

## **STEPS TO OPENING A NEW OXFORD HOUSE**

The following steps are actions that need to be taken in the opening of a successful house or at least one with the minimal amount of problems. These are not necessarily an absolute sequence of actions, as many of the activities will be occurring concurrently.

Before you opening a new house conduct a little market research. Ask the following questions.

1. Is there a need? In other words, will the TC population support the occupancy - are there other house in the area - is there a chapter to support the house?
2. Are there other houses that are consistently full or do they have an overflow of applications? Do not open a house if there are several openings in your chapter - fill those houses first.
3. Do you have one or two Oxford residents willing to live in the house and train the new residents?
4. Is there a good job market, a means by which the residents will have an income? Are there schools or training programs in the community?
5. Is there a strong recovery community that might also be willing to help the new house?
6. If a women's house, are there enough women willing to move in and since there is usually a larger turnover, enough women to have a continuous occupancy?
7. What agencies or institutions are willing to work with you?

If you get a positive response to 80% of these questions, by all means, open a house.

### **WHERE DO YOU LOOK FOR A HOUSE?**

1. In a good neighborhood. ***Do not open a house in a high drug traffic area.***
2. Current happy landlords
3. Newspaper
4. Property managers/real estate agencies
5. Recovery community-----TC agencies, AA, NA, state and county social services, ALANO clubs, or Corrections
6. Churches
7. Friends, Associates, Retired citizens, family or their associates

### **WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A HOUSE**

1. Usually 5 bedrooms or more, 2 baths, at least 2100 square feet, adequate parking, proximity to public transportation (depending on terrain and area not more than 1/3 mile from bus) and shopping (can be a small mini market within easy walking distance)
2. Off Street parking for large homes is a very important element
3. Price—Location.
4. Women generally need closet and storage space, men like a garage.
5. Adequate kitchen, preferably with dishwasher for health purposes.
6. Large enough common areas to comfortably accommodate all residents.
7. What type of utilities? Central air conditioning for hotter areas, base board electric heat is more expensive,. *Caution*, if you will need space heaters or window air conditioners, expect to pay very high utility bills.
8. Are appliances supplied - stove, refrigerator, washer and dryer?

### **CONTACTING THE LANDLORD**

1. Go prepared. Have a packet of materials that will be important to the landlord - Concepts and Q&A, Resource list of happy landlords willing to be contacted, resource list with names and contact numbers of other happy landlords, list of other houses in the area, "60 Minute" video, manual, landlord/ tenant statement, brochure or pictures of other houses if you have them and/or positive news articles about Oxford. (It can be helpful if you have a standard lease rental agreement with you.)
2. Dress for success—appearance is important.

3. Briefly explain the concept - tell them how Oxford has helped you and others you know.
4. Explain the Win-Win idea. The community benefits, the landlord benefits (we pay our rents, no wild parties, we take care of the property, and we are long term renters) and our residents benefit.
5. Don't argue with the individual, just sell them on the successes and let them know they can be part of helping others. Tell them you will leave the materials and video, ask them to visit a nearby house and call the landlords listed on the resource list. Let them know you will be calling back on a certain day if they have any questions and have a lease available to sign. BE SURE TO FOLLOW UP!

### IS THE HOUSE AFFORDABLE

One of the simplest methods is to simply add \$1000 to the monthly rent. This would be based on a 7 to 10 person house and considering the most efficient heat, water & sewer costs, electricity costs and basic cable. Expect to add \$25 for each additional person to the total - again. this will depend on the area.

After you have added the two together. then divide the total by the number of beds the house will accommodate comfortably. Keep in mind that it is nice to have 2 or 3 singles and some double rooms. Economics tell us that by having doubles, we will lower the monthly share of expenses and allow the newcomers the opportunity of a shared room. A current comfortable amount in most areas is \$85 per week. Some houses charge an extra \$10 or \$15 monthly for the privilege of a single room.

