RECOVERY HOME ARCHITECTURE (RHAS) MANUAL

Description:

The *Recovery Home Architecture Scale (RHAS)* is an instrument designed to assess characteristics of recovery homes that constitute essential functions, such as safety, health, social interaction among residents, social support for recovery, personal identity, personal space, and empowerment of residents in decision making. Items for the Architectural Characteristics Scale draw from architectural literature depicting how to maximize space to serve various social functions. Effective socializing to build relationships in the house depends on the design and arrangement of the different areas. Initial items were based on some of the formative papers in the recovery home literature by Dr. Wittman that identify physical characteristics of recovery homes that are purported to be facilitative of resident recovery. Examples include sociopetal designs that facilitate social interaction, designs that facilitate security of the premises so as to detect bringing in alcohol and drugs, and designs that balance provision of personal space with discouragement of social isolation.

Procedures for assessing each of the items include inspection of each house and its property and an interview with the house manager focused on physical characteristics of the houses. Based on site visits that are part of a study of recovery homes, we developed 25 items on 6 domains measuring various aspects of recovery home architecture:

1. Physical maintenance (M)
2. Safety (S)
3. Sociability and Community (C)
4. Personal and residence identity (I)
5. Furnishings and fixtures (F)
6. Outdoor areas (O)

Items within each domain are rated on a 5-point Likert scale:

1 = Very poor
2 = Poor
3 = Fair
4 = Good
5 = Excellent

The scale was pilot tested by 3 raters assessing 5 different homes. Agreement among the raters was high. We calculated maximum differences between raters for means within each domain. No mean differences were greater than 1.2 and more than 83% of the mean differences within domains were <1 on the 5-point scale. After completion of the house visits, staff discussed the rationale for rating choices, which has led to further refinement of the instrument and better conceptualization of the rating process.

Interviewer role

The assessment should be completed on-site and takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. The walk through should be scheduled in advance with the house owner, house manager or a senior house resident so they can answer questions and give the walk through of the house. The time scheduled should allow for a walk-through of the sober living house and discussion with the house representative. Ratings should be based upon visual inspection and responses from the house representative. For raters who have prior experience with the house, prior knowledge can be used for

determining ratings, but information should be verified during the assessment, eg. “As far as your house meetings, they’re held once per month. Is that right?” Failure to visually inspect all areas of the house may result in inaccurate ratings. House representatives may skip areas they consider irrelevant, so the interviewer should ask to see as much of the house as possible. If a room is in use for personal reasons, such as someone using the shower in a bathroom or sleeping in a bedroom, that room may be skipped out of respect for privacy. Some interviewees may view the assessment as an official review that could have repercussions due to its similarity to more formal assessments. Though there is not a consent form for this scale because it does not collect individual, sensitive data, the interviewer should attempt to establish rapport with the house representative, let them know it will be confidential, and explain the purpose of the assessment.

The interviewer should see as much of the house as possible to allow for informed ratings. If the house is broken up into multiple units, the rater ***should still try to inspect all units as possible.*** The scale items are not meant to be assessed sequentially; rather, the raters should take notes and assess as they are given a tour and then ask follow-up questions throughout to inform their final ratings. It is recommended to take some time at the end to review the assessment to revisit any unassessed items. The interviewer is responsible to probe to find out the information relevant to each item and to clarify any unknown items. No items should be left blank. Though the ratings are based upon the interviewer’s perceptions, the interviewer should collect the relevant information for these ratings. If possible, two interviewers should complete their own ratings, then meet afterwards to discuss and review their notes. The interviewer who typically works with that house may provide relevant information for any items that were atypical, eg. house had a large amount of broken items that is not typical for the house. The assessment is designed to capture the different items and how they relate to the recovery experience for the residents.

RHAS RATING GUIDE

Section 1: House Maintenance (M)
The purpose of this section is to rate the appearance of the house's maintenance and cleanliness. The physical aspects of this section are measured to see how they may support or hinder the recovery experiences of the residents in the house. High levels of physical house maintenance contribute to resident and neighborhood respect.

1. Overall appearance of the exterior of the house
items: (cleanliness, trash, debris, paint, trim, wear-and-tear, missing/broken items)
Purpose/Goal: to evaluate the level of maintenance and appearance of the exterior of the house.

Suggestions: Take time at the start of the assessment to visually scan the exterior of the house. Note the overall age of the house and specific factors that impact the overall physical appearance of the house.

- Is the house visible from the street?
- Is the front door easily approachable?
- Does the house convey a reclusive or an inviting feel from the street?
- Is there trash in the front yard?
- Are there any noticeable physical parts of the exterior of the house that need to be replaced or repaired?
- If there are plants, are they well-kept or overgrown?

