

M A I T R I

San Francisco, California

There's little about the Maitri residential care facility that signals it is a place where people are very sick. It has a light, airy feel, with latte-colored walls adorned by colorful artwork. The residence is on the second floor of a renovated warehouse in a neighborhood of San Francisco Victorians in a vibrant part of the city. Walk down one hall and you'll see atriums on either side, open to the sunshine and filled with blooming flowers, tended by a resident. Nearby a bulletin board lists the schedule for outings into the city, often planned and accompanied by volunteers.

There's no sick room smell — any odors wafting through the dining and living areas are coming from a large, well-appointed kitchen where tempting and healthful meals and snacks are prepared. Residents and their visitors are welcome to sit at one of the long oak tables for a meal or relax on an overstuffed couch in the living room.

Each of the 15 patient rooms is individualized with artwork and personal belongings. An attentive staff and volunteers come around to ensure pain control and personal needs are being handled for residents, all of whom have AIDS.

Maitri is an alternative to institutional care for low-income people who need end-of-life care or short-term intensive transitional support as they deal with complications from the disease or side-effects of the medications. In contrast to the Medicare hospice model that requires an end to curative treatment, Maitri offers hospice-level residential care while allowing patients to pursue



treatment options. Funding comes largely from federal Ryan White CARE funds and from donations.

The peaceful atmosphere was established by Maitri's founder, the late Zen priest Issan Dorsey, who in 1987 offered care in his Zen center to a homeless student dying of AIDS. The center became the Maitri AIDS hospice. By 1996, AIDS was taking a terrible toll, and there was great demand for hospice beds. Maitri responded by raising \$500,000 and obtaining a \$2.4 million housing grant from the city of San Francisco to move into larger quarters, converting the Duboce Street warehouse into a residential care facility. The interior design was donated by an organization called Healing Environments.

As it has grown, Maitri's board of directors has held tightly onto its independence so that the organization can be flexible enough to change with the needs of people with HIV and AIDS. "We try to stay one step ahead of the needs curve, which is constantly changing," explains Mary Ellen Mullin, program director. Protease inhibitor drugs have helped many AIDS patients live longer and healthier lives. But

not everyone responds well to those medications, and some have had to change drug *cocktails* as they become ineffective. They can get transitional care at Maitri at these times and then move back into the community.

"It's a model that works as a response to the epidemic," explains Executive Director Tim Patriarca. It's a model that could work elsewhere, he says. "It's simply a question of how does a community want to treat its sickest and neediest members. Not just at the bare minimum, but the way we would want to be treated. Here, your external worries about housing and finance can be dropped away."

Maitri has a robust volunteer base who take residents to medical appointments, out on individual or group activities, or just sit by their bedsides. Many residents don't have family in the area, and volunteers offer companionship.

The stigma of AIDS that might make a patient uncomfortable in the typical nursing facility is nonexistent at Maitri. "We serve people of all backgrounds and religions," Patriarca says. "Maitri treats them all with respect."



INNOVATION HIGHLIGHTS

CREATIVE FACILITY DESIGN

EXTENSIVE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

HOSPICE AND HOSPICE-LIKE SERVICES
FOR FULL-CODE RESIDENTS