



Frequently Asked Questions Halfway House in Northfield



We have received many questions about the proposed halfway house in Northfield. In order to provide the most accurate and thorough information, we have included a number of these in this document.

What is a halfway house and what is its purpose?

A halfway house is a secondary placement to treatment for those in recovery from chemical dependency. While at a halfway house, clients are able to transition back into a community, locate and start working, save up money, pay fines, and work on relations strained due to their use. A halfway house provides structure to the newly recovering adult, with group and individual therapy sessions with a licensed counselor and mandatory AA/NA attendance.

How many people will be served and what ages?

The halfway house in Northfield will serve women over the age of 18 years. The facility can house 6 women at a time.

How long do people stay in a halfway house?

The average length of stay is 60 to 120 days.

Who will operate the halfway house?

West Hills Lodge, Inc. will be in charge of operations of the halfway house. West Hills Lodge, Inc was established as a chemical dependency halfway house in 1976. Over the years, West Hills has served all 87 counties in Minnesota, as well as clients from South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. The mission is to provide a safe, secure, healthy recovery environment for our clients in early recovery.

What does the programming look like?

It is very structured, with a number of rules designed to support recovery. Work or volunteering is required, as are daily mandatory AA/NA meetings until the resident is employed. Once employed, a resident must attend a minimum of two meetings per week. Residents must also participate in two group therapy sessions weekly and a minimum of one 1-to-1 session with a counselor. Residents must also take part in any recommended mental health case management, budgeting, step work, relapse prevention, and individualized treatment planning.

Do halfway houses work? If so, why?

Halfway houses do work for many individuals, because they allow an addict/alcoholic to transition back into a community while still having structure and support in their recovery. Statistics show us that the longer an individual is engaged in a recovery environment, the better chance for longer term sobriety.

What kind of staffing does a halfway house offer? What kind of professional services and/or monitoring are provided?

The house is staffed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. At least one staff will be present at all times at the halfway house. During groups and during the day, there may be up to three staff on premises at any time.

Staffing includes at least one licensed alcohol and drug counselor (the director is also a licensed counselor), night managers to supervise the women we serve, and at least one administrative assistant during normal business hours. We hope to have a camera system in the home (as we do in our current halfway house) to maintain a safe environment. We will refer persons with mental health issues to therapists in Northfield and surrounding communities, as well as to the Northfield clinics and hospitals as needed.

What kinds of addictions do people in halfway house programs have?

People in halfway houses may have a variety of addictions... alcohol, marijuana, prescription drugs, heroin, cocaine, or other drugs. The recovery process is similar no matter what kinds of drugs a person has been using. The halfway house is a place for people to become skilled at living a sober lifestyle, regardless of the chemical or chemicals they used.

Do people in halfway house programs have a criminal history?

Some halfway house residents may have committed crimes in the past. Each person who requests to be admitted to a halfway house is considered individually, but with regard to the safety of all residents. No leveled sex offenders or arsonists can be admitted to any halfway house. Those with violent assaults are also not eligible.

What is the difference between a halfway house and a sober house?

A halfway house is really an extension or continuation of treatment. Halfway house programs offer staff support, groups, and requirements for other programming that support recovery. Sober houses do not offer any kind of programming and do not have staff. Sober houses are places where the people living there commit to a sober living environment.

What are the rules for visitors at the halfway house?

The halfway house will have visiting hours every day of the week. Visitors must check in with staff and remain out of the bedrooms. Visitors are welcome to stay for meals and socialize in and outside of the home. Visiting hours are posted and visitors will be reminded to keep the anonymity of the residents we serve.

What are the expectations for women living in the halfway house with regard to jobs, curfew and other considerations?

Our program requires residents to work or volunteer their time. There are required AA/NA meetings, group and individual therapy, chores, and a strictly enforced curfew. Curfew will be 10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday night and midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

Is smoking permitted in the house?

No smoking is permitted in the house. Residents who smoke will have to do so outside of the home and at least 25 feet from the home. The backyard is being considered for smokers so they are less visible to neighbors or passers-by.

Are residents periodically drug tested to ensure that they are not using while living in the house?

Yes. Random UAs and PBTs are done throughout their stay. Refusing to submit to UAs or PBTs are grounds for discharge

What responsibilities do the residents have to the maintenance of the house?

All residents will have chores in the home while they are there. They will be responsible to assure that the house is clean and orderly. Large household jobs will be handled by staff with resident involvement. Any damage caused by clients being neglectful or aggressive is subject to discharge and reporting damage to police, if necessary.

How is the project going to be funded?

Halfway houses are licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and Minnesota Department of Health. Funding is provided through DHS Rule 24 (chemical health) funding, and PMAP medical assistance programs. There is also the option of private pay.

What is the anticipated timeline for the halfway house to be up and running?

The opening of the halfway house is largely dependent on the licensing process, which can take up to one year to complete. The application is currently in process.

Is there any kind of ordinance change needed in order to have a halfway house located in this neighborhood?

No, not if it is a facility licensed by the State Department of Human Services.

Will all the people in the halfway house be Rice County residents?

No. By law, a licensed facility for chemical dependency must serve residents from all 87 counties in Minnesota. We hope that we will be able to serve those closer to our community, but will not limit admission to Rice County residents.

Does the house have to be a step-down from an inpatient facility or can it be an option for outpatient clients?

Typically, people come to a halfway house from inpatient treatment. On occasion, a person who can demonstrate that they are sober can be admitted to a halfway house. So it can be an option, as long as abstinence can be assured.

What are reasons for halfway house placement? Does being homeless alone qualify someone?

There are many reasons why someone is referred to halfway house placement. A common reason is repeated attempts at inpatient treatment with short-term abstinence after treatment is complete. Homelessness alone does not qualify a person for halfway house placement; however, a lot of clients are homeless or on the verge of homelessness at the time of halfway house placement.

Other appropriate reasons for halfway house placement include: need for more structure for those in early recovery; legal issues such as being court ordered to treatment and to follow recommendations (which could include living in a halfway house); lack of family and community supports; unemployment; or child protection issues or involvement.

What is the involvement of the Rice County Chemical Health Coalition?

The Coalition has been a huge supporter of this halfway house idea and has been very helpful to West Hills Lodge in preparing this house to get started and opened. They will also be helpful in finding resources for our clients.

I still have questions. Who can I contact?

Sue Fillipi, the director of West Hills Lodge, is very happy to answer any questions you may have. She can be reached by telephone (507-451-1172) or via email (sfillipiwhl@yahoo.com).

The Rice County Chemical Health Coalition is very willing to arrange additional opportunities for community members to discuss the halfway house, have their questions answered, and offer input. Contact the Coalition's staff to arrange this – Zach Pruitt (507-664-3524, zpruitt@carleton.edu) or Kathy Sandberg (507-210-5151, ksandberg@ricecountychc.com).