

# *Building Men for Life, Inc.* **Participant Handbook**

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## **Building Men for Life, Inc. - The Organization**

Many times, in early recovery, we find that we have burned all our bridges with the devastating effects of addiction and bad choices. We find that we have no safe place to go that is free of drugs or alcohol after we have completed a treatment center; and all our friends and old support systems are unhealthy for us. Now that we are ready to start the journey of recovery, we need help with using the tools that we have been learning to stay sober; we need a safe sober place to live, and a new support network of friends.

**Executive Director:**

Randy Brouwer                      616-218-8735                      handyrandyb1@sbcglobal.net

**Housing Director:**

Keith Walters                      616-836-2896                      keithwalters4@gmail.com

**Admin Assistant:**

Cheri Ruiz                      616-393-2188                      carsweet1@gmail.com

**BMFL OFFICE**

665 136<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 50                      **Phone:** 616-393-2188  
Holland, MI 49424                      **Fax:** 616-393-2182

**On the Web:** [buildingmenforlife.org](http://buildingmenforlife.org)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/Building-Men-for-Life-Inc.](https://facebook.com/Building-Men-for-Life-Inc.)



Building Men for Life, Inc. is a 501(c) (3) corporation and a founding member of Michigan Association of Recovery Residences (MARR) and West Michigan Association of Recovery Residences (WestMARR), and is a member of the National Alliance of Recovery Residences (NARR).



As recognized members of the National Alliance of Recovery Residences, Building Men for Life, Inc. offers Certified Recovery Coaching and Safe Recovery Residences filled with peer support, with like-minded people, walking the same journey.

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## **New Life for Men in Recovery: Housing, Fellowship, Self-Respect**

Our primary purpose is to provide a safe, sober, supportive, affordable, community-based living environment for people in recovery who have a desire to live drug and alcohol free. At times a living situation may threaten a person's ability to maintain a clean and sober lifestyle. The environment we provide is conducive to building a solid foundation for a new way of life. Participants are encouraged to accept employment counseling, spiritual growth mentoring, and life-skill educational opportunities. Nutrition, exercise, physical rest, and stress management also play an important part in restoration and maintenance of the body, mind and soul. Our goal is to facilitate a way of life for people whose lives have been devastated by the disease of addiction.

***“A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in a time of need.”***

*Proverbs 17:17 NLT*

## **Program Requirements**

With the primary focus to stay clean and sober, Building Men for Life, Inc. (BMFL) has implemented required programs to help participants with their recovery. We feel these programs are vital for healthy living. Participants will be held accountable for participating in all programs.

1. **SPIRITUAL GROWTH & LIFE SKILLS** - BMFL considers participation in a spiritual fellowship, like church, and support groups like AA or NA meetings, vital to maintaining a healthy way of living.
  - a. Participants must attend a minimum of four (4) meetings a week that help his spiritual growth and life skills, starting the first month. For example, a man could attend three (3) AA meetings and a church service.
  - b. Any group meetings scheduled by a recognized organization (courts, parole/probation agent) will count toward the four (4) meetings.
  - c. Participants are strongly encouraged to have both a spiritual mentor and a program sponsor and meet with him at least once a week.
  - d. Participants may be required to have a slip signed at AA/NA recovery meetings. If required, it cannot be signed by another BMFL participant. Church bulletins may be used as documentation of required attendance of spiritual meetings.
2. **COMMUNITY SERVICE** - All participants not employed full time, or who are disabled, will be required to do community service work sixteen (16) hours a

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week. The required time will be adjusted for part-time employment. If a participant cannot find a place to volunteer, BMFL will assist them.

3. **EMPLOYMENT** - Employment is a mandatory condition for the program and if not employed must be actively seeking work, unless disabled (having applied for or determined to be disabled by the Social Security Administration).
  - a. Participants without employment are required to attend all job fairs offered by Michigan Works or in the community.
  - b. Unemployed participants should be considered a “full-time” activity (e.g. 6 hours a day), at least five days per week. The minimum requirement is for two applications be filled out and turned in to the prospective employers each day.
  - c. Each day, a *Job Search* sheet must be completed and turned into the House Manager.

Failure to comply with BMFL programs will be considered as an individual’s choice not to participate in the program. If a reasonable effort is not seen in working the BMFL program, a participant may receive a written notice. If no action is taken to comply with the written notice, he will have chosen to no longer be a participant and removed from the program.

## **House Operations, Conduct, and Rules**

The fundamental principle of the home is to follow the rules and live a life in recovery. The goal is to form strength in the group to develop a functional, connected, and family environment. BMFL is a non-profit organization and the houses are not institutions. It is our hope that a family of men will unite to build a healthy and functional community.

