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For more information, contact:
Mark Cohen, VP/Communications & Public Relations
VITAS Healthcare Corporation
305-350-5905

National Institute for Jewish Hospice Certifies Five VITAS Programs

Miami, Florida, January 9, 2006—Finding the hope at the end of life is part of the Jewish approach to hospice, a lesson learned when the National Institute for Jewish Hospice (NIJH) came to Miami to certify five VITAS Innovative Hospice Care® programs in Florida as Jewish hospices.

SD accredited since 2005, rotate different staff members through so everyone has the opportunity to come back to their teams.

Mary Ann Davidson, Regional Director of Market Development,
Full day program in addition to program we have a jewish hospice manual barry kinz co-wrote it with Maurice lam,

National institute for jewish hospices based in new york, Maurice lam, mission is to work with hospices across the county to education them on cultural sens, customs, beliefs, religious situations in caring for terminally ill of jewish faith. Different sects from ultraconservative, reform. They address how our staff would need to interact with terminology, holidays. Other materials as you do your application for accreditation. Different publications for p/f, some educational pieces for our staff.

Rabbi Lam and wife do presentation. Kinz do medical ethics,

About five staff members, gm or dmd, case manager, chaplain, sw, community liaison, reps; focus is to have those indiv come back to teams. We have a rabbi on staff, committee does a lot of work with jewish centers, reminders to staff about jewish holidays so that if we're in homes we have the sensitivity about that. Call liaison to get direction and support. Taken it a step further internally to have this in-house group.

Community driven as people are ti and dying there is a lot of religious and cultural sensitivity to that process. Demonstration to community that we understand. Our svp co-wrote the manual it's a commitment we demonstrate.

“Hope transcends all religions and cultures,” acknowledges Edith Beroldi, a patient care administrator with VITAS’ Broward County program, which is re-certified annually. Beroldi has experienced a variety of end-of-life customs in her 13 years with VITAS, including those of a patient from Tibet and a Miccosukee Indian. “I’ve made a few faux pas,” she admits. “My patients teach me all the time. And we have a lot of Jewish patients, so it’s good to get a formal presentation of Jewish cultural traditions.”

It is something Dr. Jeffrey Behrens, medical director for VITAS in Palm Beach County, has been doing informally for years. With the help of Rabbi Barry Kinzbrunner, MD,

FACP, he developed a presentation on end-of-life needs in the Jewish culture. “It goes over very well with our partners in nursing homes and assisted living communities,” says General Manager Susan Acocella. “Being certified more formally was a natural progression for the Palm Beach program.”

The certification class was conducted by NIJH officers Rabbi Maurice Lamm, Rabbi David Lamm and Shirley Lamm, and by Rabbi Dr. Kinzbrunner, who is also senior vice president and chief medical officer for VITAS. The day-long event was attended by 15 VITAS employees.

To be accredited by the NIJH, a hospice must undergo in-depth, on-site training of all employees and volunteers, Jewish and non-Jewish. The curriculum addresses the unique concerns of Jews about entering a hospice, their expectations at the end of life, their fears about their families and futures, Jewish religious rituals at death and during the mourning period, practical strategies to ease the suffering and comfort patients and families, and what words to avoid. Discussion includes the specific belief systems, customs, traditions and needs of Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and secular or non-practicing Jews.

“VITAS has a long history of serving this ever-changing market, including its diverse Jewish community,” says Father Vince Treglio, bereavement services manager in Miami-Dade. “But there are certain misgivings about hospice in the Jewish culture. The NIJH taught us the particulars of the Jewish way of death.”

“We have to be culturally aware in South Florida,” Rabbi Leon Olenick of VITAS’ Broward program agrees, “so we can put our arms around our patients and families in a better way. Our education is ongoing; even after certification, the NIJH sends updates and reminders by e-mail. And we chaplains share our knowledge—Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish—at in-services. It’s who we are, as chaplains and as VITAS.”

The NIJH has accredited just 33 Jewish hospices in the United States, 13 of which are VITAS programs. Patients and families interested in learning more can call 1-800-93-VITAS.

About The National Institute for Jewish Hospice

The National Institute for Jewish Hospice, established in 1985, serves terminally ill Jewish patients and their relatives. The NIJH provides authorized endorsement for Jewish hospices within non-Jewish hospitals and nursing facilities, provides intensive training for medical and other healthcare staffs, and provides continuous consultation with them on problems relating to hospice and the Jewish community. Rabbi Maurice Lamm, President of the National Institute for Jewish Hospice, is professor at Yeshiva University’s Rabbinical Seminary, where he holds the Chair in Professional Rabbines. He is the author of five major books, including The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning. In 2003 Rabbi Lamm published the Jewish Hospice Manual with Rabbi Barry M. Kinzbrunner, MD, senior vice president and chief medical officer for VITAS Healthcare Corporation.

About VITAS Innovative Hospice Care®

VITAS Innovative Hospice Care®, a pioneer and leader in the hospice movement since 1978, is the nation’s largest provider of end-of-life care. Headquartered in Miami, Florida, VITAS (pronounced VEE-tahs) operates 39 hospice programs in 15 states (Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and

Wisconsin). VITAS employs 8,106 professionals who care for terminally ill patients daily, primarily in the patients' homes, but also in the company's 23 inpatient hospice units as well as in hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living facilities/residential care facilities for the elderly. At the conclusion of the third quarter of 2005, VITAS reported an average daily census of 10,259.

PHOTO caption:

The National Institute for Jewish Hospice certified five VITAS programs as Jewish hospices. Chaplains from those programs are, from left, standing, Tom McRee, Central Florida; Rabbi Benzion Levin, Miami-Dade; Brad Lutz, Broward; Rabbi Leon Olenick, Broward; Rev. Carol Moran, Brevard; Father Vince Treglio, Miami-Dade; Karen Modell, West Palm Beach; Rabbi Dr. Barry Kinzbrunner, senior vice president and chief medical officer, VITAS; and Rabbi David Lamm. Seated are Shirley Lamm and Rabbi Maurice Lamm of the NIJH.