

GRACE HOUSE

RESIDENT HANDBOOK

July 2025



...and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Romans 12:2

Everything in this Handbook is subject to change pending continuing guidelines and protocols in place regarding COVID-19 or other infectious diseases.

WELCOME

We recognize that without support and relationship the path to sobriety can often seem insurmountable. At Grace House we hope to walk alongside you as you work toward your personal recovery and to offer you relational support and care. We believe that with commitment and a safe structured environment you will be successful in your efforts to rebuild your life and we recognize the strength and courage you have already shown in progressing this far.

At Grace House you will be celebrated, encouraged, loved, and empowered. You also will be corrected and directed when it is necessary. We are enthusiastic about helping you discover your unique identity, passions, and skills. Our hope is that through your time with us you will develop greater self-awareness, cultivate your character, grow in confidence, and regain control of your life. It is our greatest hope that you leave here encouraged, changed, hopeful, and excited about your future. As with any journey, you cannot arrive at your destination without directions, sound decision-making, and a modicum of good common sense. This Handbook will contain guidelines for living at Grace House successfully.

WE BELIEVE

We believe in new beginnings. This is a chance for you to hit the reset button, to learn to live simply, and to rebuild. Our vision for you is that you would view this space and time as a launching pad into vitality, health, and fruitfulness.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Even though Grace House is not a certified NYS agency, we maintain and uphold all of the privacy and confidentiality rules and laws concerning protected health information under HIPAA and 42CFR, Part 2. You will be asked to sign releases of information to obtain and release information which are able to be rescinded (certain exceptions in the case of legal releases apply). You will be asked to sign off on HIPAA regulations and this is kept with your record.

In the case of an emergency, certain medical information may be shared.

You will have access to your records upon your request. The Director will review your record with you after your signed release is obtained except for documents that have come from a third party. These records would need your request directly to that source.

WHAT IS SUPPORTIVE LIVING?

This is the last step before full integration into community life. By the time you are at this level of care you should have achieved a certain level of maturity and a degree of recovery. It is a “finishing school” of sorts, - a place where you learn to live a disciplined life that can be translated into a full and productive life when you leave. The length of stay is open ended. If

you meet your goals in six months then you are discharged; - hopefully with a full time job or school enrollment and safe, affordable, appropriate housing. If your goals take 18 months to be met, then you can be here for that period of time. The time is what it needs to be. And you are a part of the supportive community offering and being support for the community of women in the House.

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Grace House is committed to providing an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for our women, their families, and our staff/volunteers. Being cognizant of trauma-informed care and implementing it, is about creating safety and trustworthiness within care practices, our physical/emotional environments, and daily interactions with residents, families and others.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We are eager for your time at Grace House to be transformative and healing. We value you and want you to succeed.

Your Rights

- A clean and well-maintained home that is adequately supplied within the budget we have
- Fair treatment by staff and volunteers who work under a Code of Ethics
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Full access to whatever we have and are able to provide

Your Responsibilities

- Keeping your room clean; doing your own laundry including bedding; completing assigned household chores in order to maintain a clean and well kept home [washer/drier on premises]
- Treating fellow residents, staff, and volunteers with the same respect you would want shown to you and giving them a hand when they need it
- Being honest and truthful in all things
- Keeping all appointments in a timely manner both in and out of house
- Asking for help or prayer when you need it
- Practicing HOW - Honesty, Open-mindedness, Willingness
- Participating in the development of your Individual Service Plan and then pursuing the goals set forth

Because each of you is a unique individual in her own right with special needs, rules will be applied as they need to be in your particular case.

REQUIRED ACTIVITIES (subject to modification)

8 am - meeting to lay out the day's activities for each woman

Grace House dinner – 5 pm – Monday through Friday

Church on Sunday at the church of your choice

AA/NA/Celebrate Recovery – at least four times a week, when available or by Zoom; more are strongly encouraged

In-house classes – when and as scheduled

There will be other group activities which will be offered from time to time.

Full participation/engagement in all activities is expected to the extent of one's ability.