*The number one rule of the program is to stay clean, sober and addiction free.*

When a man brings drugs/alcohol into a house or is under the influence, not only is he hurting himself but he is threatening other participants’ recovery. A participant bringing drugs or alcohol into the house may trigger another participant to relapse.

As a matter of self-preservation, a participant who knows of another man who has or is using alcohol/drugs, needs to ***immediately*** report this to the House Manager or a BMFL staff member. This often goes against how we may have handled situations in the past. The difference today, is that you may be saving someone’s life while protecting yourself and others in the house from relapse.

This is about “Principles over Personalities.” Recovery is about doing the next right thing. We are fighting the disease of addiction—not the person.

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In recovery, we are learning to do things differently. How we act toward others, how we treat people, and respecting others and our living environment. In our addiction, we often didn't follow rules or treat people very well. Today we are learning to live differently and to look outside of ourselves.

Because of this, we have rules and expectations of all participants and others coming on the BMFL property. This list isn't meant to cover every situation, but rather an overall guide. It includes some "hard and fast" rules, but there are also expectations of how you are to conduct yourself.

1. No alcohol, drugs, or the misuse of prescribed and over-the-counter drugs.
2. No violence, physical or verbal abuse towards one's self, others, or property.
3. No weapons of any kind are allowed in the house or on the property.
4. No illegal activities or the breaking of any laws.
5. No pornography (written or electronic).
6. No gambling in any form.
7. All houses are Smoke Free. Smoke in designated areas only and dispose of smoking materials in a safe container.
8. No animals/pets are permitted to live in the house without BMFL approval.
9. No overnight absences without permission from the Housing Director.
10. Participants may have one (1) vehicle on the property, which must be street-legal, licensed, insured, and parked in a designated area.
11. Participants must respect the privacy of the other program participants be considerate of house guests and neighbors by keeping noise levels to a minimum.
12. No fire or open flame of any kind within the home, including but not limited to, cigarette lighters, candles, hot wax, incense, or heated air fresheners.
13. Participants may not loan or borrow from another participant, money, clothes, vehicles, bikes or other personal property.
14. No participant is allowed into another participant's room unless that participant is present.
15. Use of the house phone or house computer is limited to 30 minutes.

Each house has a weekly meeting to help improve communication. This is a time to discuss issues relating to the house, pay program fees, pass on information, and turn in paperwork. All program participants in the house must be present and the House Manager/BMFL staff member will lead the meeting.

For a home to operate efficiently, it must have people who are willing to step up and be of service. Each house needs men to serve as Secretary and Coordinator.

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These service positions are program participants of the home and are appointed by the House Manager or a BMFL staff member.

The two service positions are:

**SECRETARY** - records the house meeting minutes and gives a final copy to the House Manager.

**COORDINATOR** - assigns weekly house chores, inspect rooms for cleanliness along with the House Manager, and make sure the home remains clean and orderly, inside and out. Also, collects and tracks funds for the household common expenses.

## **Confidentiality**

Living in a shared house, you will hear things from other men that may be very personal and private. Part of recovery is learning to share our feelings and thoughts in a safe environment. There are also day-to-day interactions that go on without much thought but can cause us to be irritated and annoyed. These are all normal occurrences. However, while living with others, you need to respect and protect each other's privacy. No participant should ever share another man's stories, faults, or feelings with anyone.

You are encouraged to tell others outside the house about YOUR story, feelings, and journey. It's alright to share what's going on with you. Protecting other men's story, feelings, actions is also your responsibility. BMFL expects each participant to respect one another and not share what is heard.

To protect everyone's privacy and confidentiality, taking pictures and videos is prohibited on any BMFL house or property. This applies to participants, guests, and anyone coming on the property. It doesn't matter what you are taking video/pictures of since this has the potential of disclosing confidential and protected information. Only the Executive Director or Housing Director can give permission to record videos or take pictures for any reason.

## **Program Fees**

1. **PROGRAM FEES AND HOUSEHOLD COMMON EXPENSES** - The program fees are due when you enter the program and each week at the house meeting. The week runs from Sunday to Saturday. The weekly program fee is currently \$125.00 per week and does not include food or toiletries. There is not a reduced program fee for men who enter the program in the middle of the week, or refunds for men who leave the program in the middle of a week. Exceptions to this policy will be at the discretion of the Executive Director or Housing Director.

