

Sober Living Environment

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Sober living environments (SLEs) are facilities used by addicts recovering from substance abuse, which serve as an interim environment between rehab and a return to their former lives. SLEs grew out of a need to have safe and supportive place for people to live while they were in recovery. They are primarily meant to provide housing for people who have just come out of rehab (or recovery centers) and need a place to live that is structured and supporting for those in recovery. However, it is not necessary to come from rehab.

Description

The SLE (sober living environment) movement began on the west coast of the United States and has spread around the country. SLEs provide much more than other transitional living environments. Many of them are structured around 12-step programs and sound recovery methodologies. Residents are often required to participate in 12-step meetings, take drug tests and show demonstrably that they are taking important steps to long lasting recovery.

The concept of sober living reached a wider audience during the 2008 VH-1 series Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew, whose eighth episode discussed the concept extensively. Sober living is seen in greater detail in Sober House, a spinoff of Celebrity Rehab, which documents alumni of Celebrity Rehab as they enter such facilities. VH1, which airs both shows, describes sober living thus:

A sober living house is an interim step on the path to sobriety where addicts can live in a supervised and sober environment with structure and rules, i.e. mandatory curfews, chores and therapeutic meetings. In this show, celebrity addicts, most of whom have spent the better part of their lives in the throes of addiction, will learn how to essentially start their lives over from the ground up. In many cases, successfully maintaining sobriety requires patients to alter everything about their previous lives when they were actively addicted to alcohol and other drugs. This could include changing jobs, eliminating friends and even abandoning loved ones who are deemed toxic to their sobriety.

Resident requirements

Each individual SLE will have different requirements for the residents, but many will have these typical requirements:

No drugs or alcohol

Mandatory AA or NA meeting attendance

Random drug tests

On-time bill payments

General acceptance by peer group at the SLE

Results

SLEs are a relatively new phenomenon, so there are not many studies about their success rates.

Many people who have lived in SLEs find that their stay has been an important part of the recovery process. They provide the support and understanding that many people need to stay clean and sober. For addicts to other drugs, abstinence-based recovery works with varying degrees of success, most effectively for cocaine, amphetamine, and cannabis addicts.

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