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**RECOVERY**

# Consumer Awareness Guide

An educational service provided by  
Camelback Recovery LLC,  
specialist in sober living communities.

Statistics show that individuals who return home directly from a treatment facility have a relapse rate of 90% within their first year; that percentage is cut to 50% after just 3 months of sober living. Sober living is where men and women learn how to live their lives differently than they did while drinking and using. This is where they develop new habits, build new relationships, and build a foundation for lifelong recovery.

All of that being said, choosing the right sober living home is not easy. Why? Because your research produces misleading websites, confusing claims, and simply bad information. From incompetent house managers and a low level of supervision, structure and accountability to super low prices and high pressure sales, how do you ever find a qualified, professional sober living home? You start by reading this consumer guide to sober living. In this fact filled booklet you will discover eight mistakes to avoid when choosing a sober living home, five common misconceptions of sober living homes, and the importance of value and price.

**We wrote this guide to help you better understand sober living homes.** And now with this information, you can make an informed and intelligent decision. And if you have questions about sober living or treatment for alcoholism and addiction, you are invited to call us at (800) 851-9033. Camelback Recovery is dedicated to helping individuals to achieve long term recovery, and we are happy to help in any way that we can.

Cordially,  
Tim Westbrook, President  
Camelback Recovery LLC

# 5 Misconceptions of Sober Living Homes

## 1. They are all in bad neighborhoods.

While sober living homes can range in locations usually matching an individual's budget, they are not all in bad neighborhoods. Some do resemble the dark and dilapidated areas addicts turn to when they are getting high but the majority are in stable and comfortable areas. People may be surprised when driving through nicer communities in their local town to learn that the well-kept home down the street actually houses a group of men or women looking to better their lives.

## 2. The homes are run down and poorly kept.

This goes hand-in-hand with the idea that the homes are in questionable neighborhoods. The aim of any reputable sober living home is to provide the same or better quality and comfort than the addict had at home. Imagine trying to begin a new chapter in your life and better yourself only to call a place home that resembles the condemned house that you used to pick up your drugs at. For this reason and many more, sober living homes make it a special point to provide homes with amenities and creature comforts found in higher end homes today. It is not uncommon to be greeted by hardwood floors, Travertine tile, marble counter tops, and plush leather furnishings.

## 3. Sober Living is not necessary after treatment.

On the contrary, sober living is one of the few ways to set up an individual in recovery for success. It is still up to the individual to do the leg work but sober living provides the stable and structured environment one needs to successfully transition back into their day-to-day life. While a 30, 60, or 90 day inpatient program would represent the triage and emergency services a patient would receive after a horrible accident. Sober living is akin to the follow up visits and continuing care after a patient has been stabilized. A sober home allows men and women who are still in a critical early point of recovery to rejoin life while still having the accountability needed for long term success.

## 4. They are unregulated.

Many people believe that sober living homes are unregulated, or even worse, fraudulent money making schemes. While a simple Google search can reveal the dark side of “sober livings.” It is important to remember that there are reputable facilities operating to help those suffering from addiction. Yes, they are businesses and need to make a profit to continue to help the future recovering alcoholics and addicts but they do not do so at the sake of their current clients. Sober homes, depending upon the state they lie in, are subject to regulation through zoning laws, state housing departments, state and municipal healthcare regulations and regulation specific to sober living communities and homes. While it would be nice to say every home is operating for benevolent reasons it is important to research the home your loved one chooses to continue their journey in sobriety. The best place to start is the inpatient treatment facility your loved one is currently undergoing treatment at; the counselors and staff will know which places have good or poor reputations.

## 5. They are havens for continued drug use.

Like most things in life you get what you pay for. If it is cheap, it is cheap for a reason. A sober living home is exactly that; a home where each client is guaranteed to be able to rest, recover and not be tempted by the same old environments encountered in active addiction. Each home has their own rules for what happens in the event of relapse and be sure to discuss this with the director of the home. Rules can vary from speaking with their counselor to ensure it does not happen again, to being asked to leave the home temporarily until the individual is able to test clean of all drugs, to asking any individual to leave the home in the event of any drug use. Companies that have been in business even for a short time will have seen cases of relapse and will have plans to handle each case accordingly.

More importantly, if a sober living has a good reputation, it enjoys it for a reason. They have built it over time and through the ability to foster success stories. They work with people from all socioeconomic backgrounds in the toughest and most mentally challenging moments of their lives to show them a better way to live. One of the reasons they are so successful is because the best homes are truly that a safe home for your loved one.

