Virginia Association of Addiction Professionals
Est. 1970

Position Statement – Recovery Residence Reform

Background Information:
Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services (DBHDS) - the Commonwealth agency tasked with certifying Recovery Residences in Virginia.

- Publishes a list of certified Recovery Residences on its web site.
- Delegated the certification process and currently accepts as "certified" any Recovery Residence that is certified by either **Oxford House** or **Virginia Association of Recovery Residences (VARR).**
- Has no internal agency certification process or uniform standards criteria.
- Established the position of Recovery Residence Quality Assurance Monitor and filled the position in 2023.

Virginia Association of Recovery Residences (VARR) - VARR is affiliated with the National Association of Recovery Residences (NARR) which has national standards for various levels for recovery residences accepted by SAMSHA.

- VARR has no affiliation with the houses that they certify.
- Compliance affirmed through submission of extensive documentation, annual onsite inspections, participation in sponsored training, and events and responsiveness to all reported concerns and/or grievances.
- Has various levels of support from Level 1 (PEER run) to Level 4 (Clinical support included).

Oxford Houses – Oxford Houses are chartered through the Oxford House Charter agreement process, a process more like self-certification. They are independent and self-managed and democratically governed in accordance with Oxford principles. Oxford Houses all operate in a manner similar to VARR Level 1 recovery residences.

Of these 2 entities, VARR appears to have a more robust set of certification criteria, training, and inspection accountability and process.

Recent legislation requires Recovery Residences report serious incidents to DBHDS. The procedure and process for this reporting remains unclear.

Advocacy Steps: How to Improve this System and Ensure Standard Certification Criteria:

1. DBHDS should establish a uniform set of certification criteria for all Recovery Residences in Virginia.
2. All certification criteria should be available to the public through DBHDS.
3. Recovery Residences should be required to have available for public inspection its process for certification and the standards, verification inspections, dates of certification. This information should also be made available on the DBHDS web site.
4. DBHDS needs appropriate resources and funding to provide adequate DBHDS independent oversight of certified Recovery Residences.
5. DBHDS should establish and publish process and procedures for disclosure of serious incident reporting by Recovery Residences. These events should be available to the public through the DBHDS web site.

6. DBHDS should inform localities independently of serious incidents or patterns of incidents in recovery residences in their district.
7. Each Recovery Residence certified by DBHDS should be required to participate in the completion of regular Quality Service Reviews conducted by DBHDS or its contractor.
8. DBHDS should meet regularly with community representatives, Recovery Residence representatives, addiction professionals and others to evaluate and make recommendations for potential areas of improvement of Virginia Recovery Residences.
9. DBHDS should require Recovery Residence house managers receive regular training on Human Trafficking Awareness, Fraud Detection, and Sexual Harassment.
10. Establish a DBHDS Hotline for Recovery Residence complaints and refer serious cases to local officials for independent investigation when warranted, separate from DBHDS oversight.
11. DBHDS should develop protocols for sanctions on Recovery Residences, including decertification when appropriate.
12. Allow locality, fire marshal, and building inspectors to do periodic home inspections.

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