



Resident Application Process

What is Sweetwater Spectrum?

Sweetwater Spectrum is a residential community for adults with autism spectrum disorder. This community allows residents to live with peers in an environment that encourages social integration and choice. As a supported living residence, Sweetwater Spectrum is different from a group home that provides designated services. Sweetwater Spectrum does not provide any direct support or care to residents. The goal is to create a community in which each resident will develop independently, live life with purpose and adapt to the world given his or her unique disability.

Mission Statement

To provide adults with autism an innovative, supportive community that will challenge each individual to reach his or her highest potential.

Sweetwater Spectrum Founding Principles

Accommodate the full range of autism spectrum disorders:

Sweetwater Spectrum recognizes that no matter where an individual is on the autism spectrum they can choose to live in the community. A strong and well-rounded environment will embrace residents with compatible and complementary interests and skills. This diversity will create an environment with opportunity for all residents to find friends and gain greater self-confidence.

Create active resident involvement in their home, neighborhood and surrounding communities:

Sweetwater Spectrum will encourage families, on-site service providers, city officials, merchants, community volunteers, and neighbors to develop opportunities for meaningful interaction with the residents of Sweetwater Spectrum. The aim is to make all levels of community engagement available to residents.

Provide access to productive enriching choices that support a life with purpose:

By pooling the resources and space of four homes, Sweetwater Spectrum residents will have access to on-site amenities such as a pool, hot tubs, exercise room, art room, urban farm, and a community center with a teaching kitchen and a room for gatherings.

Offer the opportunity for lifetime residency:

Most current housing options for people with autism are privately owned and run the risk, like any business, of closing when the owner passes away or retires. Sweetwater Spectrum is a nonprofit corporation with a board of directors that will change and renew

over time allowing it to exist for years to come. Many parents of adults with autism worry about who will care for their son or daughter when they are deceased. Sweetwater Spectrum seeks to provide the opportunity to have continuity of housing for a resident's lifetime.

Utilize autism-specific design, which addresses both safety and sensory issues:

Sweetwater Spectrum was specifically designed with a keen focus on the unique needs and characteristics of adults with autism. After conducting extensive interviews, focus groups and research, Sweetwater Spectrum learned that living in a home that is designed to take into consideration particular needs will enhance the comfort and quality of life for adults with autism.

Nurture long-term, high-value relationships between residents and staff:

Our four homes will attract staff who possess a variety of expertise, and will help residents learn life skills and pursue new activities. Through collaboration with service providers, the intent is to assist staff in their training and education about autism. In addition, supplemental compensation to service provider staff will be available as a means of attracting and maintaining quality caregivers. Positive collaboration with everyone who is in contact with Sweetwater residents will contribute to a supportive environment.

Accommodate residents across a broad financial spectrum:

As a community that celebrates diversity, Sweetwater Spectrum believes that socioeconomic differences among residents is important. Discounts will be available for some residents as determined through a statement of need, financial application and careful analysis of available resources. Discounts are subject to the amount of funds Sweetwater Spectrum has available for this purpose.

Create and foster a model that can be replicated nationwide:

The Sweetwater Spectrum community model was developed as a solution to the national problem of too few high quality residential choices for adults with autism. The commitment to share our knowledge and provide support to advance the replication of Sweetwater Spectrum communities is central to the mission. Focus on adults with autism and their long-term needs make this community unique and innovative in the field.

Sweetwater Spectrum – Sonoma

Located four blocks from the active, Sonoma town square, Sweetwater-Sonoma residents will have direct access to shops, restaurants, farmer's markets, a movie theatre and many community events. The robust nature of this city will provide recreational and vocational opportunities for residents. The location in the Sonoma Valley, one of the premier tourist destinations in America, encourages town friends and extended family to visit their relative often while exploring this beautiful region.

Living at Sweetwater Spectrum – Sonoma

In order to qualify for residency at the Sweetwater Spectrum community, applicants must satisfy the following requirements:

- 1) Be 18 years of age or older
- 2) Have an understanding of the Sweetwater Spectrum model and have a preference to live in a community designed for persons with autism spectrum disorder or similar disorders
- 3) Be able to comply with the terms and conditions of the lease and other community rules and regulations
- 4) Have a comprehensive, individualized plan for care in effect, which allows the resident to live communally with appropriate support systems.
- 5) Have resources (or guarantor) to pay for all current and future Sweetwater Spectrum required costs and personal expenses or to have worked with Sweetwater Spectrum to secure financial discount
- 6) Not present an unmanageable risk to themselves or others
- 7) Not have a criminal record that may adversely affect the health or safety of others

Application Process

Residency at Sweetwater Spectrum will be determined through a "rolling admissions" application process (there are no specific deadlines for applications). The resident or caregiver must submit a Sweetwater Spectrum application and processing fee to establish interest in living at Sweetwater Spectrum. Each application will be carefully reviewed. The application review process will involve and is not limited to:

- A review of the resident application to make an initial determination of the appropriateness of Sweetwater Spectrum as a residential option for the applicant.
- A preliminary review of the financial portion of the application to establish general capability of the resident or any proposed guarantor to pay rent, community fees and other lease obligations. If the applicant is applying for a discount, additional financial information will be requested. The applicant will be given specific instructions to provide further documentation.
- A face-to-face interview with the potential resident and their family, preferably in the family home or a location familiar to the applicant. If the potential resident is conserved, the conservator(s) must attend the interview.
- Once an applicant is determined to be “preliminarily eligible” to rent at Sweetwater Spectrum, he/she will be directed to contact his/her regional center or private care provider to establish a comprehensive, individualized plan for care that will allow the applicant to live communally with appropriate support systems. Sweetwater Spectrum does not provide any direct support or care to residents. (A “preliminarily eligible” determination is not a guarantee or promise that an option to lease at Sweetwater Spectrum will be offered.)

- Once received, the comprehensive, individualized plan will be reviewed by Sweetwater Spectrum to determine whether supports and services are in place for the applicant to live communally with appropriate support systems. Additional provisos may be determined and will need to be satisfied before “secondary eligibility” can be determined.
- Simultaneously, an extensive review and evaluation of the applicant’s (or proposed guarantor’s) resources to determine that he/she is able to pay for all current and future Sweetwater Spectrum required costs and personal expenses or has worked with Sweetwater Spectrum to secure a financial discount.
- Once “secondary eligibility” has been established, a refundable security deposit may be required. (A “secondary eligibility” determination is not a guarantee or promise that an option to lease at Sweetwater Spectrum will be offered.)
- Housemate selection is determined when residents, their families and/or conservator(s) meet other eligible applicants to determine compatibility for sharing a house. At “secondary eligibility” Sweetwater Spectrum will share the names of other applicants with “secondary eligibility” or a current lease. The planning team (can include, but not limited to resident, resident family, service provider and regional center staff) will support the selection of housemates using supported living guidelines. Sweetwater Spectrum is invested in creating a harmonious community and has ultimate responsibility to determine tenancy.
- Once housemate selection is determined, a one-year lease will be executed. Residents or their conservator(s) and guarantor must read and acknowledge in writing that they will abide by the terms of the lease and community rules.
- Applicant with the planning team and Sweetwater Spectrum will determine a transition plan for move-in.
- Move-in according to transition plan.

If you have questions regarding this process, please contact Olivia Vain, CEO/Executive Director at Sweetwater Spectrum: 707-996-3104 or info@sweetwaterspectrum.org