THE FIRST 30 DAYS

A woman's first 30 days will be a time of getting to know one another. There will be a closer observation than for the rest of the stay. This will include the resident having to be accompanied when leaving the House. It will also be a time of getting oriented to out-patient services, perhaps a new primary care provider, and other supports. The new resident will develop a Service Plan with the Director and start thinking about employment, volunteer opportunities, or educational choices.

HELPS FOR COMMUNAL LIVING

COVID-19 ISSUES: We are at the end of the pandemic stage and have entered the endemic phase; however, there are things we don't want to forget:

Wash hands often and thoroughly;

Use hand sanitizer when you can't wash;

Distance and/or mask when it is required/appropriate and when you are not feeling well

Get vaccinated if it is medically indicated;

Keep the House clean and sanitized.

You may be asked to be tested periodically and certainly after an exposure.

BOUNDARIES: Probably the greatest impediment to successful communal living is the lack of appropriate boundaries. Boundaries are like fences; - they are meant to protect you and me giving each of us our own space. Add to that a good dose of manners and common sense and there should be minimal problems in a group of people living together and sharing a common life.

CHORES: All residents will be assigned daily household tasks to maintain the cleanliness and appearance of House. Each woman cleans up after herself; e.g., puts her dishes in the dishwasher, cleans up spills, etc. Once a week there is a thorough cleaning of the house, usually done on Saturday.

CLEANLINESS OF VEHICLE: As we no longer have an agency vehicle to keep up, it is the responsibility of the residents to keep the director's car clean and tidy as it is used to transport them many places and should be maintained in optimal condition.

GROCERIES AND MEALS: Breakfast and lunch are taken individually. Monday through Friday dinner is taken together with the Director at 5:00 p.m. unless a woman is still out at an obligation. Residents work together to plan dinners, grocery shop, and prepare meals. Groceries and staples are purchased with SNAP benefits and other funds. Every effort must be made to be present for the House dinner. Each woman is responsible for purchasing and preparing one dinner meal a week using a recipe. Women do not pay for any other House items. Each woman **MUST** carefully budget her SNAP benefits so that they last for the entire month.

MORNING MEETING: At 8:00 each morning there is a short meeting opened with inspirational and positive thoughts for the day. This is followed by an overview of the day for each of the women along with any announcements the Director or the women may have.

ENTERTAINMENT: TV, movies, and the like are limited to evenings, after 6 pm, and weekends.

WEEKLY ROUTINE: Monday through Friday is spent pursuing goals, developing skills, working, volunteering, or in an educational program. Weekends are for leisure and fun activities. From time to time there will be organized group activities both during the week and on a weekend day.

BEDROOMS: After breakfast/before leaving for the day, each resident is responsible for making her bed and assuring that the room is **neat and tidy**. Bedroom doors should be OPEN except when changing.

No resident should be in another resident's room unless that person is present and invites her in.

CELL PHONES: first 30 days of residency—cell phones will be handed in each evening at 8 pm or when returning from work/meeting if later than 8 pm and will be returned after next morning's devotions.

After 30 days of residency—women may have their cell phones with them UNLESS their use becomes an annoyance to others or excessive. If this happens, they will be returned to an 8 pm to 8 am turn-in for a period of time or some other limited schedule.

Phones are ordinarily collected prior to departing for a self-help meeting or similar activity.

CURFEW: Sunday through Thursday (unless at an approved activity) all residents will be in the House by 9 pm. For Friday and Saturday it is 10 pm.

SMOKING: Smoking, including vaping, is not permitted in the House, on the grounds, or anywhere else. If this presents a difficulty, please bring or request Nicotine Replacement aides. **If this smoking regulation will be a problem for you, please do not ask for admission to Grace House.** We do not want the odor of smoke in this House as it presents a trigger for others who

are trying not to smoke/vape. While we recognize there is no odor from vaping, any of that paraphernalia along with tobacco and lighters will be confiscated and destroyed if found.