### OPENING THE HOUSE

1. Once you and the landlord have agreed on the terms, name the house and call 1-800-689-6411 to confirm that the name is not used in some other area (for computer reasons and accountability).
2. Get lease agreement and loan application (for states that have loan funds) completed. See page on each for proper procedure. Each state may vary, so be sure you know your procedure. Contact Debbie at Oxford Inc. (301) 587-2916 e-mail: [debbie.dunjee@oxfordhouse.org](mailto:debbie.dunjee@oxfordhouse.org) re loans
3. Call utilities and set up accounts –get phone number first. Be sure to block LD. Calling cards are easily purchased and will save the house from financial problems. Also block 900 #.
4. Make up flyer to distribute to treatment centers, clean and sober clubs, corrections, agencies, etc.
5. Set up schedule of presentations to agency clientele or staff.
6. Contact personally, by phone, or mail any community sources for household donations.
7. Begin recruitment and interview process. If you have other houses in the area you may ask them to help. Make new residence part of the interview and set up process. Show the “60 Minutes” tape at each interview.
8. Begin furnishing and supplying house. When you first move in, you will need the basics - beds, kitchen and eating utensils, one couch, table and chairs. See list for suggestions as you continue to furnish the house.
9. It is suggested that a chore coordinator be appointed immediately to schedule the tasks of a new house.
10. If a rental truck is needed to move furniture try to schedule it to pick up as much as possible in one trip. Also if you need the truck at the beginning of the month, make advance reservations. This is usually their busiest time and more expensive.
11. Check with head office on method of procuring a tax I.D. number
12. When loan money is received, immediately open the house checking account following the Oxford House guidelines. If you need signers contact your chapter or another house in the area. If this is not available ask a counselor or club manager to be a temporary signer. Do not become the only signer. Be sure you keep all receipts and record any expenditure made from this money.
13. Purchase a rent receipt book before taking in any funds. USE IT FOR ALL (including loan and donation funds) INCOME. DO NOT ACCEPT CASH. This is good accounting procedure and will eliminate any questions about accountability.
14. Purchase basic household supplies and equipment i.e.; TP, cleaning supplies, basic staples, brooms, mops, sponges, wastebaskets, and any other essentials. Watch your budget, especially if your house is slow to fill up.
15. Make up individual notebooks for each chapter office. These books should not be kept in the officer's room but on a desk or in the house bookcase.

### **TRAINING THE RESIDENTS**

1. Give each resident a manual asks them to read it. Hold a meeting especially to go over the manual and explain how Oxford works. There is training videotape available from Oxford Inc. about conducting a meeting.
2. Hold weekly meetings with temporary officers for the first few weeks. The members can take turns each week for a particular office and rotate. It will help determine who will be elected and also demonstrate how the democratic process works. This will give you the time and opportunity to fill the house, furnish it and have it set up. It also gives the residents a chance to get to know their roommates before electing them to office.
3. Train officers how to fill out forms and the other duties of their office. It works well if you or your house services people work one on one with each officer. After you have held an official meeting get all officers together and go over each notebook and duties together. This insures that everyone knows what is expected of whom.
4. *Most importantly have fun and remember "Half the things you are going to worry about will probable never happen and the other half are going to happen anyway ---so why worry."*

### **NOW THE HOUSE IS UP AND RUNNING**

1. Fill out the Conditional Charter application (the form can be obtained online at [www.oxfordhouse.org](http://www.oxfordhouse.org) under publications) and mail to the World Service Office.
2. If you don't have a computer call 1-800-689-6411 and ask for a charter application to be mailed to you.
3. Be sure that all copies of your lease and loan are mailed to head office for their files.
4. After 4 to 6 weeks it is advisable to hold an open house for neighbors, counselors, the recovery community, and any governmental persons. The mayor makes the house worthy of a good introductory news article. A sheet cake with WELCOME XXX OXFORD HOUSE written on it plus coffee, tea, and punch could be served. The open house will serve several purposes. It will give the TC's the opportunity to see the house and will alleviate neighbors' concerns.
  - a. Send out invitations in the mail and post flyers in recovery clubs. Announce at AA & NA meetings. It is effective to hand deliver the invitations to the neighbors' door.
  - b. Have materials available at the open house to hand out to any interested guest. Some houses plan a brief program. Welcome by Mayor, TC or other agency or chapter chairman. You might have an on going showing of the "60 Minutes" Tape.
  - c. Have various members take guest on tour of the house and answer questions.

**GOOD LUCK AND ENJOY THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP OTHERS**