

CHAPTER HOUSING SERVICE COMMITTEE

Chapter Housing Service Committees are made up of outreach individuals in the Chapter who devote a portion of their time for very special service work – helping those individual Oxford Houses in the Chapter that need help. For example, the Chapter Housing Service Committee always helps the new house in a Chapter get off to a good start, as well as existing houses that may encounter challenges.

The Housing Service Committee consists of the Chapter Housing Service Committee Chairperson, the Chapter Vice-Chairperson, and an elected Housing Service Committee Representative from each house in the chapter. The Housing Service Committee provides suggestions and help to the members of a new house or a house in trouble. Since each house is autonomous, the Housing Service Committee always offers suggestions first – not orders. “Bossism” works no better on the Chapter level than it does within an Oxford House. Remember, the Committee’s collective experience, strength and hope is a very powerful voice.

A significant role of the Housing Service Committee is to impress upon the new house – or house in trouble – the importance of meeting the conditions of an Oxford House Charter. Oxford House relies on having a good reputation in the community and one “bad apple” can adversely affect the welfare of Oxford House as a whole. By skillfully carrying the message, the Housing Service Committee can prevent problems from arising and quickly provide suggestions for those problems that do arise.

The Housing Service Committee should avoid acting out on control issues or becoming a court for disputes that may arise among residents of a new or troubled house. Tradition Five clearly states: “Each Oxford House should be autonomous except in matters affecting other houses of Oxford House as a whole.” What that means in a nutshell is that if a house is operating in accordance with its charter and their Chapter guidelines, the Housing Service Committee is limited to making suggestions. On the other hand, if a house is in violation of any of the three conditions of its charter, or otherwise adversely affecting Oxford House as a whole, the Housing Service Committee can take corrective action. Whenever corrective action is necessary it is a good idea to call the Outreach Services Representative for your area or the State Association Housing Services Chairperson, and remember that Oxford House, Inc. must approve any action that infringes upon the autonomy of a house.

Some Pointers:

- Read and be familiar with your Oxford House Manual and Chapter Manual.
- Always schedule a follow up visit after the initial visit. Consistency is important.
- Be accessible - return phone calls.
- Share your experience, strength and hope.
- On your first visit your primary role is to observe and develop a plan of action.
- Encourage members to **identify problems** briefly, and then **concentrate on the solution**.
- **Use your Committee**. All too often the Housing Service Committee Chairperson tries to do everything on his/her own.
- Use your regularly scheduled Housing Service Committee Meeting to help share information, discuss prior house visits and plan future Housing Service Committee activities.