COMING AND GOING: Please use the back door when coming and going and sign in/out on the sheet provided. Accuracy and truthfulness are expected. For the sake of both courtesy and safety, please let the Director know when you are leaving and when you have returned. In addition, if it is a destination other than a walk or something on the daily schedule discussed at the morning meeting, it is again only good manners to ask permission to go to that place. Residents will be given a code to access the house key inside the lock box. This code will be changed frequently. There should be reasons and destinations for going out. A walk for recreation or exercise is healthy as is a walk to a clinic, store, library, or other destination. However, going in and out every half hour is both unreasonable and unnecessary. Being aware of your location/destination is a safety/liability issue.

NARCAN: Every woman should be trained in the use of Narcan and have a kit in her possession at all times. If you do not have one, please arrange with your outpatient counselor to be trained and obtain a kit.

FOOTWEAR: During winter months and bad (wet, muddy) weather at other times of year, street shoes are not allowed throughout the house. Thick socks or house slippers with a tread should be worn in the common areas. There is a tray for shoes/boots by the door in the kitchen for women and visitors alike.

WAKE/SLEEP TIMES: Residents should be up in time to be downstairs for morning meeting at 8 a.m. Monday-Friday. Women should be in their rooms to read/study/prepare for bed by 9 pm Monday-Thursday and 10 pm on weekends. Lights are out at 10 pm during the week and shortly thereafter on the weekend.

POWER OF EXAMPLE: It is sincerely hoped that those women who have been in the House longer will welcome those coming in and help them in any way possible most particularly by being a positive power of example to them.

SPONSORSHIP: Obtaining and using a sponsor in the self-help fellowships is strongly encouraged. Use the guidelines established in the fellowships to invite a woman to be your sponsor.

BICYCLES: Bicycle riding is healthy and good exercise. Women are welcomed to bring a bicycle and lock with them. Bicycle riding must include the use of a helmet. This is a safety/liability issue.

PERSONAL ACTIVITIES: This is a wonderful opportunity to develop a hobby or skill that you have always wanted to learn. Or just to develop a love of reading; Canton has a great public library. Talk with others about what you might like to learn.....

MAIL: Only staff and/or volunteers may collect mail and packages from the front and back door porches. If you notice that a package has been delivered, please notify staff.

PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES: Soft drinks and caffeinated beverages ARE allowed but are advised to be used in moderation. Energy drinks are prohibited as is alcohol and all substances which are illicit. It is healthy to monitor the intake of one's sugar

RESIDENT MONITOR: One resident can be appointed with input from the other residents as Resident Monitor. She will help by checking that doors are locked at night, lights are off, needed supplies are listed, chores are done, etc.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION: At this level of care we should not need a system of demerits or points to deal with behavior that is harmful to a resident or disrupting of community life. A one time, frank discussion should be sufficient to bring about change. If it does not, along with subsequent conversations, the woman will be asked to leave the House. As valued as each woman is, the good of the House must come first.

CONVERSATION: Grace House is intended to be a safe place in which to get better. Conversation about the "glories" of drug/alcohol use, criminality, old "friends" still in the throes of harmful behaviors, and jail house buddies has no place here. Cursing, swearing, and vulgarity are not to be used at any time. Insolence and abusive talk will not be tolerated in any form nor will contentious conversations or derogatory statements about race, ethnicity, sexual preference/orientation, gender, religion, or disability. In other words, all conversation should be kind and uplifting. As a reminder, gossip is neither kind or uplifting.

SPIRITUALITY/MEDITATION/THERAPY: Items in the House relating to these areas will be permitted at the discretion of the Residence Director and the CEO. Such items include books, cards, cds, and the like.

WORKING/SCHOOL HOURS: When one first starts employment, the limitation to the number of hours worked per week is 20. This will gradually be raised IF the woman is able to handle work along with other responsibilities. No work or school hours should be scheduled past **6 pm**. This is to assure that self-help meetings can be attended. Work should be scheduled around mandatory programming especially clinical appointments. Exceptions require permission of the Director. All work/school schedules are to be given to the Director and she is to be notified when changes are made so that she always has a current schedule in the case of emergencies.

