



Complex care, Simple comforts

# care connection

## Clear vision... Critical mission... Core values

**V**ision and values may seem like the “soft-stuff” of any organization, but these intangible elements play a crucial role in an organization’s success - or failure. At VHA, having a clear and inspiring vision and mission statement, along with a set of fundamental values, is not just a wordsmith exercise.

As part of a recent strategic planning process, VHA’s volunteer Board of Directors and senior management group reviewed and revised its core Vision, Mission and Values statement (*inset*). Invaluable input from staff, clients, external stakeholders and community partners, for which we are very grateful, assisted us in this important task. Lengthy and lively discussions of VHA’s raison d’être and the needs of the community took place over a six month period. Finally, after several drafts, consensus was reached.

We are proud to share with the community our new Vision, Mission and Values. We believe they form the bedrock for all our future planning, decision-making and service delivery. The challenge ahead is to truly live out our mission and values through our actions and words in delivering complex care and simple comforts.

### VHA HOME HEALTHCARE VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

#### VISION

To be recognized as the best provider of home and community health support services in the province.

#### MISSION

To make a positive impact on every life we touch by providing complex care and simple comforts.

#### VALUES

- Client Focused Services responsive to individual and family needs and preferences, respectful of diversity and delivered with competence and sensitivity.
- A Positive Organizational Culture that values the contributions of its diverse workforce and fosters excellence through accessible supervision, consultation and professional development.
- Continuous Quality Improvement through ongoing evaluation with the aim of exceeding standards of care.
- Cooperation and Collaboration with our community partners and other stakeholders.
- Advocacy in identifying service needs and effecting positive system change.

As a charitable not-for-profit organization led by a volunteer Board of Directors, we all share a commitment to manage our resources with fiscal responsibility, to adhere to ethical practices in all our operations and to ensure, as we are able, that the most vulnerable in our community have access to our services.

You can also find this statement on our website at [www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca).

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**Without VHA’s support...**



# Without VHA's support...

*"I would have had to put my children into [CAS's] care."*

Brenda, mother of 2, during treatments for cancer

**"The health and the safety of my baby and my wife would have been at risk."**

Victor, father of 10 month old, and recently blind

**"I would have had to send my 2 year old daughter away."**

Maxine, mother of 4, during leukemia treatments

**"one of us (parents) would have had a breakdown, physically and mentally."**

Caroline, new mother of colicky twins

**T**hanks to the United Way of Greater Toronto and private donor funding, VHA Home HealthCare (VHA) is able to help families who fall through the cracks of government programs. Children that would otherwise be separated from their parent(s) are able to stay at home and parent(s) are supported in caring for their own health and their children's well-being. Hospitals that would otherwise have to delay discharge because parents aren't physically or mentally ready to care for fragile multiples at home can safely expedite discharge with childcare, personal and home support for the family. These crucial benefits are provided by a unique program developed and run by VHA.

When Brenda was diagnosed with cancer, a social worker from Sunnybrook and Women's College Hospital referred her to VHA. During her critical chemotherapy treatment, Brenda could not care for her 2 year old and special needs 9 year old and had no other supports available. So for one month, a VHA worker fed the children their meals, got one off to the school bus, took care of the two-year old, and managed and maintained the household. "They [her two homemakers] were my light in a terrible time. I don't know how I would have survived without them. I was able to go out to get my treatments and then rest when I was home. They would even draw a bath for me when I was too sick to do it.



Annabelle and Victor, by coincidence former home support workers at VHA, have multiple challenges in caring for their precious 10 month old daughter, Aliyah. One month before Aliyah was born, Victor began going blind as a complication of diabetes. To stem the tide of the disease, he had six surgeries in six months, but they were unsuccessful in preventing total blindness.

Annabelle, who has severe carpal tunnel syndrome in her hands causing pain and weakness, was left caring for the baby with little help. Although Victor receives some government funded personal support due to his permanent blindness, his worker cannot provide care for the baby due to Ministry of Health funding guidelines.



*Aliyah, Victor and Annabelle with caregiver Angela*

When the doctor recommended surgery for Annabelle, Victor knew he could not care for the baby alone. And, post-surgery, Annabelle's weak hands would risk her active daughter's safety every time she tried to pick her up.

