

Virginia Association of Recovery Residences

PREPARATION GUIDE *On-site Physical Inspection*



Revised: January 2026

Site Inspection Guide

Introduction

VARR will conduct the site inspection of the recovery residence for compliance with the NARR Standards. Prior to a site inspection, the following must be completed:

- Operator has provided verification of legal entity status, insurance coverage and permission for property owner to operate a recovery residence at the location
- Operator has provided policy and procedures that have been review and meet the NARR Standards
- Recovery residence seeking accreditation is operational
- Recovery residence is at a minimum, 50% occupied by residents

VARR's onsite inspection reviews for compliance with the NARR Standards across the following five categories.

1. The physical residence
2. Posted documents in the residence
3. Safety and emergency preparedness
4. The social model of recovery
5. Resident interviews

The Physical Residence

A VARR site inspector will check the physical residence inside and outside of the property. It should have a home-like appearance that is inviting and aesthetically pleasing. The site inspector will walk through every room of the entire house; this includes basements, the outside property and any sheds/garages.

The residence must be well maintained with no signs of structural damage that could present a safety hazard to a resident. There should be no signs of neglected repair issues.

There is a minimum requirement of 50 square feet per bed, per sleeping room. The site inspector will measure each bedroom to ensure this minimum is met. Each bedroom must have personal storage space for each resident.

There is a minimum requirement of 1 full bathroom per 6 residents. All bathrooms must have functioning hot and cold water.

Laundry services (washer and dryer) must be accessible for all residents to use. The site inspector will look behind the dryer for any fire hazards.

The site inspector will check various assorted items, included but not limited to:

- Light switches and fixtures
- Accessible hot water in bathrooms and kitchens
- Functioning appliances, including *microwaves, refrigerators, dishwashers, laundry appliances, and AC/heat*
- Available food storage
- Smoke detectors in all bedrooms and carbon monoxide detectors if the residence uses gas
- Fire extinguishers on each floor of the residence
- Easily accessible Naloxone throughout the residence
- Designated smoking area outside the residence

Fire Prevention

Fire extinguishers must be on all levels of the residence including the basement. It is recommended that fire extinguishers are installed near the kitchen and laundry services. If a fire extinguisher is not in plain sight then there needs to be signage directing a resident to the location of the fire extinguisher.

Smoke detectors must be in every bedroom. Documented fire inspection logs are required for smoke detectors and resident fire drills. Fire drills must be conducted periodically and documented by residents and staff. There needs to be a designated rally point for the residents to gather in the case of an emergency to conduct a headcount.

An emergency/fire exit plan map (evacuation map) of the residence must be displayed on all floors of the residence. This is a blueprint of the house that shows exits in case of an emergency and is typically placed next to the fire extinguisher mounted on the wall. This should include an outside “rally point” where residents are to meet in case of evacuation.

Naloxone

Naloxone is administered to reverse an opioid overdose. Naloxone, sometimes known as Narcan, must be accessible to all residents on each floor of the house. Each resident should know where the Naloxone is located and how to use it. Naloxone must be seen in plain sight and not stored in any type of cupboard, dresser, or closet.

When residents hold their routine house meetings, it is common to have Naloxone as a brief talking point. This ensures that every new resident is aware of the overdose procedure and where Naloxone is kept throughout the residence in case of an opioid overdose.

The Social Model of Recovery

The heart of all recovery residences is the Social Model, an operational framework that distinguishes these environments from other shared living spaces. This model emphasizes the importance of personal and collective responsibility for the safety and progressive health of oneself and others in the community. Strengths-based lived experience, peer leadership,

participative governance, and community-based support networks are the foundational elements for lasting recovery. - <https://narronline.org/standards/#social-model>

Peer and resident involvement in decision-making create a sense of resident ownership, responsibility, and connection to the community within the recovery residences and also with the staff. In line with social model concepts, VARR site reviewers look for the following in a recovery residence:

- There needs to be entertainment or recreational areas that promote social engagement and interaction. This must be a meeting space large enough for small group activities and socializing; a living room qualifies as this.
- The kitchen and dining areas must be large enough to accommodate residents sharing meals. Encouraging residents to eat and make meals together helps build a home-like environment to promote a social model of recovery. Consider simple cooks out or gathering sporting and/or holiday events.
- Scheduled community house meetings should take place in the residence. This helps establish a sense of community, belonging, and responsibility to the residents and the house. It is common for these meetings to discuss house rules, naloxone, relevant trends/topics, and complaints. The residents should feel comfortable with their participation in decision-making in regards to the community and organization.
- Evidence the residents are engaging in a recovery journey: tokens from celebrations and recovery milestones, recovery literature, mutual aid supporting meeting lists, community resources, etc.

Posted Documents in Common Area

There are several documents required to be displayed in a certified recovery residence. All documents must be neatly displayed in a common area of the residence. It is common to have these documents neatly framed on the wall and uniformly displayed in a single common area, i.e., the living room or dining room.

These are the documents that are required to be posted in the residence.

1. The VARR Grievance Policy
2. Blank grievance forms easily accessible to residents (not required to be posted on a wall, but must be accessible)
3. Emergency contact phone numbers for staff and local emergency services / resources
4. Overdose Procedure
5. List of community resources accessible to residents
6. Resident's Rights and Rules
7. Fire escape plan posted on each floor
8. Safety Inspection Log
9. If already VARR Accredited, Certificate of Compliance is displayed in the residence

Grievance Policy and Blank Forms

This policy must be posted to ensure residents have the right to file a formal grievance. Certified recovery residence operators adopt the VARR Grievance Policy. A blank grievance form must be accessible to all residents.

Resident Interviews

There will be brief and documented resident interviews conducted during the site inspection. A staff member of the recovery residence can be present, although the goal of the interviews is to gauge the social model of recovery within the residence. The interview talking points may include Naloxone knowledge, the formal grievance process, social engagement, and general wellbeing.

Before the Inspection:

- Have ready and provide one physical copy of the Resident Intake Packet Policies & Procedures the day of inspections
- Inform all residents prior that a VARR site inspection will be taking place
- Residents should not be in bed sleeping during the inspection aside from reasonable exceptions
- Yourself or a designated staff member must be available on-site during the inspection
- VARR must have access to all areas of the residence

Conclusion

The site inspection is one of the final steps to the accreditation process. Once certified, a recovery residence will be inspected annually to maintain accreditation.

If any areas of the recovery residence do not meet the NARR Standards they will be addressed in a post inspection report known as the *Quality Improvement Plan(QIP)*. *Quality Improvement Plans* will be emailed to the point of contact for the recovery residence operator.