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- a. The house may vote to pool their money to buy certain foods as a group and/or buy their food individually.
  - b. In addition to the program fee, each man is expected to share in the common household expenses (cleaning supplies, toilet paper, etc.). These expenses normally run from \$10-\$20.00 per man each month and needs to be paid to the Coordinator at the first house meeting of every month. Each house is encouraged to find ways to reduce their household expenses.
  - c. The Coordinator is responsible for purchasing the supplies and keeping a detailed record of payments/purchases and keeps the receipts.
2. **LATE OR MISSED PAYMENTS** - Missed payments will result in removal from the program unless a participant has received prior approval from the Housing Director/Executive Director. Approval will be based on the participant's history of meeting BMFL program requirements. If program expectations have not been met, an extension will not be granted and the participant must leave the program. The participant must enter an agreement with BMFL to pay off the overdue balance over a specified period.
- a. If your program fee balance is not paid in full by the end of your weekly house meeting, you will be assessed a \$5.00 late fee. This fee will continue to accumulate, each week, until your program fees are paid up.
3. **MEDIA POLICY:** If you have a cable box in your room when you move in, you will be responsible for the remote and the box to be in the room and in good working condition when you leave.
- a. To replace the cable box, in the event of it being stolen or missing, a police report must be filed before the cable company will issue a replacement. BMFL will press charges for any stolen devices and seek the replacement costs at current market value.
  - b. Cable boxes must never be moved from room to room or removed from the house.
  - c. Pay per view, pornography, and premium movie channels are not permitted in the house.
  - d. Program participants are not permitted for any reason to call the cable provider. All issues that arise with cable TV, internet, or telephone must be reported to the House Manager or a BMFL staff member.
  - e. Any changes to the services or phone calls to the service providers will result in a \$50.00 fee and could result in removal from the BMFL program.

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### **Medications/Alcohol/Drug Use and Testing Policy**

The primary purpose of BMFL is to give men a home environment that is ideally suited for successful recovery. When a participant chooses to use drugs and/or alcohol, he threatens the recovery of everybody in his home.

The number one rule for BMFL participants is: Do not use alcohol, drugs, or misuse prescribed or over-the-counter drugs, or use any mind-altering substance—legal or illegal—while in the program. As such, we have a zero-tolerance policy for drug and alcohol use and any participant who violates this policy will be immediately removed from the program.

1. Participants taking prescription medication must store them in lock-boxes that are provided or approved by BMFL.
2. Any medication that may cause a participant to fail a drug screen must be approved in writing by the Housing Director.
3. The use of marijuana is strictly prohibited, even if a participant has a prescription.
4. Participants who are over-medicated on prescription drugs or are prescribed a type or level of drug, which makes it unsafe for him to live in the house, may be removed from the program.
5. Participants who are on medication assisted therapy (MAT), such as Methadone and Suboxone, must have a signed release allowing BMFL staff to talk to the prescribing physician regarding the treatment.

Participants are subject to drug and alcohol testing at any time and for any reason. Once you are told you will be tested, you must follow the BMFL staff member's directions and fully cooperate throughout the testing process.

### **Drug Test**

If you are asked to take a drug test you must:

- ✓ Stay within the House Manager's or a BMFL staff member's sight until you are told the testing is finished.
- ✓ Provide enough urine to test;
- ✓ Allow an observed collection if required;
- ✓ Not adulterate or substitute a urine specimen;

### **Alcohol Test**

If you are asked to take an alcohol test you must:

- ✓ Stay within the House Manager's or a BMFL staff member's sight until you are told the testing is finished.
- ✓ Provide an adequate amount of breath;

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### **Consequences of a Positive/Refusing a Test and/or an Adulterated Test**

Any participant who refuses to submit to a drug and/or alcohol test; that receives an adulterated or substituted drug test result, or has a positive test result may be immediately removed from the BMFL program and his probation/parole agent will be notified.

### **Housekeeping**

1. The house, including all bedrooms, must be kept in a clean orderly fashion.
2. Participants may have only one bag (i.e., backpack, suitcase, etc.) of clothes and toiletries.
3. Rooms may be inspected at any time by a BMFL staff member and will be inspected at least once a week.
4. The yard and exterior must be kept in a clean and orderly fashion, and up to community standards.
5. The house and any outbuildings must be kept locked. No locks may be changed or added without the permission of BMFL.
6. No alterations to the interior, exterior, or other part of the home is permitted.
7. No appliances, including, but not limited to stoves, air conditioners, or space heaters may be brought into, or removed from the house without the prior approval from BMFL. All such appliances must be inspected for safety by BMFL prior to bringing into the home.
8. Participants may not change or alter house thermostats. All adjustments of house thermostats must be done by a BMFL staff member.
9. Participants may not move, rearrange, or remove any house or room furniture, audio/video equipment, or appliances without the prior approval from BMFL.