It would also ruin any chance of a positive outcome from her surgery. So they called VHA who was able to send a caregiver, Angela, for Aliyah during Annabelle's recovery period.

Maxine, a single mother of four young children 8 and under, was diagnosed with leukemia during her fourth, very difficult pregnancy. Without support and hands on assistance during this tragic time in their lives, she could not care for her new baby and her two-year-old while coping with her own health issues. VHA's worker cared for Lillyanne (Maxine's two year old) and helped with baby Amerie.

The severe illness of one child in a family can cause a care crisis as well. Shahanima is an experienced mom of a 7 year old and a 3 year old. But her third child was recently born with paralysis in one hand and a badly functioning diaphragm which puts the baby's breathing at risk. Shahanima has been trained by the hospital nurses and therapists to care for her baby but the baby requires constant vigilance and will soon be scheduled for more surgery. Shahanima cannot care for her 3 year old during these surgeries or while she is alone with the baby. While Shahanima looks for a permanent solution, VHA's homemaker cares for the 3 year old and the home.

These families fall through the cracks in our communities. Community Care Access Centres, under government mandates, cannot fund well child care at all.

However, the need for child care and homemaking is obvious and dire in these cases and United Way of Greater Toronto has stepped in to fund short term assistance. Through our Child and Family Homemaking Program, families in crisis who are not eligible for government funding can receive services including:

- child care
- personal care
- household management (meal preparation, light housekeeping)
- teaching homemaking and childcare skills, and
- special services (walking children to local schools; escorting to doctor's appointments; grocery shopping, etc)



*Maxine's Lillyanne and baby Amerie*

One of the growing specialties in this program is working with families with multiple birth children. Grace heard about VHA through a friend and called us when she learned she was having triplets. VHA's homemaker, Shirley, took care of the triplets 5 nights per week for 8 weeks while Grace recovered from her C-section. "I don't look forward to my weekends without Shirley. She is so nice and so skilled, with lots of experience. I don't have time to make a phone call during the day, let alone read books on caring for triplets. Shirley is a wealth of information. Now she's helping me adjust the children's feeding schedule to prepare for when we have to take over all of the night time care."



Caroline was in the same situation, a new mom with multiples, but her premature twins were both medically fragile and colicky, and Caroline was sick from an infected incision and post partum depression. She and her husband needed support for the difficult nights. With VHA's help, one of the parents could sleep while one parent cared for one colicky twin and VHA's worker cared for the other. The parent who slept could then do the morning care while the other parent slept. It was a rigorous schedule - sleeping only every other night - but one they could manage.

The United Way funded child care and homemaking program is a short term assistance program. In order to stretch the funding dollars and help as many families as possible, assistance has to be limited to 6 to 8 weeks (a crisis intervention approach), families must contribute to the cost of care according to their ability, and everyone concerned must be seeking more permanent supports.

The needs in the community are much greater than the needs we can meet. Our own statistics show that referrals are increasing each year, from CCACs, hospitals, Parents of Multiple Births Associations, groups working with refugees and recent immigrants, and other community agencies. Under our short term service mandate, we must terminate service to 15 to 20 families per month, despite enormous pressure to extend the deadline beyond 8 weeks.

We know that community trends will continue to increase demand for this program. The incidence of multiple births is rising but services geared to their needs are almost nonexistent. Statistically, multiples families face higher rates of divorce, alcoholism, and domestic violence, and the children often face special health and development issues. Dr. John Barrett, Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Toronto, says: "We know through research that home care often means the difference between survival and collapse for many families."

The increase in newcomers to Canada who settle in Toronto will also escalate the demand for VHA's program. Newcomer families are often isolated and in difficult financial circumstances. When severe illness strikes these families, there are often no resources, familial or financial, to support them.



*Grace and Robert's triplets with caregiver Shirley*

The stories of our clients highlight the potential devastation to a family where the primary caregiver or sole caregiver is very ill. Interestingly, VHA's original mandate when it was founded as a volunteer organization in 1925, was to care for the children of mothers who were in hospital and couldn't care for their own children. VHA is pleased to continue to provide this crucial societal support through this program.

