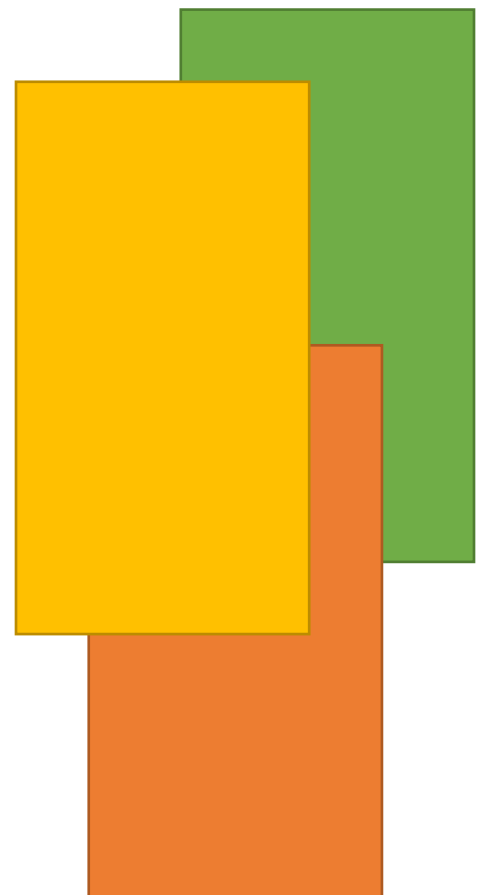




Ohio Recovery Housing

## Best Practices for Supporting Residents Returning to the Community from Incarceration

OHIO RECOVERY HOUSING | 2021



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## Introduction

The Ohio Recovery Housing Best Practice Guide for Supporting Residents Returning to the Community from Incarceration was developed in coordination with many organizations and individuals who want to provide a helpful resource to recovery housing operators.

Recovery housing and the criminal justice system often intersect. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, “an estimated 65% of the United States prison population has an active SUD [Substance Use Disorder]” (<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/criminal-justice>) In many communities across Ohio, recovery housing programs work with their local courts, jails and prisons to house residents returning to the community following incarceration. This population of reentry residents in recovery housing faces many additional barriers and needs additional supports to meet their basic needs and reconnect with their communities.

As such, this guide serves to provide you with helpful information and resources for providing safe, sober environments and recovery supports for people in reentering their community following incarceration. Ohio Recovery Housing aims to continuously update this resource with new and relevant content to ensure that evolving best practices continue to be implemented in recovery houses across the state.

While Ohio Recovery Housing hopes you consider the information listed in the following toolkit, please recognize that the advice given is not legal advice. If you are concerned about legal matters, please contact your local legal aid office or private 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 (NARR), and Ohio Recovery Housing, the state affiliate of NARR. You may also feel free to contact us at any time for information, short-term technical assistance or support. We know that stigma and discrimination cannot be eliminated overnight - the tools, strategies, and best practices in this guide are designed to help you as you address these issues over time.

## Race and the Criminal Justice System

It would be remiss to write this guidance without first acknowledging both the historic and systematic injustice against black and brown people in the criminal justice system. While black people make up only 13 % of Ohio's population, roughly 34% of people in jail and 45% of people in prison in Ohio are black (<https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-ohio.pdf>). Additionally, black and brown people face discrimination and other barriers to accessing high quality prevention, treatment and recovery support services. We see this reflected in recovery housing., According to Ohio Recovery Housing's 2021 resident data, 79% of residents living in recovery housing are white.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide tools for operators to support residents who are currently or have previously interacted with the criminal justice system. ORH wants to ensure that recovery supports are available to these groups who are experiencing disenfranchisement. Our shared work in promoting and advancing racial equity goes beyond the scope of this best practice guidance document. However, we recognize the link between these issues and hope that this guidance will be used in coordination with any efforts to promote racial equity, recognizing the disproportionate impact the criminalization of addiction has on black and brown people. We will work to continuously update this guidance with current, relevant information.