### **Guests**

1. No guests and/or visitors are allowed in the house without the consent of a BMFL staff member. Guests are only allowed in common areas and are not permitted to stay overnight without the prior written approval of a BMFL staff member.
2. The Housing Director must approve all house guests. This may include an interview with the guest(s). All house guests must remain supervised in common areas. The maximum time a guest may visit a participant (except in cases where the guest has received the prior written consent of the Housing Director) within a house is 2 hours.
3. No persons on probation or parole, other than program participants, are allowed in the house or on the property.
4. All guests must be sober. No intoxicated guests are allowed in a house.

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5. The participant shall be financially responsible for any conduct by his guest causing damage to the house or the contents of the house.

### **General**

1. If a participant is on probation or parole, their agent will be notified if they leave the program, are terminated from the program, fail a drug test, are intoxicated, or break any laws while in the program.
2. When a participant moves out or is removed from the house, no other participant may tamper with or move the personal property of the removed participant without authorization from a BMFL staff member.
  - a. If asked to pack up the personal property of a participant who has been removed, two (2) participants or a BMFL staff member must be present. If a BMFL staff member is not present during such packing, a written inventory of all packed personal property must be completed and signed by those responsible for packing the items.
3. The typical stay in the BMFL program is in the range of six (6) months to three (3) years. All participants must leave the house after graduation. Upon graduation from the program, successful program graduates are encouraged to apply at that time to serve as mentors and sponsors, House Managers, or sit on the BMFL Board of Directors.

### **Emergency Policy**

In each house, there are postings for “In Case of Emergency” and evacuation routes for your house. Please locate and become familiar with both postings.

If you need emergency services of any kind: **CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY**. If you’re not sure if the situation is an emergency, call 911 anyway and let them decide what help is needed. It is better to err on the side of caution and call 911, than to need help and not have it.

### **Medical Emergency**

In a medical emergency, **CALL 911**. State you have a medical emergency and give the following information:

- ✓ Your name and phone number.
- ✓ House address.
- ✓ What happened – How many people, nature of injury(s) or illness.
- ✓ Give as much information about the victim(s) (like diabetes, allergies, health issues, etc.)
- ✓ Follow the directions of the 911 Dispatcher.

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### **Fire Emergency**

If there is a fire, possible fire, smoke, or explosion, warn everyone in the house to evacuate. Use cell phone instead of house phone to **CALL 911** and tell them you have a fire emergency and give the following information:

- ✓ Your name and phone number.
- ✓ Street address.
- ✓ Nature of fire.
- ✓ Fire location (area of house or floor).
- ✓ Any injuries and type of injuries.

### **Evacuation Procedures**

- ✓ Evacuate the house along evacuation routes that are posted.
- ✓ Meet at the Designated Evacuation Location: \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Follow the orders of the emergency personnel when they arrive.

### **Severe Weather Emergencies**

During severe weather, you should tune into a local TV or radio channel for information. If a **Tornado Warning** has been issued, go to the designated emergency spot, which is the center of the basement, away from windows. Monitor other weather Watches and Warnings and follow the directions of the National Weather Service.

### **Other Emergencies**

If for any reason, you feel there is a threat to the house, the property, or the people in the house get away from the threat as quickly and safely as possible, then **CALL 911**. Explain the situation and follow their directions.

***Once emergency responders are on the scene and if the House Manager is not there, immediately contact:***

- ✓ Randy Brower – 616-218-8735, or
- ✓ Keith Walters – 616-836-2896, and
- ✓ House Manager Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

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### **The Guiding Rule**

The most important rule is to remain clean and sober always: any violation of this rule may result in immediate removal from the program.

### **Build Something Bigger Than Ourselves: Giving Back**

BMFL would not only like to support a self-reliant family of men in a self-supporting home, but also, we have a vision that the same group of men who were once in need, can also pass on the gift of a safe, sober, and supportive living environment.

The goal we have is that each BMFL home builds a small surplus of income through program fees and fundraising to start another home, and pass on their experience, strength, and hope to the next group of men looking for support.

The start of a new home depends on first and last month's rent, security deposit, and the purchase of furniture.

We would also like to maintain a surplus of funds to help men who fall on hard times and may need a hand with food, clothes, program fees, and/or toiletries. We encourage each man to look outside himself to help a brother in need. We encourage men to participate in BMFL fund-raising efforts, become sponsors or mentors to new residents, and volunteer in the local community. Each man has his own gifts, and together, we can share our time, talents, and treasures to build a loving community, helping each other, and expecting nothing in return.

***“As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend”***

*Proverbs 27:17*

***“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”***

*Proverbs 17:17*

Passing up an opportunity to build something bigger than yourself is a vision that only a few can find to be more important than today.