

## **SOME QUESTIONS THAT EVERY PERSON SHOULD ASK BEFORE LIVING AT A RECOVERY (THREE-QUARTER WAY) HOUSE.**

This list is, by no means, comprehensive. Not only individuals who are contemplating living at a Recovery House; but, also parents and friends can use these questions to determine whether a particular recovery house is legitimate or not.

1. To the Owner/Operator: How long have you been in business? What is your business structure?
2. To the Owner/Operator: How and why did you get into this business? What is your purpose in providing recovery housing?
3. Can I tour your facility?
4. To the Owner: Are you in recovery? How long have you been clean/sober?
5. Who is in charge at your facility? Who do I call in an emergency?
6. How long have your House Manager(s) been clean/sober? Are they trained and certified in first-aid, CPR, the administration of **NARCAN** (naloxone HCl) or any other skills? Do you have **NARCAN** (naloxone HCl) on the property?
7. Can I get a copy of your house rules, your intake forms and a copy of your resident contract to review?
8. How often do you drug/alcohol test residents? Do you drug test your staff? Do you only test people when you suspect they have been using or do you do it randomly and regularly?
9. What is your relationship with local hospitals, rehabs and detoxes? Do they send you their patients?
10. What is the monthly program fee (also known as “rent”) and what does it cover? When is it due, how is it collected and by whom?
11. Are your residents required to go to recovery meetings? How many per week? What about outpatient therapy? Are your residents who are supposed to go to Outpatient Therapy doing it?
12. What is the visiting policy here? Can I bring my girlfriend/boyfriend here for visits? Overnight visits? If the answer is yes – this is a big red flag.
13. What is the typical daily schedule of a resident?
14. What accountability practices do you follow? Do you have a sign-in/sign-out board? Do you or staff check up on people to make sure they are where they say they are?
15. Are any of your programs licensed by any government agency?
16. How do you handle relapses at your facility? Are people immediately thrown out into the street or do you try to get into a higher level of care?

**NOTE: If you are uncomfortable or unsatisfied with the answer to any of the above questions, it is highly likely that the recovery house you are examining has problems of one sort or another. It is ALWAYS best to trust your gut instincts when it comes to these places. If you sense that something is wrong, it probably is and you should avoid living there or sending anyone else to live there.**

### **RED FLAGS WHEN IT COMES TO RECOVERY (THREE-QUARTER WAY) HOUSES**

The best way to find out about a Recovery (Three-Quarter Way) House is to actually go there and take a look for yourself. If this is not possible, you should ask for current photographs – although these can be altered and cannot substitute for an actual tour. Here are some red flags to beware of when it comes to Recovery Houses. Of course, this list is not all-encompassing. The best rule of thumb is to follow common sense.

1. How clean is the house? There is no better way to evaluate a program than by its physical appearance. If the house and resident rooms are a wreck, the program is also going to be a disaster.
2. How many people live in each room? Ask to see the rooms.
3. Do the residents follow a set schedule? Do they go to work or school or therapy? Do residents go to recovery meetings? Or is it a free-for-all. Studies show that people in early recovery do well having structure and a set daily routine. If residents are idle, they present a much higher risk of relapsing.
4. Try to determine if there is adequate heat, hot water, air conditioning and other utilities. Many of these homes do not have proper utilities or they are constantly being turned off for lack of payment.
5. Ask other people in the community - if you can - about the owner/operator of the house. What is their reputation? If you can - try to find out how the owner/operator treats his/her residents in their house and/or their employees. This will tell you a great deal about their program.
6. Are members of the opposite sex allowed to visit the house? If you have people bringing their boyfriends, girlfriends, etc. for visits and overnight, you can be sure that the program is chaotic and undisciplined.
7. Does the owner/operator seem overly interested in money? Does the owner/operator ask for more money than the initial monthly program fee? Sometimes this fee is referred to as “rent” – although in any properly organized program, it is not. For example, some owners/operators initially charge \$400 for the month and a \$50 fee for “processing” and “drug testing”. That is certainly understandable for the first month only – then the program fee would go down to \$400 per month. However, if an owner is asking for one month of “rent” plus one month of “security” or says that there may be other future charges - this is a bad sign. Some owners/operators even try to charge their residents extra during the summer months for air conditioning. Your program fee should be all-inclusive.
8. Try to schedule your tour of the house in the early evening when residents will be home. By doing this, you will get a feel for what type of people are living there. The owner/operator may say that you aren't allowed to do this because of anonymity or confidentiality issues or because you are a

member of the opposite sex and are not allowed in the house – but that isn't really a valid reason. As a visitor, you must agree not to reveal the identity of any person living in the house to any outside person or agency; but, this should not prevent you from visiting briefly.

9. When visiting the facility or speaking with the owner/operator, do you have an uneasy feeling? Some people in this business can provoke a strong visceral reaction. Do they act like a used car salesman or are they overly self-promotional? Do they act a bit like a messiah – like they are saving the world? Do they believe that **their** way is the ONLY way to recover? If so, there is probably something seriously wrong with them and it would be best to stay away.
10. When visiting the facility or speaking with the owner/operator, are they using recovery or treatment jargon or psycho-babble that you don't understand? Many people in various recovery programs mistakenly believe that everyone is familiar with their language. If you don't understand something, please ask and watch the person's reaction.

**NOTE: Certainly there are other red flags that can present themselves when you are conducting research about a particular program. Unfortunately, most Rehabilitation Centers, Detoxes and Hospitals know very little about the programs that they recommend and simply give patients a list of places that they have heard about. As always, it is best to follow your natural instincts.**