## Recovery Housing

According to Ohio Revised Code Section 340.01 (A) (3), "Recovery Housing" means housing for individuals recovering from drug addiction that provides an alcohol and drug-free living environment, peer support, assistance with obtaining drug addiction services, and other drug addiction recovery assistance.

Recovery Housing is for:

- Individuals who are actively seeking recovery
- Individuals who desire a safe and structured living environment with others who share the same goal of sobriety
- Individuals who desire to participate in supportive services or treatment services to further their sobriety
- Individuals at risk of homelessness because they are exiting treatment, incarceration, military duty, or are living in an environment that puts them at risk for using substances

## Recovery Housing and the Criminal Justice System – Understanding Common Barriers

Recovery housing intersects with the criminal justice system in a variety of ways. In many communities across Ohio, recovery housing programs work with their local courts, jails, and prisons to provide housing to people in recovery from substance use disorders returning to the community after incarceration or arrest. For recovery homes to best support residents reentering the community, it is critical to first understand the barriers faced by previously incarcerated individuals and how you can work within the system to manage these barriers.

**Basic Needs** – Operators will need to assess the basic needs for residents reentering the community and ensure those needs are met. People exiting jail and prison are often left without clothing, food, person hygiene products, or money to purchase these basic needs. To be sure residents have access to basic needs build relationships with local food banks, clothing banks, or other charities in your community. Local faith-based organizations may also assist in helping you gather a supply of these items to have on hand for when residents first move into your home and do not have these items.

**Public Benefits and Student Loans** – People with criminal records are often barred from accessing certain public benefits and student loans. Residents convicted of any drug offense, a misdemeanor or a felony are not eligible to receive federal financial aid for college related expenses. However, in Ohio, people with criminal records are not banned from accessing other public benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). You can help residents apply for benefits on-line at <https://benefits.ohio.gov/>.

**Housing** – Safe and affordable housing is a huge barrier to people returning to the community following an interaction with the criminal justice system. In many cases, public housing is the only option as many private landlords place limitations on renter eligibility. While recovery housing programs that do cater to people with many different convictions, the main barrier for potential residents is both accessing these programs and then finding safe and affordable environments after exiting a recovery housing program. As a recovery housing operator, be prepared to have residents with criminal convictions stay at the recovery home longer than residents who do not, as it can be more challenging for them to find their next housing environment. See future section on assisting residents when they are moving out for more information on helping them overcome this barrier.

**Employment** – Similar to the barriers faced in housing environments, people returning to the community face barriers to employment. Meaningful employment that pays fair wages is critical to a person reentering the community. However, accessing and maintaining this kind of employment can be difficult. Recovery homes should be prepared that it may take a person with a criminal conviction a longer amount of time to find employment, and this may impact their ability to pay their rent at the home. Be prepared to assist the person with rent payments while they are seeking employment.

Recovery homes can build relationships with local employers. Especially, “second-chance” employers in your community. “Second chance hiring is the act of employing formerly incarcerated individuals, people in recovery, or other applicants whose life choices and situations have disadvantaged them in obtaining stable employment” (<https://hrindianashrm.org/news/what-is-second-chance-hiring/>). Having these relationships where you can easily refer people for employment opportunities and help prepare them makes it easier for residents to find and maintain employment. Many second chance employers exist throughout the state. You can find a short list of some of these employers in the resources section of this guide. Additionally, work with local staffing agencies in your area to identify potential employment opportunities for your residents. Operators have also noted that engaging with local employment training sites and having residents engage in local community service efforts supports those residents in learning working habits such as time management, reliability, working with others, etc.

Individuals with criminal records can have their record sealed, expunged, or can receive a Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE) to remove barriers to employment and occupational licensing. Although sealing and expungement are often used interchangeably, they are very different tools in removing barriers. Expungement means to delete or destroy a criminal record, including an arrest record. This is only available in very limited circumstances, such as for juvenile records or for survivors of human trafficking. Sealing, however, is more widely available and will hide the criminal record from public view. A CQE will not seal or expunge a criminal record but will remove the barriers in the law that prevent an individual from seeking employment or an occupational license. More information can be found in the resources section of this guide.