SALARY NOTIFICATION: Each woman who receives DSS assistance is responsible for notifying the appropriate county DSS that she has commenced working when she receives her first paycheck.

ROMANCE: There are to be NO romantic or sexual relationships pursued by a resident at Grace House. Not only are you endangering your own recovery but also the recovery of

someone else. In addition, there is to be no association whatsoever with the residents of North Country Freedom Homes. This contact endangers the on-going progress toward recovery of both of you as well as their stay at that facility and yours at this House.

FIRE DRILLS: Fire drills will be held once a month randomly. During a drill, or in the event of a real fire, all residents will promptly exit the building and meet at the designated point to await further instructions.

NAIL POLISH/ETC. Substances that can permanently stain such as nail polish, glue/super glue, eyelash adhesive, some craft material and the like must be used downstairs on a surface that is protected.

BATHROOMS: There are two bathrooms with a laundry room in between, a rather odd set-up. Rooms 1 and 2 will use the bathroom off Room 1 and Room 3 will share the other with the Volunteers. Please be careful with the doors/locks/etc. There are many of them! The downstairs bathroom is reserved for staff, volunteers, and visitors. Please note, that plumbing in this house is old and use of toilet paper should be monitored. We all become well-versed in the use of plungers while at Grace House! On the other hand, the water heating system has just been updated, and there is on-demand hot water throughout the house.

RENT: For those who are working, the proper rent is paid on the 1st and 15th of each month with a three day grace period. Please submit copies of pay stubs on a weekly basis. For those receiving monthly benefits such as SSD, the arranged rent is due within three days of the payment being received.

ROOM SEARCHES AND TESTING: Rooms and/or possessions (bags, purchases, etc.) will be searched periodically with the resident present. The Director can enter one's room after knocking. Drug and alcohol testing can be done periodically. Colored buttons are drawn every morning by the women at the 8:00 a.m. meeting and if the button drawn matches the day's color a drug test is done.

BACKPACKS: Backpacks cannot be worn/taken into any store, to self-help meetings, church, or any other such activity. They MAY be used for going to school, on hikes, recreational activities, going away for an over-night/weekend, and possibly going to work.

CONSERVATION: Please turn off lights and other electrical equipment that are not being used and recycle in the proper baskets. Be sure to manage food well so there is minimal waste.

AGENCY COMPUTERS: We have both a desk top and lap top computers available to the residents to be used for their needs. There is also a dedicated printer available. A full policy regarding the use of this equipment will be available to you prior to your use of it and posted on the bulletin board.

GROUPS: It is our responsibility to keep the grounds, walks, etc. tidy and neat and clear according to the season.

VIDEO CAMERAS: These are located in the House for security and protections. Notification is posted at both the front and rear doors.

PACKING: When packing to leave upon your discharge we ask that both staff and your roommate be present because of unfortunate events in the past of stealing. Once bags are packed they are to come downstairs and remain untouched until you leave. A small bag for last minute items may be kept with you until leaving. Theft will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

ITEMS LEFT: Packed or boxed and sealed up items can be left in the basement (which is locked) for up to 30 days at your own risk. If they are left past that time they will be disposed of unless other arrangements are made. Items left in your room because they have been forgotten or by design will be kept for 7 days and then disposed of.

VISITATION

Contact with loved ones, especially children and immediate family members, is important. For women with children visitation will be determined on a case by case basis making every effort to coordinate with the needs of the children. We support and encourage continued building of relationship with children and family while living at Grace House and will do our utmost to facilitate opportunities for this.

Guests are limited to immediate family from 12 noon until 3 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday from 3 – 6 pm. Visitation is confined to the lower floor of the House. The behavior of the visitors is the responsibility of the GH resident. In general, visitation is discouraged the first month of residency (except for child visitation), because it is helpful for a woman to be grounded in her new environment prior to having visits.

In order for the smooth operation of the House, schedules of child visitation should be given to the Director and updated with her every time changes are made. Other guests such as personal clergy, sponsors, spiritual mentors, and the like can also visit with prior notification to the Director.

