

Making Referrals:

With expanded services and territories, the goal of VNS of Connecticut is to meet all of your home care needs with the same commitment to high quality, professional services you've experienced.

Call us 24 hours a day, seven days a week to make a referral and we will take care of the rest. Our intake motto is, *"One call, problem solved."* 1.800.551.8671



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We proudly salute Visiting Nurse Services of
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Bringing HEART to Home Care

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NewsUPDATE

A Publication for VNS of Connecticut Providers



Some Straight Talk About Home Care

—by Lou Carpino, Director, Customer Service

Welcome to the fall 2008 edition of News Update, the newsletter for VNS providers and referrers that we send to about 3,000 hospitals, doctors' offices, nursing homes and more across Connecticut. Over the next year, News Update will be published twice—fall and spring editions—to keep you abreast of what is happening at Visiting Nurse Services of Connecticut.

It's been a tumultuous first half of 2008, with the Congress and President battling over the future of Medicare. Physicians were facing 10% payment cuts, which would have forced many out of the Medicare business altogether. Fortunately, Congress was able to come up with a solution that eliminated the cuts and even added a percent or two to physician payments. While it's not a permanent solution, at least the immediate crisis is over.

Home care is facing much the same battles when it comes to reimbursement. Battles which severely challenge our ability to serve our mission—providing high quality home care services for everyone in our community...

As the members of the baby boom generation age, however, it is clear that all health care providers need to pay special attention to the needs of our senior citizens. At VNS, we continue to monitor the needs of our patients and develop programs to meet those needs. Our patients are leaving the hospital earlier than ever and they join our service with ever more complex medical needs. We strongly encourage utilizing telemonitoring to enhance the treatment process and avoid re-hospitalizations. Services such as IV therapy, wound care by certified wound specialists and our full complement of therapies to regain motion and avoid falls are all part of our geriatric care portfolio of services designed to speed patient recovery, ensure compliance with medication and care plans and avoid more costly health services for our patients. And, most recently, we have added Voicecare, the personal emergency response system that allows customers experiencing health emergencies to alert responders with the push of a button. This system is available for customers statewide at up to one half the cost of similar products.

We receive a great deal of positive feedback when we publish a picture of our Intake staff. Many of you speak with our team members many times each year and you tell us it's nice to match a voice with a face. So, in spite of their mild protestations, we are reintroducing our Intake Staff with a front page picture. All of these ladies, by the way, are Registered Nurses, so you know when you call that you are talking to someone who truly knows their health care...

In future newsletters, I will address some of the issues you have raised on the surveys and also talk about other issues that impact our work, including VNS' efforts to improve referral source patient feedback and our disease management programs.

In the meantime, should you have a question about home care or any of our services here at VNS, please don't hesitate to call me at 203.330.5507. Your comments are always welcomed.



VNS' Intake Staff--all Registered Nurses--can be reached with one phone call to 1.800.551.8671 to take a referral or answer questions regarding clinical services or even insurance coverages. Shown, left to right, are Kim Schneider, Bernice Urban, Karen Giustino, Wilma Painter and Laurie Laslett.



Bringing HEART to Home Care

VNS Notes...

We are pleased to announce that **Diane Miller, PT, MPT, COS-C**, has been named VNS' Director of Rehabilitation Services. Diane, who has been with the agency for eight years, is now overseeing our Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapy services. She can be reached directly at **203.330.5433**.



While fewer than half of the nation's home health agencies offer **telehealth monitoring for patients**, clinical studies continue to show that home-based monitoring has a positive impact on patient outcomes, especially in the area of reducing re-hospitalizations. VNS' own studies of its patients has shown telemonitoring helps keep patients at home while improving their compliance with medication and dietary requirements. At any one time during the year, about 100 VNS patients are using the agency's telemonitoring system. For more information about VNS' program, **call our Telemonitor Supervisor at 203.366.3821, x1092**.



VNS nursing supervisors staff our weekend intake phones Saturdays and Sundays from 8:30 a.m. till 4:30 p.m. Our supervisors are on call in the evening and early morning to meet your referral needs. Any time of the day or night, the number is the same, **1.800.551.8671**.

VNS Gets Solid Marks From Referrers

VNS received solid marks from referral sources in the 2008 Satisfaction Survey conducted this spring. A total of 128 of the surveys were completed and returned from hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, doctors' offices and other provider sources.

Results were as follows:

- 95% of respondents reported VNS referral process was the same or better than other agencies;
- 99% of respondents reported VNS Intake Department hours were as convenient or more convenient than other agencies;
- 99% of respondents said VNS customer service was as good or better than other agencies;
- On clinical quality, 99% of respondents rated VNS service as the same as other agencies or better. Seventy-eight percent rated it as better or excellent;
- Sixty-two percent said VNS follow up with referrers on patient condition changes was excellent or above average, 36% said it was about average with others;
- 98% of respondents said VNS follow up with referrers on patient conditions was the same or better than other agencies;
- Overall referrer satisfaction with VNS staff and services fully 99% of those responding as satisfied with the agency's work on behalf of their patients; and,
- A similar level, 99%, saying they would be likely to recommend patients to VNS in the future.

Areas in which our referral sources would like more information included wound care/wound vac services; Partners In Care, VNS' private duty subsidiary; VNS' Hospice at Home program and PT/INR services. Efforts will be made in the months ahead to provide additional information in these areas.



Nearly two dozen representatives from Japan's health care system visited VNS in July to learn more about health care services in the United States. The group, which included home care nurses, former government leaders, journalists and trade association representatives, received presentations from VNS staff on the elements of home health care services. They also traveled to St. Vincent's Medical Center in Bridgeport for an overview of the American hospital system and the process for discharging patients into home care services. While the Japanese have made progress in reducing average patient length of stay in their hospitals from 40 to 22 days, they continue to search for answers to further reduce hospital utilization and overall health care cost in their nation. This is the second consecutive year a Japanese contingent has visited VNS and St. Vincent's.

A Complete Geriatric Continuum of Care

Whether the need is skilled care, compassionate end-of-life care or private-duty personal care, VNS has the resources to meet these needs. We use the latest in technology to supplement our expert, personalized approach to patient home care, with special emphasis on the needs of geriatric patients.

OUR SERVICES

Core Services

Skilled Nursing
Physical Therapy
Occupational Therapy
Speech Therapy
Medical Social Work
Home Health Aides

Value-Added Technology

Home Health Telemonitoring
VoiceCare 24 personal emergency response system

Hospice & Palliative Care

End-of-Life Care
Pain & Symptom Management
Grief Counseling
Support Groups

Our Specialty Services

Hi-Tech Home IV Therapy
Wound Care/Wound Vac/Ostomy Care
Psychiatric Nursing
Nutritionists
Elder Care Planning & Coordination
Care for the Caregiver
Pain Management Services
Free Needs Assessment

Personal Care & Quality of Life Services

Bathing and Personal Assistance
Live-Ins, Sleep-Ins



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Bethel	Morris	Stratford
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Darien	New Hartford	Trumbull
Derby	New Haven	Watertown
East Haven	Newtown	West Haven
Easton	North Haven	Weston
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