**Stigma** – As operators of recovery housing know, people in recovery often face stigma from their communities. Often this stigma is then compounded for people in recovery who have a history with the criminal justice system. These stigmas play into the barriers addressed above and often lead to additional challenges that residents and operators must overcome.

While these barriers can prove to be difficult, it is important for operators and staff of recovery housing to recognize that these barriers exist so as to better support the residents facing them. See later section on being a Good Neighbor and NIMBY Concerns for best practice guidance on how to overcome stigma in communities.

### Good Neighbor Policies and NIMBY Concerns

Another essential component to support residents reentering the community is crafting good neighbor policies and addressing potential NIMBY (not in my back yard) concerns. Good neighbor policies can be an effective way for residents to positively interact with their communities. While good neighbor policies will not ensure that NIMBY issues won't arise, many of the items outlined in the list below have proven to be effective for many operators who serve residents returning to the community from incarceration.

**Meet with neighborhood associations and watch groups** – Getting involved in neighborhood groups is a great way for neighbors to meet residents and staff of the recovery housing organization. Often, neighborhoods don't understand what recovery housing is and meeting residents living in these homes at regular neighborhood meetings both gets residents involved in the community and helps the community get to know the residents and the recovery housing program.

**Engaging with local law enforcement** – Current operators of recovery housing noted that engaging with local law enforcement and probation or parole departments have been effective for positive community engagement. You can start building these relationships by inviting these groups to tour the home, meet with operators and staff to learn more about the recovery community, and to let neighbors know that you are engaging in relationships with these groups. Another way to engage with local law enforcement is to create meetings or trainings where the recovery housing organization can inform them about substance use disorders, treatment, recovery support services, and recovery in general.

**Engage with the local community** – Residents and staff should be encouraged to participate in the local community. Recovery homes typically require residents to engage in some form of

community service Engaging with the local community is essential for the resident's life skills and recovery and is also great for the community at large. Some ideas to help residents perform service work include

- Volunteering at a local food pantry or clothing center
- Assisting elderly or disabled neighbors with snow removal or other chores
- Making and distributing treats during the holidays

See [Best Practice Guidance on Addressing NIMBY](#)

## Intake Considerations

Prior to welcoming a resident into a recovery home, an operator must first examine their intake considerations. This involves, understanding the requirements around a resident's criminal history, the level of support a resident may need, if the resident is the right fit for the house or the program, etc.

**Limitations regarding criminal histories**— It is important to consider your home's limitations regarding a resident's criminal histories. There are certain criminal convictions that some homes may not be able to accommodate such as residents who are registered sex offenders, or residents convicted of arson. It is best practice to check your local laws as well as with your insurance carrier to determine in your organizational policies who you are unable to support in your recovery home.

**Court-Ordered Recovery Housing**— When working with the court system, there are situations where a judge may give an individual the option to either go to jail or to enter a recovery housing program. It is no surprise that these individuals often choose recovery housing over going to jail or prison. It is important to consider how to support a resident who may not be entering your program with their recovery as a priority. Remember that people can change their minds, while also recognizing that your program might not be the right fit for them at that time. Best practice is to communicate clearly with the potential resident what the priorities and requirements of your recovery housing program are. If the operator and the potential resident agree that the home is an appropriate fit, work with the resident on ways to best support them. For example, in a resident's relapse plan, your organization could hold space for them if they returned to jail or prison. While this may not be an option for all organizations, it can be effective in showing a resident that you are committed to them and their recovery.

**Needs Assessment**— All recovery homes should assess all new residents needs and create a plan for how these needs can be met. We drafted a variety of topics that recovery homes typically ask of their residents during the need's assessment process, found in Appendix A on page 12 of this guide. You can use this list to help develop your own needs assessment for your homes. Please note, it is critical to establish relationships within your communities as many groups exist to help with many of the items listed.

## Recovery Planning

Recovery planning is an essential component for all residents living in recovery housing. There are many considerations for what staff should discuss with residents in terms of recovery

planning. Listed below are recovery planning topics to consider and discuss with new residents in your recovery home.