You can make a difference to these children and families. If you are interested in supporting this program and other needed services across Toronto, we hope you'll continue to or begin donating to the United Way. As their slogan says, "Without you, there would be no way." You can also donate directly to VHA. Gifts may be earmarked for the Child and Family Homemaking Program if you wish. Brenda, Victor, Maxine, Shahanima, Grace, Caroline, and others like them in need of VHA's services will be grateful you did.

**"I wouldn't have been able to cope with my triplets and the sleep deprivation. I was still learning and my homemaker was a wealth of information and experience."**

Grace, new mother of triplets

## VHA's pediatric nursing program is expanding

**Y**ork Region residents will now have greater access to VHA's pediatric visiting and shift nursing program. Through a recent RFP issued by the CCAC of York Region, VHA was awarded a Child and Youth Visiting and Shift Nursing contract. We are pleased to be able to serve the families of York Region through this contract which began in April of this year.

In 2002, VHA also renewed its contracts with all five Toronto CCACs under the Child and Family Program. This work includes shift and visiting pediatric nursing (both in home and in school) as well as personal support services.



## What do the best pediatric nurses need to know?

**V**HA's pediatric nurses recently participated in a study being conducted by researchers at the Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto examining the nursing knowledge and skill needs necessary to optimize the success of pediatric home care. This study is designed to identify indicators of nursing knowledge and skills such as

educational preparation and experience that can be linked to patient, nursing and system outcomes in pediatric homecare. The research, which began in June 2001, is in the data analysis stage now. Preliminary findings will be discussed among the researchers soon and we can hope for dissemination of the findings at the end of this year.

For more information, please contact

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# Offering complex care and simple comforts since 1925

## VHA SERVICES

- ✓ Adult and Elder Care
- ✓ Child and Family Care
- ✓ Respite or Caregiver/Family Relief
- ✓ Palliative Care
- ✓ Mental Health Support
- ✓ Foot Care
- ✓ Attendant Care
- ✓ Home Cleaning (regular and extreme)
- ✓ Information and Referral Services
- ✓ Supplementary Staffing in care facilities

## VHA PROFESSIONAL STAFF

- ✓ Registered nurses/registered practical nurses
- ✓ Homemakers/personal support workers
- ✓ Client service coordinators/supervisors
- ✓ Other skilled professionals as required

VHA Home HealthCare is a member agency of the United Way of Greater Toronto and a contracted provider for all six Toronto Community Care Access Centres, the Durham Access to Care, the CCAC of York Region, the City of Toronto's Homemakers and Nurses Services Program and the Regional Municipality of Durham.

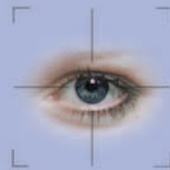
*All services can be made available in your own home, in hospital or in a long-term care facility.*



For more information, please call us at  
**(416) 489-2500**  
or **1 (888) 314-6622**  
or visit our web site at [www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca)



**United Way**  
of Greater Toronto



## Eye On QUALITY

### Our Commitment to Quality Improvement

VHA is busy preparing for its second accreditation survey by the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA) taking place in September 2003. CCHSA provides health services organizations with the opportunity to participate in an accreditation program based on national standards. By assessing our organization against CCHSA's standards of excellence, we are able to identify strengths and weaknesses, and strive to continually improve the quality of care and services we provide.

Our progress towards accreditation to date includes:

- Establishment of 6 accreditation teams:
  - Leadership and Partnerships
  - Client Services-Home Support/Cleaning
  - Client Services-Nursing
  - Human Resources
  - Information Management
  - Environment
- Appointment of team members including staff representing all areas of VHA as well as Board members
- Orientation and training on the self-assessment process provided to all team members
- Development of surveys for soliciting broader input from community partners and other stakeholders
- Development of a communication strategy to keep our geographically diverse staff informed about the accreditation process and results

**For more information about any of our quality initiatives, please contact Gloria Kay at (416) 482-8772 or e-mail: [gkay@vha.ca](mailto:gkay@vha.ca)**

IF YOU  
have any comments or suggestions  
regarding our newsletter, please feel  
free to contact the editor of

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