

What is mental illness?

Mental illnesses are common in the United States. Nearly one in five U.S. adults lives with a mental illness (44.7 million in 2016). Mental illnesses include many different conditions that vary in degree of severity, ranging from mild to moderate to severe. Two broad categories can be used to describe these conditions: Any Mental Illness (AMI) and Serious Mental Illness (SMI). AMI encompasses all recognized mental illnesses. SMI is a smaller and more severe subset of AMI.

Any mental illness (AMI) is defined as a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder. AMI can vary in impact, ranging from no impairment to mild, moderate, and even severe impairment (e.g., individuals with serious mental illness as defined below).

Serious mental illness (SMI) is defined as a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities. The burden of mental illnesses is particularly concentrated among those who experience disability due to SMI.

Why are Group Homes Needed?

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed the “Community Mental Health Act” into law. The intention of this sweeping legislation was to improve the care and outcomes of individuals suffering with mental illness by changing how care was delivered. Specifically to reduce institution-based care and instead have individuals with mental illness cared for in their own communities when able.

Many individuals can access treatment and live with independence. Yet, we now know that a small number of people with more chronic forms of mental illness will need ongoing levels of support throughout their entire lives. Group homes provide the structure and assistance that is necessary for people to gain stability in a safe and dignified setting. This support often includes medication management, cooking skills, budgeting, social engagement, and job training. Through group home living environments, individuals experiencing chronic mental illness have improved quality of life, support, socialization, and resources for a more meaningful life.



Town of Gilbert

90 E Civic Center Dr.
Gilbert AZ 85296
Phone: 480-503-6700

FAQ's

Group Homes & Recovery Residences



Information provided in partnership with the East Valley Behavioral Health Coalition



www.gilbertaz.gov
Land Development Code Article 4.5
Sections 4.504 and 4.5015

Top 8 FAQ's

1. What is a “group home” for the Handicapped?

- Residential housing occupied by a group of unrelated individuals (children, adults or the elderly) that are physically handicapped, mentally impaired or otherwise disabled.
- Licensed by the state to provide medical care and supervision
- Must register with the Town of Gilbert

2. What is a “recovery residence”?

- Residential housing that is occupied by a group of unrelated individuals that are recovering from substance abuse.
- Not licensed by the State
- Must register, obtain a business license and submit an operation and management plan to the Town of Gilbert

3. How many people can live in a group home or recovery residence?

- Homes may serve a maximum of 5 residents excluding staff
- Exceptions can be made on a case by case basis up to 10
- Concerned they have more than allowed? Contact the Town to determine if a reasonable accommodation was given

4. What if I think my neighbor is operating an unlicensed group home?

- AZ Dept. of Health Services responds to concerns/complaints on group homes, but not recovery residences
- Residential Facilities 602-364-2639 or residential.licensing@azdhs.gov
- Developmental Disabled Special Licensing 602-364-2079 or special.licensing@azdhs.gov

Top 8 FAQ's (cont.)

5. A home is causing problems in my neighborhood. What can I do?

- PD is able to assist and respond when there is an immediate threat to public safety, danger to life, destruction of property or disturbing the peace-Call 911
- Code violations such as parking issues, overgrown weeds, or storage of trash- Call 480-503-6879
- Group homes issues such as care of resident, staffing or environmental concerns contact AZ Dept. of Health Services 602-364-2639
- Recovery homes not providing proper supervision or having residents follow the rules call Town of Gilbert 480-503-6700

6. Do the group homes or recovery residences have rules they have to follow?

- Both must be registered
- Must provide a minimum of 2 on-site parking spaces
- All activities must serve the residents
- May not allow residents to live there who would directly threaten the health and safety of others or damage physical property
- Must follow general town ordinances (litter, dust control, disturbing the peace)
- Recovery homes must have operation plan that outlines owner, operator, number of persons per bedroom, floor plan, resident screening process and guest and resident rules of conduct

Top 8 FAQ's (cont.)

7. Where can a group home or recovery residence be located?

- The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination against individuals. Therefore, Gilbert's zoning laws allow homes in all residential areas
- The law does allow for distancing standards to avoid clustering which could change the neighborhood character
- There must be 1,200 feet between group/recovery home residences
- Contact the town if you are concerned the separation requirements are not being met or to determine if a reasonable accommodation was given

8. Can an HOA prohibit a group home or recovery residence in my neighborhood?

- Any action taken by an HOA in an attempt to enforce the CC&Rs against group homes for the handicapped or recovery residences could constitute a violation of the Fair Housing Act and subject the Association to significant liability
- An HOA can require the owner to comply with any and all other rules of the neighborhood