- Life Skills Development
- Rebuilding Relationships
- Forming your community of support
- Obtaining a sponsor, mentor, or religious mentor
- Creating a wellness plan including physical health, financial health and budgeting, behavioral health, including mental health, and spiritual wellness
- Connection to recovery meetings
- Engaging with peer supporters
- Volunteering or Community Service
- Employment/ Workforce Development
- Education

### Continued Involvement in the Criminal Justice System

Residents entering recovery housing following incarceration or an arrest often continue to be involved in the criminal justice system in a variety of ways. It is critical for recovery housing operators to develop relationships with their local court systems to provide support for residents who are still involved with this system.

**Documentation** – Regardless of the populations a recovery housing organization serves, documenting everything is incredibly important. While documentation not only helps your homes operate effectively, it is critical for residents who continue to be involved in the criminal justice system as documentation will be important for both the court system as well as any probation or parole offices. Documentation may include information collected as part of the move-in/ intake process, contact/ emergency contact information, documentation related to concerns or grievances, instances related to a resident noncompliance with house rules, etc., and another pertinent information required by a probation office, parole office, or court.

**Do your Research** – Many counties across the state have more than one court that residents may interact with. These courts can range from common pleas to municipal courts, family courts, and other specialty courts such as drug court, recovery court, mental health, treatment, etc. Additionally, there may also be more than one drug court in a locality. Research your local courts to figure out which courts exist in your area and the cases that each court sees. You can find a list of all Ohio courts organized by county on the Ohio Supreme Court website at: <https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/JudSystem/trialCourts/default.asp>

**Get in Contact with the Courts** – Open communication with the court system is essential to supporting residents who will need to navigate this system. Set up meetings or round table discussions with judges, clerks, or other support staff at the courts. This will offer both sides the opportunity to talk about the programs and ask questions.

**Know how the System Works** – There are a lot of requirements and responsibility when a resident is involved in the court system. Operators will need to learn how to work around these



with the resident. Doing your research and engaging in open communication with leaders in the court system will be effective in learning how to operate within this system, which will highly benefit residents navigating the system. This includes topics like how to pay court fees. Some courts will require people to engage in court-ordered community service. While this will mean additional time that the resident needs to schedule in along with all other requirements of the court and the recovery home, operators can work with the courts to find out if they will allow the resident to participate in community service as part of their recovery housing program.

**Have open communication and mutual respect with your courts, local police, and parole and probation offices** – It is the recovery home’s responsibility to communicate with the court system about residents. Some operators have noted that inviting police and parole officers into a home prior to any residents moving in helps build this relationship and this respect. While they get a sense of the layout of the home, they also learn that recovery housing provides a homelike environment. In many cases, operators have said that if a problem arises at one of the homes and the police are called, that the police will call the operator about the issue prior to pulling up with sirens on in the neighborhood as this exacerbates stigma and can provoke NIMBY concerns.

**Parole and Probation** – As an operator or staff member it is important to understand what probation and parole are and how they will impact both residents who are actively interacting with them and other residents in the home. Residents should understand that the recovery home is their home, therefore their actions will impact not only themselves but their fellow housemates. Parole or Probation officers may need to enter the home at some point. Staff should notify residents that this may happen, while also notifying the officer that while they may search a resident’s room, common areas shared by all residents are considered off-limits. It is crucial that policies related to searches by both the recovery home and probation, or parole are included in the resident policy packet. All residents, including both residents who are actively on probation or parole as well as residents who are not, must be informed that these searches may happen and what their rights are regarding searches. Additionally, releases of information should be included in resident policies. Recovery homes may need to share pertinent information with probation or parole offices and vice versa. Please visit Appendix B on page 13 for a template release of information. Ultimately, working effectively alongside probation and parole offices will be important for the resident as both sides should be working a team to help the resident with their recovery.

## Exiting Recovery Housing

While many recovery home environments support individuals with a criminal history, it can be incredibly difficult for those residents to find a safe, affordable environment for residents to live in after exiting the recovery home. Below is a list of ways operators can support reentry residents with this barrier.

