

# Dismas House

## Massachusetts

*Dismas House is a community in the Main South neighborhood of Worcester where former prisoners, students, volunteers and others work together to create community. It is important to understand that we are not a halfway house or a treatment program. We offer programs, and the structured community may be suitable for probation or parole. Former prisoners and persons with criminal/addiction histories agree to follow the rules, house agreements, and expectations described in this fact sheet.*

*Dismas House assists in the transition of people released from jail through supportive community and through the programs offered by staff and partner agencies.*

### **MISSION:**

*The mission of Dismas House is the reconciliation of former prisoners with society, and society with former prisoners, through the creation of supportive community.*

### **FIRST DAYS:**

*On or before your prearranged day to move in, call Dismas staff or have your case manager/social worker call to confirm that you will be moving in. When you get to Dismas House, staff will assign you a room, give you the keys, have you sign a contract, and assign you a chore and a day to do dishes. New residents should speak with staff about services available to them. If you are on parole or probation, you are responsible to notify your supervisor when you move in and out of the house.*

**IMPORTANT:** *Before coming to Dismas House, make sure that you have the proper documents (birth certificate, Social Security card, etc.) needed to obtain an official ID. You will need this documentation when applying for jobs.*

*For the first six weeks of your stay at Dismas House, you are expected to be in the house by 10 PM; no overnights may be scheduled outside the house. For those in recovery, attendance at a minimum of 4 AA or NA meetings a week is required. After six weeks, curfew is midnight, and residents can request an overnight pass on weekends to stay with family or friends.*

### **EMPLOYMENT:**

*Everyone at Dismas House is expected to be employed, going to school, or involved in community volunteerism. Former prisoners should work with staff and partner agencies to get a job as a priority. Dismas House staff*

*will assist residents in finding employment, but residents must understand that they are responsible for finding their own job. Staff are to be informed immediately by the resident upon obtaining or losing a job. Generally, students who live in the community are expected to be full-time university or college students in good standing, or involved in a live-in internship. Persons receiving disability assistance will be expected to be volunteering full-time and/or working the hours allowable.*

### **PROGRAM FEES:**

*The weekly fee, which includes room and board, is \$75 per week. Fees are payable each week in advance, due each Friday. If former prisoners who come into the house directly from the institution have no job or other income, the first weeks' or two weeks' payments may be waived. If at anytime your past due fees exceed \$225, a schedule for repayment will be drafted with staff. Failure to pay program fees constitutes grounds for dismissal from the house.*

### **HOUSE RULES AND CONSEQUENCES:**

*Breaking any of the following rules indicates your unwillingness to live in a peaceful community and will result in your being asked to leave the house.*

1. *No violence, threat of violence, theft or destruction of property (this includes weapons of any kind). The use of violence means that you will be asked to leave the house immediately.*

2. *The use of illegal drugs or alcohol on the premises is against the rules. In addition, the use of drugs or alcohol on or off premises by recovering substance abusers is prohibited. The use of drugs or alcohol means that you will be asked to leave the house immediately. Dismas House staff randomly test for drugs and alcohol use.*

3. *No sexual activity is allowed on the premises. No community member should engage another in a sexual relationship during his/her time at Dismas House.*

*If you are asked to leave the house and you are on parole or probation, your parole or probation officer will be notified when you leave.*

### **ROOMS:**

*You are expected to sleep in your room at Dismas House every night. Residents who have successfully completed their first six weeks may request to spend weekends with friends or family.*

*If you would like to change your room, please consult with staff first. Please do not remove furnishings from the common areas.*

### **APPEALS PROCESS:**

When a resident breaks a rule and is asked to leave Dismas House, he/she has the right to appeal that decision to the community. Appeals will be brought to residents at the weekly house meeting. If a resident or staff do not accept that decision, either may appeal to the appropriate committee of the Board of Directors. Staff's decision stands during the appeals process.