2. Overall appearance of the interior of the house ……
items: (cleanliness, trash, paint, trim, wear-and-tear, missing/broken items)
Purpose/Goal: to evaluate the level of maintenance and appearance of the interior of the house.

Suggestions: Take time when entering each room inside the house to visually scan the interior of the house to come to a final rating overall for the interior of the house. Make notes throughout the tour in order to determine the rating after having seen the entire house.

- How recently does the place seem to have been cleaned?
- Is the house messy/are items put away?
- Is there trash left around the house?
- Is paint peeling?
- Are there multiple broken items around the house?
- Is there a large pile of items in one area that would make spending time in that area undesirable?

3. Maintenance equipment is adequate
items: (cleaning supplies, vacuum cleaner, tools for minor repairs, brooms/brushes)
Purpose/Goal: To determine how many of the cleaning supplies are provided by the house management to allow for house maintenance.

Suggestions: Ask to see where cleaning supplies are located. Visually inspect the condition of the equipment. Keep in mind what would be needed based upon the size of the house and check to see if it's available.

- Does the house supply the cleaning supplies or are residents expected to buy them?

- Do you think that the amount and tools are sufficient for cleaning the house?

4. Protection from environmental health risks
items: (fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, sturdy handrails, lighting for stairs & outdoors)
Purpose/Goal: To determine the physical items that support environmental safety.

Suggestions: During the house walk through, note if all stairs have handrails and proper lighting. Note the condition and location of all fire extinguishers.

- How many fire extinguishers are in the house?
- If the house is multiple levels, is there a fire rope or exit plan for the second floor?
- Are any of the exits blocked?

5. Cleanliness and hygiene …… ……
items: (dirt on surfaces, leaky toilets/drains, soiled furniture/furnishings, cleaning eqpt)
Purpose/Goal: To determine the cleanliness of the house because this can impact the comfort of the residents and desirability to reside at the house. Respect for the house can help create a sense of community.

Suggestions: Note the condition of surfaces in the rooms, both the counters and the floors. The shared living spaces should be clear of clutter and cleaned so others would feel comfortable also using that space. Be sure to rate the overall house. Though there might be a few messy residents, the rating should be for the house overall for that day.

- Is the toilet running?
- Are there visible stains?

Section 2. Safety and Security (S)
The physical design of the property impacts the sense of security that residents feel and impacts their desire to positively interact with others in the house. Residents should feel as though their safety is looked after and that their physical environment aims to protect them. Their physical setting should be conducive to their recovery efforts. While problems may occur, a house with good safety design can spot and address these problems.

6. Secure property
items: (locks, fencing, lighting, property open to visual surveillance)
Purpose/Goal: To evaluate the physical items that contribute to the sense of security of the property and how it prevents issues with unwanted visitors and substances.

Suggestions: Note these items throughout the house tour. Ask about any gaps in the security.

- If there is fencing, does it go all the way around the house?
- Is the fencing effective, aka How high is the fence? Can it easily be climbed?
- Does the property feel as though it provides privacy from the neighbors?
- Are entrances and exits usually locked?
- Is there a video surveillance system?
- Can the exterior of the property be easily monitored?

7. Entrances & openings to facility are monitored

items: (closures for doors, windows, perimeter fencing, lighting, visual surveillance)
Purpose/Goal: To determine how easily people can enter and exit the property to ensure that residents can feel secure and discourage drugs/alcohol from entering the house.

Suggestions:
- Could unauthorized people enter and exit the property easily?
- How is the property monitored?
- How are the exits/entrances monitored?
- How are visitors supervised?
- Have there been any issues with unauthorized people visiting the property?

8. Fire-safety and emergency procedures in place
items: (exit plans, earthquake kits)
Purpose/Goal: To evaluate the emergency procedures that contribute to the residents' sense of security.

Suggestions: Ask the house representative about the emergency procedures and supplies.
- Does the house have an emergency exit route posted?
- How do they review emergency procedures?
- Have they ever had an emergency?

9. Design discourages hiding of contraband
items: (all parts of premises open to inspection, including all cabinets, closets etc.)
Purpose/Goal: To keep the house free from alcohol and drugs to avoid temptations to relapse and to maintain a sober environment. While recovery homes may not be considered "controlled environments," the goal of the house should be to have an environment that is free from alcohol and drugs.

Suggestions: Ask the house representative about random inspections and how their possessions are monitored.
- What is the house's medication policy? If medications are allowed, could other residents access their medications and abuse them?
- Do they do a house inspection when any resident relapses?

