

January 20, 2000

Richard K. Baron  
Executive Director  
Herman Goldman Foundation  
61 Broadway, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10006

Dear Mr. Baron:

The Hebrew Home for The Aged At Riverdale and its community services division, ElderServe, request a grant of \$20,000 from the Herman Goldman Foundation to develop and implement a safety training program for home health workers. Home health aides provide the care that immeasurably enhances the quality of life of elderly people and often makes the difference in delaying or avoiding institutionalization in long-term care facilities. They are the front line in keeping our increasingly older population at home for as long as possible. Their job is demanding, often unappreciated and frequently dangerous.

Healthcare organizations, including nursing homes, observe rigorous standards regarding safety and security procedures. Every facility must have available up-to-date safety and disaster manuals. Each employee receives training in appropriate responses to fire and safety situations. Security personnel are visible and control entry to the facility. Most important from the perspective of personal safety, the employee is surrounded by others and has the ability to summon assistance with relative ease.

No such support is available to the home health aide. The individual worker in the field is isolated, without the infrastructure available to their on-site counterparts. They are exposed to street crime, traffic accidents, weather-related perils and hazards within the client's location. The latter can include violent or uncontrollable behavior on the part of the client, environmental hazards in the home, building intruders and potential accidents resulting from the physical demands of the job. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (the accrediting organization for hospitals, nursing homes and healthcare services) requires a secure workplace for home health workers, including

efforts to protect against violence in the home and robbery or assault while reaching an appointment. Most safety instruction for these employees, however, is relegated to a small component of the general training program they receive when they are hired.

As recently as January 3, *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe* and other major newspapers ran an article about a national shortage of home health care workers. Because of the low unemployment rate, many home health care workers are leaving the field to work in such less demanding areas as retail and fast food. In some cases, they earn an equivalent or higher salary and qualify for benefits. The shortage creates a crisis for elderly people for whom in-home services make the difference between staying at home or moving to a nursing home or other institutional setting. The article notes that the number of jobs to be filled will have increased by 76% between now and 2006.

ElderServe employs approximately 600 home health aides to serve 300 clients in the Bronx, Westchester, Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. In addition to the economic factors noted in the *New York Times* article, we have found that concerns about safety and security are factors in recruitment and retention. When incidents occur, not only is the individual traumatized, but also the news spreads quickly throughout the entire group of workers. Such incidents have a demoralizing effect on the home health aides and result in less reliable services for the clients.

The Hebrew Home for The Aged At Riverdale has a long history of innovation and responsiveness to the needs of the elderly people it serves. Our initial approach to the problem was to work with several of the firms that assist us with employee training programs. We found, however, that there are no discrete safety training programs for field based healthcare workers. Therefore, we will develop our own program and request the assistance of the Herman Goldman Foundation in supporting the curriculum development component of the project. When the curriculum has been completed and tested, we will make it an ongoing part of our training program for home health aides. In addition, we will make it available for other long-term care and healthcare facilities that may wish to replicate it.

The Hebrew Home and ElderServe will partner with the Westchester County District Attorney's Office in developing the curriculum and conducting the training sessions. The Westchester District Attorney has developed a pioneering elder abuse program. It's staff members will contribute their substantial expertise in issues related to law enforcement and service to elderly persons. In addition, the Hebrew Home security director and assistant director are former law enforcement professionals with years of experience. A component of the training program will deal with elder abuse issues designed to help aides understand how to respond appropriately in cases where clients exhibit violent behavior or where they exhibit signs of having suffered domestic abuse. The Westchester District Attorney's staff will be instrumental in developing this component.

A nurse/trainer will coordinate the program. The Hebrew Home maintains a training apartment in its Baptist Division. The apartment will be used as a training site to

supplement classroom activities. The curriculum development component will produce a *Train the Trainer* manual that will be used for the training, which will be conducted several times a year. All aides will be required to attend the training program in addition to their general training upon being hired and will be given the opportunity to repeat the program if they desire. We will publish the manual and make it available for dissemination to other healthcare facilities. Following is a preliminary outline of the curriculum.

TOPIC	LEARNING OBJECTIVES
1	Hazard assessment; initial and ongoing. Adding to plan of care
2	Safety and violence
3	Transportation safety
4	Avoiding and escaping hazards and confrontation
5	Protecting oneself when confrontation is unavoidable
6	Self defense — legal devices and how to use them
7	Client rights; what is a crime; what not to do.
8	Dealing with violent situations in the client's home
9	Identifying and addressing instances of elder abuse that might be evidenced by malnutrition, dehydration or bruising.
10	Protecting self and the client from intruders

A grant of \$20,000 from the Herman Goldman Foundation will enable us to develop and produce the curriculum and launch this program. We anticipate that it will make a significant contribution to caring for elderly persons in their homes by giving home health aides increased confidence and skills regarding their safety as well as their clients'. We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

Executive Vice President