**NOTE:** Residents who are in their first six weeks of residency and are asked to leave the community do not have the right to appeal. Also, residents who are being asked to leave for delinquent fee payment cannot appeal.

### **HOUSE EXPECTATIONS AND DECISIONS:**

The spirit of Dismas House is embodied in the community life of the house. The community is built in part on these

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shared experiences: evening meals, the house meeting, house activities, and weekly household chores. It is necessary as a member of Dismas House to participate in all of these areas.

### **MEALS:**

There will be an evening meal every Monday through Friday night, provided by volunteers and occasionally by residents. Your participation is expected and important. The evening meal is at 6 PM. On Saturdays and Sundays, members of the household prepare their own evening meals. Special holiday meals will be prepared together with staff. You prepare your own breakfast and lunch every day.

Attendance at the evening meal Monday through Friday is mandatory unless you have informed staff that your work schedule prevents you from attending. The maximum number of absences allowed from the evening meal due to work is 2 per week Monday through Friday.

### **HOUSE MEETINGS:**

House meetings must be attended every week by all residents. The meetings are held once a week, Monday at 7 PM, and are an important platform for group decision-making and for achieving consensus in areas of conflict or compromise.

### **CHILDREN:**

Children of residents are welcome at Dismas House for weekend visits. Residents must make the proper arrangements through staff, and secure the agreement of their roommate. The visit of children must be discussed at the house meeting as well.

### **CHORES:**

Household chores are to be done per agreement with the

staff and the community. During the week your chore area should be made presentable. You also will do set-up and clean-up for the evening meal on your assigned night, as well as welcoming the cooks and assisting them.

### **SMOKING:**

There is no smoking anywhere in the house. You may smoke outside and on the porches. You will be asked to leave if you smoke in the house, per the Board of Directors' decision. All butts should be placed in the ashcans on the porches.

### **SERVICES:**

Residents meet weekly with the Dismas clinician for one-on-one substance abuse/mental health counseling. Additionally, through weekly case management sessions with staff, residents set goals and receive services such as preparing a resume and a budget, applying for health benefits, resolving civil and criminal legal issues, accessing free health and dental care, reuniting with children, restoring good credit, obtaining driver's licenses, etc.

### **ADDICTION RECOVERY:**

Residents with a substance abuse history should participate in a plan, agreed upon with staff, to support their recovery. During the first six weeks at Dismas House attendance at a minimum of 4 AA or NA meetings per week is required. After the first 6-week phase, the 4 meetings per week program is urged. Residents meet weekly with the Dismas clinician for one-on-one substance abuse counseling. A substance abuse recovery plan for recovering addicts is essential for residency at Dismas House.

### **INTAKE POLICIES:**

According to the policy of Dismas House of Massachusetts, Inc., former prisoner applicants who want to live at Dismas House must be interviewed at least 2-3 times and their criminal record must be reviewed before the decision to accept them can be made. No one with a sexual offense history can be considered to live at Dismas House.

### **HOUSE AGREEMENTS:**

During House meetings, residents can make new agreements, which, if agreed upon by the full consensus of the house, become house agreements. Following are agreements in effect:

1. The curfew for the first six weeks is 10PM for former prisoners.
2. Chores rotate monthly.
3. Residents can spend every weekend with friends/family after their first six weeks.

4. *All guests must be accompanied by another resident & cannot help themselves to food and drink.*
5. *Quiet hours are in effect 24 hours a day, meaning that all radios, TVs, and voices should be kept at respectable levels.*
6. *All guests must leave by 11 PM (except for children of residents spending weekend nights with parents).*

***SEND YOUR APPLICATION OR OTHER  
CORRESPONDENCE TO:***

***DISMAS HOUSE MASSACHUSETTS***

***Post Office Box 30125***

***30 Richards Street***

***Worcester, MA 01603***

***Telephone: (508) 799-9389***

***Fax: (508) 767-9930***

***Executive Directors – Colleen Hilferty & David  
McMahon***

***Program Advocate – Arthur Rosenberg***