**Be prepared to serve these residents for a longer period of time.** As mentioned earlier in this guide, operators of recovery housing programs that serve people reentering the community should be prepared to have residents with criminal convictions stay at the recovery home longer than residents who do not, as it can be more challenging for them to find their next

housing environment. Operators have noted that it can take up to a year or more for a resident with a criminal history to enter into a new housing environment.

**Start planning the exit process early.** As noted above, it can take many months to help your resident find their next housing. As such, operators should be prepared by creating exit plans for residents in advance. These plans will include identifying what barriers the resident may face after exiting the recovery home, contacting local landlords, etc. Starting this process as soon as possible will allow for more time to identify and find solutions to barriers around permanent housing.

**Build relationships within your community.** Community relationships are essential to supporting your residents in a variety of ways. Finding affordable housing that accepts tenants regardless of their criminal histories can be difficult but engaging in your local community can make this search far more manageable. Operators find these housing options through word of mouth, their recovery home alumni, the recovery community at large, and general community members including local landlords.

**Learn about local resources and voucher programs.** Many programs exist throughout Ohio that serve to assist people in their different housing needs. These include housing subsidies, subsidies for utilities, and programs that offer free or reduced furniture essentials. Additionally, reach out to your local faith-based organizations who may offer similar donation services. These supports are essential for residents who may not have furniture or the funds to furnish their new home.

**Follow up with residents after they leave the recovery home.** Exiting the safe, supportive, recovery environment and living on your own can be a challenging transition for individuals. It is best practice to follow up with residents who have exited your recovery home into their new home. This can be done in a variety of ways, with some operators noting they just check in over the phone to see how the former resident is adjusting.

## Conclusion

Ohio Recovery Housing hopes this guidance serves as a useful resource to recovery housing operators serving residents reentering the community as well as residents who have had a history of interaction with the criminal justice system. Please refer to the resources page and the appendixes at the end of the guide for more information. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ohio Recovery Housing.

## Ohio Recovery Housing

Ohio Recovery Housing (ORH) is a state affiliate for the National Alliance of Recovery Residences (NARR). ORH certifies recovery houses across the state of Ohio that meet the quality standards set by NARR. The purpose of the ORH standards is to ensure integrity and quality of recovery housing programs, services and environments for people recovering from substance use. ORH Board, Staff, and Associates recognize that recovery takes time and that residential support has many facets, ranging from residential treatment models to long-term recovery housing. ORH affirms the necessity of a continuum of care to adequately address the total needs of people recovering from addiction.

### Contact Us:

[info@ohiorecoveryhousing.org](mailto:info@ohiorecoveryhousing.org)

(614) 453-5133

## Additional Resources

- Toledo DART (Drug Abuse Response Team) <https://www.sheriffs.org/sites/default/files/BSSA2.pdf>
- Clean Turn <https://cleanturn.com/company/our-story/>
- Ohio Means Jobs <https://ohiomeansjobs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/omj/>
- Ohio Poverty Law Center: <https://www.ohiopovertylawcenter.org/>
- ORH Nimby Guidance [https://63f78b26-80cc-40a7-b987-4819ba5e1208.filesusr.com/ugd/3c8c7e\\_14265477913e4e06ac7d4e4550eedec3.pdf](https://63f78b26-80cc-40a7-b987-4819ba5e1208.filesusr.com/ugd/3c8c7e_14265477913e4e06ac7d4e4550eedec3.pdf)
- Ohio Courts <https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/JudSystem/trialCourts/default.asp>
- American Bar Association [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/criminal\\_justice/resources/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/criminal_justice/resources/)
- US Office of Justice Programs <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/new-ojp-resources>
- OSU - Local and National Resources <https://cjrc.osu.edu/collaborations/resources>
- Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services <https://www.ocjs.ohio.gov/#gsc.tab=0>
- The Ridge Project <http://theridgeproject.com/>
- Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition <https://drc.ohio.gov/reentry-coalition>
- Ohio Community Transition Program <https://mha.ohio.gov/Schools-and-Communities/Criminal-Justice/Re-entry-Programs/Community-Transition-Program>
- Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. <https://www.ablelaw.org/>
- CQE Information [https://195f095c-529b-407c-9bf8-766033337b1e.usrfiles.com/ugd/195f09\\_c2b6fa9dfce64d0b933963034519cfad.pdf](https://195f095c-529b-407c-9bf8-766033337b1e.usrfiles.com/ugd/195f09_c2b6fa9dfce64d0b933963034519cfad.pdf)
- Human Trafficking Information [https://195f095c-529b-407c-9bf8-766033337b1e.usrfiles.com/ugd/195f09\\_1f8feb09fc4c4410a6dd7274bf3ec159.pdf](https://195f095c-529b-407c-9bf8-766033337b1e.usrfiles.com/ugd/195f09_1f8feb09fc4c4410a6dd7274bf3ec159.pdf)
- Record Sealing Information [https://195f095c-529b-407c-9bf8-766033337b1e.usrfiles.com/ugd/195f09\\_ab8d8b46cb2144b4ac66b8ff246ad3e8.pdf](https://195f095c-529b-407c-9bf8-766033337b1e.usrfiles.com/ugd/195f09_ab8d8b46cb2144b4ac66b8ff246ad3e8.pdf)