# 8 Mistakes to Avoid When Choosing a Sober Living Home

## **MISTAKE #1 – Choosing a sober living home without a structured program.**

A structured environment which holds the residents accountable for their actions is necessary for individuals in early recovery. One key component of our program is to keep the clients on a fixed schedule. A regular schedule should remain in place once the individual has transitioned to a sober living home. Something as simple as waking up and having your bed made by 7:30 AM is an important way to build a healthy routine for life. Adding a daily chore assignment, allows the individual to be accountable for making a contribution to the overall 'health' of the house. It should be required that all residents have a commitment of at least 30 hours each week to a job, school, out-patient treatment or volunteer work. Instilling a sense of responsibility helps the residents to become functioning members of society. A structured home should also do random drug testing each week for their residents. This creates an additional layer of accountability for the individual with their sobriety. Lastly, the program should be 12-Step based. The teachings that are contained within the 12 Steps provide a healthy foundation for those in early recovery. 12-Step meetings are a key part of each individual's daily work towards a long-term recovery path.

## **MISTAKE #2 – A low price isn't always a deal.**

A sober living home that charges a low price typically is not able to have a full-time experienced house manager living on the premises. Low cost homes may instead use a senior resident as their 'manager.' These individuals can have as little as 90 days of sobriety. The net result is a low level of accountability and supervision at the home. Homes with a low price point are often not well-maintained. They can be filthy and infested with various types of pests. Overcrowding has also plagued this type of home. The owner will often pack people in at unsafe and unhealthy levels. Requiring the residents to provide their own meals is also a way to keep the costs down. Addicts have generally survived on eating foods that are processed and have high levels of sugar, fat, and salt (if anything at all) and will usually continue down that same path if forced to purchase their own food. Lastly, many of the bargain sober living homes are located in "bad neighborhoods." This places their residents in an environment of drugs and other substances that need to be avoided during early recovery.

### **MISTAKE #3 – Choosing a sober living home based upon a single telephone call.**

Do your homework when searching for a sober living home. Continuing-care therapists from the treatment center are usually a good source for well-qualified homes. These individuals have typically done a fair amount of research and established relationships with reputable sober living homes in the area. Do not allow yourself to be 'closed' during an initial phone call. What may sound amazing over the phone, may in reality be nothing more than a strong sales pitch. Always use the initial call to simply gather information. Always have at least 3 questions ready to be asked during your conversation. When possible, always try to compare a number of homes before reaching a final decision.

### **MISTAKE #4 – Choosing a sober living home that does not include meals or provide guidance on meal selection and nutrition.**

Most addicts come into early sobriety malnourished. They have usually become accustomed to a steady diet of processed food. Addiction recovery is about establishing new healthy habits. Nutrition needs to play an important role in an overall recovery program. The house should make available healthy meals for consumption and have no junk food for snacking. Nutritional education on what constitutes a 'balanced' meal should be a part of the house's program. There should be an understanding of the role that a healthy mind and body play in early sobriety. Food serves as the fuel for the body and making wise meal choices can help to repair some of the damage that occurred during addiction.

### **MISTAKE #5 – Choosing a sober living home that is not a member of a local recovery organization.**

Here in Arizona, we have AzRHA (Arizona Recovery Housing Association). In order to be a member of AzRHA, a sober living home must meet certain quality standards. The sober living home will undergo a rigorous inspection of all aspects of the business prior to being accepted into AzRHA. Other parts of the country may have their own organizations that help to maintain a high level of quality care for sober living home residents. Be sure to ask about what organizations they belong to in the community.

## **MISTAKE #6 – Choosing a sober living home without getting reference comments from other clients/families.**

What do past clients have to say about their experiences at the sober living home? What do their loved ones have to say regarding their observations? Speaking with current or past clients is a great way to confirm the experiences of others during their stay. Be sure to have at least 3 questions ready to ask the individuals when speaking with them. This is an extra step, but well worth the time invested to gather the necessary information for your decision.

## **MISTAKE #7 – Choosing a sober living home that is not gender specific.**

Studies have shown that men and women experience addiction differently. Each sex has their own specific reasons for turning to drugs and alcohol. Individuals in early recovery need to avoid any unnecessary distractions. Coed houses have historically been a place where residents tend to focus on members of the opposite sex as opposed to doing the necessary work for their own recovery. Gender specific homes allow for a healthy fellowship to flourish amongst its residents.

## **MISTAKE #8 – Choosing a sober living home based upon location alone.**

There is more to selecting a home than just having a desirable zip code. It is important that the house be located close to 12-Step meeting places. The house should also be near a method of public transportation for those that are not able to drive themselves. Be sure that the house is situated a reasonable distance from most of the locations that will be travelled to each week. There should be many points that are used in order to select the right sober living home. Is it 12-Step based? Is there a full-time experienced manager living on the premises? Do they provide healthy meals? Is there a sense of structure to their overall program? Being prepared and seeking answers to the right questions will help you to make the best decision in this important step down the path of long-term recovery.

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