10. Food handling and storage is in safe and clean environment
items: (clean surfaces, stove/refrigerator, cupboards, food storage areas, garbage)
Purpose/Goal: To rate how well food safety procedures are followed. Since it's a shared living environment, the efforts of other residents to properly prepare food to avoid food-related illnesses can impact the safety of each resident.

Suggestions: Visually inspect the countertops in the kitchen, sink, cupboards, and refrigerators.
- Are meals provided by the house or are residents responsible for preparing their own meals?
- If making their own, how soon afterwards do they clean up?
- If meals are provided, who is responsible for meal clean up?
- Is additional cleaning of the kitchen/food prep area one of the house chores?

Section 3. Sociability and Community (C)
The purpose of this section is to examine how the layout of the house encourages resident interactions. According to the 12-step model, peer support is viewed as supportive of the recovery process. Isolation during recovery is regarded as potentially leading to relapses, while peer support is perceived as preventing relapses. While AA and NA meetings may provide formal meeting opportunities for interacting with others in recovery and development of healthy relationships with others in recovery, sober living houses provides another setting for these relationships to develop.

11. Layout of the house encourages resident interactions
items: (open plan, ease of circulation, accidental contacts with other residence)
Purpose/Goal: To determine how much the physical layout of the house leads to the residents informally interacting because frequent interactions promote recovery and healthy interactions among the residents. The model is to have a physical layout of the house that leads to more interactions and has more of an open concept where the kitchen, living and dining areas flow into each other.

Suggestions: Ask the house representative about where people tend to hang out in the house. Ask about where they tend to eat since some houses may have a dining area, but some may eat outside. Observe interactions among residents while conducting the assessment. Think about where one would go throughout the day as they got ready to go out and came home from their day.

- Are the kitchen, living and dining areas separate rooms?
- How easily could one spend time in one room without being within visual or audible perception of other residents?
- If someone came home, could they go to their room without entering any common space?
- Does there seem to be a space that would encourage a high level of socializing?
- How easy is it to isolate oneself in this house?

12. Space to accommodate house meetings with all residents
items: (space can accommodate all residents comfortably in one area)
Purpose/Goal: To determine if all the residents would have a space to meet on a regular basis.

Suggestions: Ask the house representative where the house meetings are usually held. Based off of the number of beds in the house, determine if that space could comfortably accommodate all possible residents.

- Is there a large table that everyone can sit around to have the meeting?
- Does the living area accommodate all of the residents?
- If a house meeting has been previously attended, were any residents forced to stand?

Section 4. Personal and Residence Identity (I)
A recovery home should build relationships among secure and healthy residents that support each other in their recoveries. Residents should feel as though they are able to establish a private space and to participate in the life of the house.

13. Personalization of resident rooms
Items: (personal pictures/poster/objects, radio/tv, toiletries, books, lights)
Purpose/Goal: To determine how much the residents have personalized their space as a sign of how much they are participating in their life in the house.

Suggestions: Ask the house representative about the house policy regarding personalization of the rooms. Note how many people have hung items on their walls or have placed items on their bedside tables.

- Does it seem as though residents have a personal space?

14. Security of resident personal possessions
items: (separate drawers, lockable space, separate space for possessions)
Purpose/Goal: Since individuals should feel safe within their home, the safekeeping of their possessions contributes to their sense of security and possession of rights within the house.

Suggestions: Ask house representative if residents have a lockable space for belongings. Some houses may not allow lockable spaces or have lockable spaces in an office due to concerns about contraband. Determine if they have assigned drawers for possessions and allotted space in a closet for their clothing.

15. Distinguishing or unique features of the house
items: (things that make the house stand out from neighbors / similar houses)
Purpose/Goal: The preference for this rating is for a house that fits into the neighborhood rather than one that stands out, especially for bad reasons. The house can have unique aspects that are desirable and that would contribute to someone wanting to live there.

Suggestions: When first arriving for the assessment, note the other houses in the neighborhood and their general appearance.

- When walking/driving up to the recovery home, does it stick out in the neighborhood?
- What are some of the aspects of this house that you find most memorable?
- How would you feel if this house was in your neighborhood?

16. Identification of the house as a sober living environment
items: (special plaques, awards, signs, clothing, logos)
Purpose/Goal: To evaluate the physical environment of the house to see how much of the identity of the house is for people in recovery vs. people living together.

Suggestions: Keep an eye out for these throughout the house tour. If none are noted, ask the house representative.

- Are there any certifications/awards on the walls for the sober living?
- Are the 12 steps posted anywhere?
- Are there photos of the residents doing a sober activity together?

