment is appropriate for them.

Demonstrate your practices during orientation

New residents can get overwhelmed when moving into a new environment. When residents arrive to move in, it is important to remind them of your organizations protocols regarding reducing spread of disease including

- Showing residents where cleaning supplies are stored
- Demonstrating cleaning practices and procedures, especially on high touch surfaces
- Informing residents on what they should do if they run out of cleaning supplies or handwashing supplies
- Showing residents where any personal protective equipment such as masks are stored
- Informing residents on what they should do if they run out of masks or other PPE
- Show residents areas where visitors are to be welcomed

Have new residents use extra caution and be physically separated from other residents

Testing for COVID19 may be limited for some time. Homes may ask residents screening questions about their physical health and potential exposure to COVID19. However, there are people who contract COVID19 without knowing it.

For organizations that operate multiple properties, consider using one property for new residents. While living in this property new residents will be expected to take extra precautions, including

- not having visitors
- remaining physically distant from others at all times
- not leaving the property unless it is for an essential activity

For organizations that do not have multiple properties, they can consider reserving a private bedroom and bathroom specifically for new residents. New residents will take additional precautions, including

- staying in their room whenever possible
- remaining physically distant from other residents at all times
- not leaving the property unless it is for an essential activity
- not having visitors

New residents can remain connected to their new housemates virtually by using apps and programs. Residents can join house meetings using virtual meeting software, meals can be delivered to bedrooms, schedules can be created to help introduce residents to one another, and everyone can participate in physically separate games and other group activities. After two weeks, new residents who do not show signs of illness can join the rest of the home.

Ask residents daily about presence of symptoms

Residents should be asked daily about presence of symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath. If a resident develops symptoms, the resident should contact their primary health care provider and follow their instructions. The home should also contact their local health department and notify them of the situation and follow their instructions. If a resident is having trouble breathing or showing any other signs of an emergency medical situation, contact 911 and inform the operator of the residents' symptoms and if the symptoms may be possible COVID19.

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