Those who are visiting must receive approval in advance and must not be under the influence of alcohol or other substances. They will be admitted to the House through the front door only.

TIME AWAY FROM THE HOUSE

After 60 days' residency a woman may, with permission, spend a Friday or Saturday night away at the home of an immediate family member on occasion. After six months of residency this can be two night (Friday and Saturday), from time to time, at the home of an immediate family

member. As with all special allowances, this is based on appropriate maturity level, behavior, and permission and not intended to be on a regular basis.

There are times when a family would like a woman resident to join them for a special occasion (a short trip or excursion). Permission for these activities is granted on a case by case basis.

MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

Women accepted to Grace House must be able to manage their own medications; that is, able to take them according to how they are prescribed and maintain them safely in a tote that is provided and kept in the Director's office which is locked. **All prescriptions need to be placed through Kinney's Drug here in Canton.** Over the counter medications are to be kept in these totes, also. The only exceptions would be epi pens, nitro, and the like for immediate and emergency use.

All medications, prescribed and OTC, must be noted by the Director in your record at the time of admission and updated on an on-going basis during your stay. When a prescriber makes a change, s/he needs to fax or otherwise inform the Director in writing of the change in medication so that the Medication Administration Records are accurate.

If you have medications to dispose of there is a supply of kits to do this with in the Director's office or they can be taken, with the Director, to the disposal Kiosk at Kinney's Drugs. They should not be flushed or otherwise put into the waste stream.

Under no circumstances are you to "share" with another individual your medication whether it is prescribed or over-the-counter.

If a woman is found to be unable to manage her own medication, other alternatives will be explored for her placement.

All prescribers of medications for residents of Grace House must be located in St. Lawrence County unless one has been referred to a specialist or special program out of county and is being seen there in coordination with a service provider here in SLC. This is to ensure appropriate coordination of care with local providers of care and the health and safety of our women. If your current prescriber is from out-of-county, you have 20 days to arrange with your local provider of service—mental health, substance use disorder, other health care—to get prescriptions moved. This is to be done in conjunction with the Residence Director.

CHANGING SERVICE PROVIDERS

You are asked **not** to change a service provider (that is, one who provides primary medical care, mental health care, substance use care, or specialty care) without the coordination of the Residence Director. This is critical to maintain appointments, appropriate releases, and information in the event of an emergency.

TEAM EFFORT

Not only is life within the House a team effort, but we will all strive to work with outside agencies in a team-like way. We will seek to work closely with out-patient services, mental health providers, health care workers, probation/parole officers, educational programs, employers, housing agents, and any others that might need to be involved in making your transition in a full community life successful.

MASTER SHEET OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

In light of achieving coordination of care and assuring that visits are made and kept, each resident will complete a list of all service providers and assure that it is kept up-to-date with the Director. This is done as providers are obtained, changed, and discontinued.

GRIEVANCES

Into every life some rain will fall.....therefore, we won't have a perfect life all of the time. When we have a disagreement with another resident, a volunteer, the Director we should make every attempt to work it out through frank and open discussion. NOT triangulation and other unhealthy means of communication which include raised voices, shaming, tattling, foul language, insolence, and disrespect of any kind.

If an effort at frank discussion fails and the issue remains unresolved, then the Executive Director or Board Chair will hear the matter and bring conclusion to it.

Steps:

Resident with Resident	Seek resolution from Community Meeting	if that doesn't resolve
	Seek resolution from Director	if that doesn't resolve
	Seek resolution from Executive Director	
Resident with Volunteer	Seek resolution from Director	if that doesn't resolve
	Seek resolution from Executive Director	
Resident with Director	Seek resolution from Community Meeting	if that doesn't resolve
	Seek resolution from Executive Director	

If all of the above steps have not been taken and notes made of the various discussions, then the Executive Director/ Board Chair will have nothing to work with and will be unable to hear the complaint until the steps have been gone through with some notations.

Executive Director:

Carolyn M. White
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If the above process does not bring remediation, the Board Chair may be called for final determination. The Chair is currently Rachel Sieja at 518-335-6971..