

**California Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act:**  
**ADDICTION RECOVERY RESIDENCE CERTIFICATION**

**Fact Sheet**

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**SUMMARY**

This bill would provide much needed quality parameters for group living environments for Californians recovering from addiction. Existing law provides for the licensure and regulation by the State Department of Health Care Services of adult alcoholism and drug abuse recovery and treatment facilities. Because recovery residences (sober living homes) do not provide treatment and are protected by federal fair housing and disability statute, they cannot be regulated by DHCS. This bill would provide for a voluntary certification program for these types of supportive residences and would prohibit referrals from addiction treatment programs to noncertified recovery residences. This bill would define a “recovery residence” as a residential property that meets specified requirements and has been is operated as a cooperative living arrangement to provide an alcohol and drug free environment for persons recovering from alcoholism or drug abuse, or both, who seek a living environment that supports ongoing recovery. The bill would provide that a drug and alcohol free residence may be certified by an organization approved by the State Department of Health Care Services, defined as “an approved certifying agency.” The bill would provide that a residence housing persons who purport to be recovering from drug or alcohol abuse would be presumed to be a drug and alcohol free residence if the residence has been certified by an approved certifying organization. The bill would require an approved certifying organization to maintain an affiliation with a recognized national organization, approved by the department, establish procedures to administer the application, certification, renewal, and disciplinary processes for a drug and alcohol free residence, and investigate and enforce

violations by a residence of the organization’s code of conduct. The bill would specify training requirements for owners and operators, as well as onsite residents. Additionally, it would require that certified recovery residences conform to national quality standards and requirements for good neighbor policies that provide contact information and complaint resolution functions for local governments and neighborhoods. This bill would require the department to maintain and post on its Internet Web site a registry that contains information regarding recovery residences that have had a certification revoked. The bill would prohibit referrals from state funded agencies and contracts to recovery residences that are not certified in good standing.

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**BACKGROUND**

Numerous studies document that sober living contributes to reduced recidivism. Given that close to 50 percent of recovering alcohol and drug addicts will relapse at some point after initial treatment and that it takes an estimated four to five years to reach a full sustained recovery; and the first 30 to 90 days after initial treatment are the most critical for preventing relapse, it is imperative that recovery residences be expanded as a means of reducing costs associated with multiple treatment episodes.

It has been shown that sober living homes are a helpful option for living following treatment, especially if a person’s original home environment is chaotic, unstable, and/or promotes substance use. In a study by Polcin and colleagues (2010) conducted an 18-month study that examined substance abuse and global functioning outcomes for residents living in sober living homes. Researchers followed 245 residents with alcohol

and/or drug abuse problems who were enrolled in the Clean and Sober Transitional Living program in California. The residents were assessed for severity of substance abuse, legal problems, psychiatric problems, employment, and family problems at baseline, 6-months, 12, and 18-months. The results showed that subjects in the sober living environment made significant improvements in substance abuse problems, with 42% of subjects reporting abstinence from drugs or alcohol at 18 months, compared to 19% of subjects who reported being abstinent at the start of the study.

Although an important component of the continuum of care for addiction recovery, the unregulated sober living market in California has allowed “bad apples” to take advantage of addicts and payers seeking to obtain accommodations post treatment. Substandard living conditions, overcrowding, and environments where drug use is overlooked or encouraged at supposed “sober living” homes have been substantiated. Impacts of poorly run sober living can also negatively affect neighborhoods and create law enforcement issues.

The lifeblood for many recovery residences is referral and funding from treatment programs, justice system clients, and post incarceration residents. Tying referrals and contracts from these sources to a requirement for certification would serve to basically “starve out” poorly run and dangerous “sober living” houses. This voluntary approach to certification does not violate federal or state statute in that homes that are not dependent on state funding or referrals can continue to operate without a certification requirement.

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### PREVIOUS LEGISLATION

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AB 2255 (Melendez), 2016, held in Assembly  
AB 2403 (Bloom), 2016, held in Assembly  
SB 1283 (Bates), 2016, held in Senate  
AB 2491 (Nestande), 2014, held in Senate  
AB 1983 (Mansoor), 2012 held in Assembly  
AB 1284 (Huffman), 2009, held in Assembly

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### THIS BILL

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This bill provides tangible solutions to improving sober living for persons in recovery and for creating an atmosphere of mutual support and respect between residents, local governments, and communities. Expanding and improving recovery residences supports the goal of the California Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act (CCARA), to create the nation’s first “on demand” treatment system for addiction. The bill provides:

- Voluntary certification of recovery residences
- Adoption of national quality standards for “sober living”
- Prohibition of referrals and contracting involving state funding to noncertified recovery residences
- Training requirements for recovery residence owners and operators
- Training requirements for onsite residents for the recognition of substance use disorder and relapse symptoms, first aid related to overdose, and ethical concerns for recovery residence operations
- Adherence to a nationally recognized code of ethics tied to sanctions for violating its tenants
- Oversight by the Department of Health Care Services which will be given the authority to order revocations of certifications based on its own investigation or complaint processes

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### STATUS

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Seeking co-authors

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### SUPPORT

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The following supported AB 2255:

- California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals (CCAPP)

- Association of California Cities - Orange County
- California Police Chiefs Association
- City of Dana Point
- City of Costa Mesa
- City of Hemet
- City of Laguna Niguel
- City of Menifee
- City of Rancho Mirage
- City of Riverside
- City of Whittier
- League of California Cities
- National Coalition Against Prescription Drug Abuse

**OPPOSITION**

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The following opposed AB 2255:

- Cliffside Malibu
- Western Center on Law and Poverty

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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