

VNS Health Rolls Out Specialized In-Home Dementia Care for Private Pay Clients

Caring for a loved one with dementia is always challenging—but that challenge is being lessened by a new home care program from VNS Health. The program, Dementia Care at Home, is designed to enhance the quality of life for patients with cognitive impairment while easing the burden on family caregivers.

The program, which was piloted with VNS Health private pay clients in early 2023, centers around the daily care provided by a specially trained home health aide (HHA) who is skilled in managing and supporting individuals with dementia, in addition to providing more traditional personal care services. “To date, 288 of our HHAs have taken the training,” reports Joe Perry, VNS Health Director of Private Care Services.

In addition to being paired with one of these specialized HHAs, clients entering the program undergo a full assessment by a dementia expert. Based on that assessment, a personalized care plan is developed that includes specific, tailored techniques for keeping the client engaged, stimulated, and stable throughout the day. The dementia expert walks through these techniques with the client’s HHA, the HHA’s supervising nurse, and the family in a hands-on coaching session, and also provides referrals to community resources and activities.

The client is then assigned a VNS Health care coordinator who connects regularly by phone with the family, the supervising

nurse, and the HHA to ensure that the plan stays on track. The supervising nurse will also visit the client's home every 90 days to check on their status and consult with the HHA and the family.

"The program's customized approach is key, because the nature of dementia varies by diagnosis and by individual," says Perry. "Our HHAs are taught methods such as reflecting back the client's feelings when they express distress or frustration, and using questions with no 'right' or 'wrong' answer as a way of engaging their client in conversation."

"Dementia can be very stressful for the person suffering from it, as well as for those caring for the dementia patient," notes Kelly Harned, Administrative Vice President for VNS Health Personal Care. "Our Dementia Care at Home program offers practical ways to lower that stress and improve the patient's quality of life. Depending on a patient's needs, this program could be a potential alternative to assisted living or nursing home placement, allowing those living with dementia to remain safely in their home, where most people choose to be."

To learn more about the Dementia Care at Home program, please call 1-888-735-8913 or email clientservices@vnshealth.org

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