

Recovery Housing Protocol & Checklist

June 2025

Goal of This Protocol

To clarify the definitions, qualifications and expectations of organizations providing Recovery Housing for individuals recovering from substance use/misuse in Iowa.

Definitions

Recovery Housing: Recovery houses are safe, healthy, family-like, substance-free living environments that support individuals in recovery from addiction.

Recovery Residence: a term describing a National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) Certified recovery house.

National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR): NARR has established a national standard for recovery residences. This standard defines the spectrum of recovery - oriented housing and services and identifies four different levels of support for providers to choose from for their residence.

Missouri Coalition of Recovery Support Providers (MCRSP): Missouri's NARR affiliate, temporarily providing certification to Iowa recovery housing providers.

Background

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (Iowa HHS) recognizes that Behavioral Health encompasses a broad spectrum of mental health and substance use related services. The focus of this protocol is on services that support a comprehensive continuum of **recovery housing** for individuals experiencing substance use disorders. While historically behavioral health efforts focused more on prevention and treatment, an important and overlooked need is recovery in general and the social model of Recovery Housing in particular.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [Best Practices for Recovery Housing](#):

“Recovery houses are safe, healthy, family-like, 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, mutual support groups and recovery support services.”

Recognized as a key component for many individuals gaining stability in recovery, support of Recovery Housing has played an increasingly important role in federal grants issued by SAMHSA. With this support, SAMHSA has endorsed the National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) who established standards for monitoring Recovery Residences.

Specifically, NARR:

- Is widely recognized as the authority in certification of recovery residences with affiliates in thirty- three states (and seven more in development) that do the inspections and monitoring.
- Has established standards and monitoring for four levels of recovery residences.
- Has worked to integrate recovery residences into the new guidelines of ASAM (American Society of Addiction Medicine).

2025 Status

Iowa HHS is working to formally implement NARR - established standards.

Certification is required in order to access Iowa HHS reimbursement for recovery housing in Iowa as well as completing the eligibility checklist.

Current Guidelines for Certification

Iowa HHS is currently recognizing temporary certification granted by the Missouri NARR affiliate (MCRSP) to Recovery Residences that meet the following criteria:

- Location: The housing is sited in a conventional residential neighborhood with minimal crime that ideally has access to infrastructure: transportation, work, recreation, and social/health services.
- Appearance: The look of the residence conveys a sense of being neighborly rather than reclusive. Ideally, it has a design typical of other houses in the neighborhood, is visible from the street (as opposed to hidden behind a wall) and has an approachable front door.
- Design for sociability: The floor plan has an open design in which kitchen, dining and social spaces follow into each other, strongly encouraging socializing to promote recovery and healthy interactions.
- Design for personal space: The residents typically share rooms but have personal or private space. A balance of shared and private space facilitates both relationship building and personal empowerment.
- Facility oversight and security: The physical design enables easy oversight of the premises as well as personal security that promotes a supportive recovery environment. Space is open and free of physical barriers that would separate or seclude residents.
- Care and Upkeep: High levels of physical maintenance, house- cleaning and upkeep are vital.

In Addition to These Criteria

- Residences cannot be co-located with clinical treatment services.
- Residences do not require clinical services to be sought from a specific agency.

Recovery Housing Funding Eligibility Checklist

Document Goal: To clarify the qualifications to be met for Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) funded Recovery Housing providers. The following criteria checklist has been created for interested providers. If an interested provider answers “no” to any of the criteria items below, they may be ineligible to qualify as an Iowa HHS- funded Recovery Housing provider. For more information, please contact the Recovery Housing Helpdesk at recoveryhousing@hhs.iowa.gov.

1. Have you been in operation as a recovery house for at least 3 months?
☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Are the services you provide offered in a family- like (house) setting that offers a shared living environment, centered on peer support and connection to services that promotes sustained recovery from substance use disorders?
☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Is the recovery housing located at a different address and location than a clinical, licensed SUD or MH treatment provider?
☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Do you allow residents to seek clinical treatment services (as needed) from the provider of their choice?
☐ Yes ☐ No
5. If your programming has faith- based requirements, are residents allowed to attend religious/faith- based services of their choice in lieu of the primary required services?
☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Do you allow residents to take all FDA- approved medications for substance use disorders and mental health conditions?
☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Do you require all eligible residents to have a history of substance misuse?
☐ Yes ☐ No