

Best Practices for Recovery Housing Operators During COVID-19



RETURNING
HOME

Introduction

The global coronavirus pandemic has raised unique questions from recovery housing operators. Recovery homes come in different sizes, operate in numerous types of buildings, and provide varying levels of support to residents. The purpose of this document is to provide information that can help operators determine the most appropriate strategy for their individual operation. We are in unprecedented times.

The situation changes rapidly, and it is possible that new recommendations and resources may become available.

This document is not intended to replace the advice of state or local health departments or legal 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 and Ohio Recovery Housing, the Ohio state affiliate of NARR. The exact implementation of guidance and recommendations will vary based on Level of Support available in the recovery home. It is important to keep track of any public health orders that may be issued by the state or your local government. It is important that you become aware of these orders and help explain what these orders mean to your residents.

The following are strategies and practices that can be used to help reduce the risk of spread of coronavirus as homes seek to allow residents to have visitors in the recovery home.

Encourage Residents to visit with others virtually

Reducing in-person visits is an effective strategy for reducing COVID19. Recovery homes can reduce spread by making it simple and easy for residents to choose to have visits with friends, families, and others virtually. Recovery homes can encourage this by

- Discussing risks of spread of disease with residents and how reducing visits can reduce this risk
- Reminding residents that visiting with others in person not only increases the risk for them, but for everyone in the household
- Allowing residents with limited minutes or data on their phones the ability to use an organization computer or phone to connect with others
- Providing a private space for residents to engage in virtual visits within the recovery home

Reduce Trips Outside the home when possible

Residents can reduce some trips outside the home. The following are suggestions for helping residents reduce trips

- Helping residents create weekly grocery lists to reduce trips to the grocery store
- Contact any health care or treatment provider and learn if tele-health services are available
- Set aside a private space in the home where a resident can participate in tele-health services

Create positive and fun activities for residents to engage in at home

Residents are more likely to choose to stay home if they have something fun and engaging to do at home. The following are suggestions for strategies to create positive and fun activities to encourage residents to stay home

- Talk with residents about what activities they most enjoyed during the stay-at-home order, continue to offer or participate in those activities
- Arrange trips to near-by parks for picnics or nature hikes
- Host cook offs or bake offs where residents can showcase culinary skills
- Start a book or movie club
- Ask residents what skills and talents they have and allow them to teach each other a new skill (knitting, painting, woodworking, or playing an instrument are ideas)
- Learn about virtual recovery supports and virtual meetings that residents can engage in

Develop Clear, Written Protocols for Residents for when they leave and return to the home

Of course, residents will want or need to leave the home to visit with their family and friends. These relationships are important to everyone, especially for parents.

Recovery homes need to be prepared to support residents while also creating an environment where residents engage in activities that can reduce the spread of disease. Recovery homes should share the [CDC Guidance on Deciding to Go Out with Residents](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/deciding-to-go-out.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/deciding-to-go-out.html>).

Recovery homes should already have in place policies and practices where residents notify staff (or other residents in peer run environments) about where they are going and when they plan to return. Recovery homes may also have policies and practices that allow for overnight visits. The following updates to these written policies can help prevent the spread of COVID19.

- Require that recovery home provide cloth face coverings for residents so they can be worn whenever the resident is leaving the home
- If your home allows residents to have hand sanitizer, provide residents with small containers, so they can sanitize their hands frequently when not at home
- Require that residents wash their hands immediately upon returning to the home
- Require that residents change their clothes and shower immediately upon returning the to the home

This written policy should be discussed with all residents. Many Ohioans are tempted to forget about coronavirus and may see others not following health or safety regulations and may believe that it is ok to "go back to normal" and not follow additional protocols. To avoid this happening, remind residents frequently of the new policy and be sure it is posted onsite as a reminder. Additionally, the recovery home should

- Provide cloth face coverings to residents and encourage them to be worn whenever a resident is leaving the home. Provide enough face coverings so residents can either have a clean one-time use face covering, or enough reusable face coverings so they can be laundered frequently.
- Check the supply of face coverings often, to make sure they are always available
- Help residents arrange for transportation so public transportation can be avoided whenever possible
- When public transportation must be used, remind residents of the [CDC Guidance for using public transportation](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/using-transportation.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/using-transportation.html>).
- If your recovery home allows hand sanitizer, provide residents with small containers, so they can sanitize their hands frequently when they are not a

home. If homes do not allow hand sanitizer, remind residents to wash their hands frequently when not at home.

- Check handwashing and cleaning supplies often to ensure that there is an adequate supply in the home
 - Check [the EPA List N](#) for cleaning products that are appropriate to use (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>).

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