

DBHDS Office of Recovery Services (ORS)
Certified Recovery Residences Guidance Document (ORS-01)

Per [Code of Virginia § 37.2-431.1](#). Certified Recovery Residences
and corresponding DBHDS regulation, Certified Recovery Residences [[12VAC35-260](#)]

BACKGROUND

In a May 2017 brief, the National Council for Behavioral Health reported:

Recovery housing refers to safe, healthy, and substance-free living environments that support individuals in recovery from addiction. While recovery residences vary widely in structure, all are centered on peer support and a connection to services that promote long-term recovery. Recovery housing benefits individuals in recovery by reinforcing a substance-free lifestyle and providing direct connections to other peers in recovery and recovery services and supports.

Many residents live in recovery housing during and/or after outpatient addiction treatment. Length of stay is self-determined and can last for several months to years. Residents often share resources, give experiential advice about how to access health care and social services, find employment, budget and manage finances, handle legal problems, and build life skills. Many recovery homes are organized under the leadership of [a] house manager and require residents to participate in a recovery program, such as 12-step and other mutual aid groups.¹

While many recovery residences are well-run, a national effort has been growing to bring standards to how recovery residences are operated due to “unscrupulous actors running sober living homes who profit off the misery of their occupants.”²

Broad community feedback called for greater oversight for recovery housing in Virginia to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of individuals staying in recovery residences. Chapter 220 of the 2019 Acts of Assembly (HB2045) (<http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?191+ful+HB2045ER>) added a new section numbered § 37.2-431.1 in the Code of Virginia creating an avenue for the certification of recovery residences in Virginia through regulations adopted by the State Board of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. This legislation was developed through a stakeholder driven process. The State Board of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services adopted 12 VAC 35-260. Certified Recovery Residences, effective March 7, 2020, to implement this legislation.

The regulation creates a voluntary process for entities that meet the qualifications, policies, and practices established by credentialing entities to be certified by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS or Department) as certified recovery residences. The two credentialing entities specified in the regulation – the Virginia Association of Recovery Residences and

¹ National Council for Behavioral Health, *Recovery Housing Issue Brief: Information for State Policymakers*, https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/05/Recovery-Housing-Issue-Brief_May-2017.pdf, citing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General (2016), *Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General’s Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*. p.5-11. Washington, D.C.: HHS, Retrieved from: <https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-generals-report.pdf>.

² Governing Magazine, May 14, 2018. Sober Living Homes and the Regulation They Need. Stratman and Aronberg. Retrieved from: <https://www.governing.com/gov-institute/voices/col-regulation-sober-living-homes-recovery-residences-need.html>.

Oxford House – are nationally-recognized organizations that follow best practice standards for recovery from substance use disorders. The certification process will be administered by the DBHDS Office of Recovery Services (ORS).

Voluntary certification of recovery residences in accordance with 12 VAC 35-260 and including them on a certification list maintained by DBHDS is intended to be utilized by courts, community services boards, individuals, and families to make it easier to locate recovery housing for individuals needing such housing.

CERTIFICATION LIST MAINTAINED BY THE OFFICE OF RECOVERY SERVICES

The Certified Recovery Residences regulations, 12 VAC 35-260, become effective March 7, 2020. At that time, entities may begin to submit applications to DBHDS for verification of compliance with the requirements of the regulation, including verification that the entity is certified or accredited by or holds a charter from a credentialing entity. Should a recovery residence choose to be certified by the Department, it must provide evidence that it meets the qualifications, policies, and practices of, and is certified or accredited or holds a charter from one of the following credentialing entities:

- Virginia Association of Recovery Residences (VARR). <https://varronline.org/>
- Oxford House. <https://www.vaoxfordhouse.org/>

Once an application has been received, the DBHDS Office of Recovery Services (ORS) will, using regularly updated lists received from VARR or Oxford House, verify the applicant's accreditation or certification by, charter from, or membership in a credentialing entity. Applications that are approved for certification as a certified recovery residence will be placed on the certification list maintained by ORS: <http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/office-of-recovery-services>

Pursuant to 12 VAC 35-260-40(B), any recovery residence that fails to maintain accreditation or certification by, a charter from, or membership in a credentialing entity shall be removed from the certification list. DBHDS will monitor certified recovery residences' continued compliance with the requirement to maintain their accreditation, certification, charter, or membership. The two credentialing entities, VARR and Oxford House, will notify ORS within three (3) business days of the date an entity is no longer accredited or certified by, or no longer holds a charter or membership with, them for any reason. This notification will be made by completing the Notification of Non-Compliance for a Certified Recovery Residence form and sending it via email to ORS. ORS will update the certification list on a weekly basis.

Questions regarding recovery residences should be directed to:

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