Section 5. Quality of furnishing and fixtures (F)
Purpose/Goal: To rate the furnishing and fixtures on different aspects to get an overall rating of the quality of the furnishing and fixtures. A house's furnishings and fixtures would ideally have a cohesive design and the items would be in good shape to contribute to a sense of "home."

17. Durability of furnishing and fixtures
Purpose/Goal: House is commonly used by multiple residents over time, so typically good to choose practical materials to endure use. Furnishing and fixtures should be in good condition. House is lived in

so some wear and small imperfections are expected to occur but furnishing and fixtures in disrepair may indicate a lack of respect for or pride in the house.

- Are the furnishings and fixtures generally in good condition? Aka if you were to list these items for resale, would you describe them as being in good condition?
- Are there any stains, tears, scratches, dents, frayed or pulled threads, or other visible markings that indicate extensive usage or lack of care?
- Are there any strong odors, such as mildew or smoke, pet hair, or other potential irritants for residents who may be allergic?

18. Repair of furnishing and fixtures

Purpose/Goal: Items throughout the house are not excessively damaged. If so, they are reported to the house manager and/or owner to fixed or replaced.

- Are there a large amount of broken or damaged items in the house?
- Do items look as though they need to be replaced?
- When items have been repaired, is the item in good condition? Aka, are the fixes extremely noticeable, eg. Duct tape to hold together an item, wires hanging out

19. Comfort of furnishing and fixtures

Purpose/Goal: House is expected to offer a comfortable living environment that encourages residents to relax and stay. Though different houses may have different approaches to their design of comfort based upon the residents, here are some general items to note.

- Does the living room offer places for people to sit comfortably, ideally with a place to put their feet up?
- Do the shared living and dining areas feel cramped? Do you have to move items to get around?
- Are the fabrics scratchy?
- Is the seating stiff? How about the beds?
- Is adequate lighting provided? Is any of the lighting harsh? Is there natural light?

20. Appearance (design) of furnishing and fixtures

Purpose/Goal: House has a cohesive design, either through matching pieces of furniture, similar styles of furniture, or a color scheme. Mismatched items may occur due to needing to replace items, but an investment in the furnishing and fixtures reflect an attempt to create a welcoming environment for the residents.

- How would you describe the design of the house?
- Does it seem as though much thought was put into the appearance of the furnishing and fixtures?
- Is the house cluttered with items? Is the décor visually pleasing?

Section 6. Outdoor common areas (O)

Purpose/Goal: To determine how the outside area of the house contributes to the residents' experiences in the house.

Suggestions: Inquire about how often and use of the outside area. Potential uses could include gardens, gazebos, sports/exercise areas, and covered areas that can double as outdoor rooms and places for

cookouts and social gatherings. Multi-use of large back yards is acceptable particularly if these are quiet activities typical for the neighborhood.

Character of area (1 = very little, 5 = a lot of the characteristic) If no outside area, then house gets lowest rating

21. Privacy/containment
Purpose/Goal: Outside area is private so can socialize without being observed by neighbors. Good for a sense of community at the house and for relationships with neighbors.

- Is there a fence around the outside area?
- Can you see into the neighbor's windows?
- When you walk up to the house, can you hear people outside talking? Can you see people in the yard?

22. Maintenance & upkeep
Purpose/Goal: Cleanliness of outside area reflects a sense of pride in the house and contributes to a welcoming environment for the residents to use the outdoor environment.

- Is the outside area kept clean?
- Are there a large number of items crowding the outdoor space?
- Is the landscaping maintained? Eg. Are plants alive? Is grass mowed?
- Are the outdoor items all functional? eg. Pool is operational, gym equipment works, games are not broken.
- Does the smoking area have ashtrays? Are there cigarette butts scattered about the yard?

23. Natural feel / planting / green / views
Purpose/Goal: Green spaces and natural views provide a relaxing environment that can help the well-being of the residents. Having plants in the outdoor space is a nice option for those who would like to rest outdoors. Green spaces also improve air quality, reduce noise, and provide a cooling environment during hot temperatures.

- Are there plants in the yard? Are they alive?
- Does the area offer a space to relax in the shade of a tree or other greenery?
- Does the outside area have a nice view of nature?

24. Suitable for games and recreation
Purpose/Goal: Outside area allows for people to play games or do other recreational activities, such as exercising. Residents need a space that allows for them to spend some time outdoors doing fun activities.

- Is there a space to play games?
- Are games and/or workout equipment made available?

25. Suitable for hanging out and socializing
Purpose/Goal: Residents are able to use the outdoor space to connect with other residents.

- Does the outside area offer seating and comfortable areas to facilitate socializing and developing the social environment of the house? Are there benches, chairs, couches, and tables?
- Is there a grill if residents wanted to have a barbeque?