## Appendix A

### Need's Assessment Template

- Medical Needs
  - Do you have a primary care doctor?
  - Do you have a dentist?
  - Do you need help locating a doctor for Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)?
  - Do you need health insurance or assistance signing up for Medicare or Medicaid?
- Identifying Documents
  - Do you have a driver's license?
  - Do you have a birth certificate?
  - Do you have a social security card?
  - Do you have a state identification card?
- Employment
  - Do you need assistance finding employment?
  - Do you need assistance writing a resume?
  - Do you have a criminal record that is hindering finding employment?
- Public Benefits
  - Do you need assistance in applying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)?
- Education
  - Do you have any educational needs (GED, continuing education, diploma, etc?)
- Transportation
  - Do you have reliable transportation and/or need assistance with bus passes?
  - Do you need assistance with car insurance?
- Legal Issues
  - Do you need help with any legal issues?
  - Do you need help court fees?
- Children
  - Do you need help with child related issues, visitation, CPS, custody, or parenting?
- Basic Necessities
  - Do you need bedding, shampoo, soap, socks, clothing, etc.?

## Appendix B

### Release of Information Template

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security #: \_\_\_\_\_

Pursuant to: 42 CFR Part 2, 40 Fed. Reg. 27802. (1975) Confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse patient records established by H.E.W.

I authorize **Organization** (check one or both)  to release to or to obtain from :

\_\_\_\_\_

**I authorize the release of the following information to Organization:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing status            | <input type="checkbox"/> Medications                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appointment dates         | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Exam Results      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Situations      | <input type="checkbox"/> Psychiatric Evaluation     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment results        | <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment Summary          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Urine Drug screens        | <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation Results         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment Summary         | <input type="checkbox"/> Discharge Summary          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance                | <input type="checkbox"/> Urine Drug screens         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medications prescribed    | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal History              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment recommendations | <input type="checkbox"/> Background Information     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Client status             | <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diagnosis                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment Needs Identified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____              |   |

State the purpose of need for disclosure: \_\_\_\_\_

Records Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ Records End Date \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: I expressly consent to the release of information designated above. I understand and acknowledge that this authorization extends to all or any part of the records designated above, which may include treatment for mental illness (ORC5122.31), alcohol/drug use and/or abuse (42 CFR Part 2) and/or Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) test results or diagnoses (ORC3701.24.3)

I hereby state that I have read and fully understand the above statements as they apply to me and do herein expressly consent to disclosure for the purpose or need and the extent or nature as stated above. I further understand that I may revoke this consent at any time, except where disclosure has already been made, or upon the occurrence of the event: the purpose for which disclosure is hereby authorized.

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
RESIDENT SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
WITNESS SIGNATURE

**NOT VALID AFTER 12 MONTHS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED**

Organization Name, Organization Address, I hereby revoke my previous authorization pursuant to 42 CFR Pt 2, 40 Fed. Reg. 27802 (1975), effective immediately:

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
RESIDENT SIGNATURE

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