

## The Alzheimer's Special Care Program at Sherrill House: Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. What type of programming is offered to residents on the Special Care Unit?**

**A.** Sherrill House provides a wide variety of programs and activities designed to meet the needs of all residents, regardless of their level or type of dementia. Special amenities include a hands-on, therapeutic “country kitchen” where residents can engage in programs such as baking groups and tea parties, as well as individual activities. The unit also features a “front porch” for resident gatherings and reminiscence activities. In the warmer months, residents from the unit enjoy cookouts and other activities in one of our beautifully-designed outdoor spaces. For specific programs, please refer to the attached Daily Activity Schedule.

**Q. How many hours of programming are offered each day?**

**A.** Programs are offered 12 hours/day, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., 7 days/week.

**Q. Do residents on the Special Care Unit go on community outings?**

**A.** Yes. Residents visit a variety of area destinations, depending on the season. For example, residents might go to the Arnold Arboretum in warmer months, the La Salette Shrine or the Boston Common to see the holiday lights, J.P. Licks for a summertime ice-cream cone, or local restaurants for lunch. Each resident is accompanied by a staff member on these outings.

**Q. Is music therapy programming offered on the Special Care Unit?**

**A.** Yes. Sherrill House’s board-certified music therapist, assisted by music therapy interns from the Berklee College of Music, directs music therapy groups such as Music and Motion for residents with advanced dementia, and a late-afternoon group for residents who display “sundowning” behaviors, and offers one-on-one music therapy sessions as well. Music therapy services are available 40 hours/week.

**Q. How many recreation staff are assigned to the Special Care Unit?**

**A.** There are four full-time recreation specialists on the unit.

**Q. In addition to the recreation specialists, how is the Special Care Unit staffed?**

**A.** The Program’s leadership team includes a Program Director, a Nurse Manager and an Assistant Director of Nursing. Other staff includes 2 charge nurses, nursing assistants and a unit secretary. Sherrill House meets or exceeds the Alzheimer’s Association-recommended staffing ratio of one staff person for every five residents. Dedicated volunteers also spend time with residents on the unit each week.

**Q. Are staffing assignments consistent from day to day?**

**A.** Yes, Sherrill House uses a primary nursing care model, assuring that residents will have the same caregivers throughout the week.

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- Q. Does the Special Care Unit have a designated social worker assigned to work with the residents on the unit and their families?**
- A. Yes. The Program Director, a licensed independent clinical social worker, provides social work services and is supervised by Sherrill House's Director of Social Work.
- Q. What is the tenure of the staff on the Special Care Unit?**
- A. The Special Care Unit staff is extremely committed to the residents in their care, and turnover on the unit is very low. Most staff members have worked on the unit for more than a decade.
- Q. What special training do employees on the Special Care Unit receive?**
- A. All staff members on the unit, regardless of discipline, undergo an extensive training, using a curriculum developed by the Alzheimer's Association. In addition, staff receive training in the care of individuals afflicted with Lewy Body Dementia.
- Q. Are there any religious services or spiritual celebrations specifically for residents on the Special Care Unit?**
- A. Yes. Our staff chaplain leads two worship services each week, and residents of all faith traditions are welcome to attend. The chaplain also leads a weekly Rosary group, and provides spiritual support to families as needed.
- Q. Is outdoor space available for residents' and families' use?**
- A. Yes, Sherrill House's upper patio features umbrella tables and chairs surrounded by lush container plantings, and is open for family visits, cookouts and celebrations in the warmer months. In addition, our cottage-style lower-level therapeutic garden has been designed with our residents' safety in mind, and is available for strolling, visiting and quiet contemplation.
- Q. Are there specific areas in the building for family visits and gatherings?**
- A. Yes, our lobby-level grande room, sunroom and library are all available for families to enjoy, and can be reserved for special family celebrations
- Q. How does Sherrill House determine which individuals are appropriate for admission to the Special Care Unit?**
- A. To ensure that Sherrill House can provide the highest quality care to each individual on the Special Care Unit, decisions about admission are made following the completion of a thorough clinical assessment consisting of most recent physical and social history and current medication regimen. The assessment is conducted by Sherrill House's interdisciplinary team, which makes recommendations about admission on a case-by-case basis.
- Q. Does the Special Care Unit serve residents with different levels of dementia?**
- A. Yes, residents afflicted with dementia reside on the Special Care Unit, regardless of the stage of their illness. The availability of four recreation specialists ensures that individualized programming is provided to each resident.

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**Q. Is the Special Care Unit secured?**

**A.** To ensure residents' safety, the entire building including the Special Care Unit is secured by the WanderGuard system.

**Q. What is the average length of stay for residents on the Special Care Unit?**

**A.** While the length of stay will vary depending on each individual's illness, the average stay on the unit is 3 - 4 years.

**Q. Are phones and TVs installed in residents' rooms?**

**A.** Telephones and TVs can be installed at the family's request. Complimentary TV, phone and WiFi services are available throughout the building.

**Q. Are beauty salon services available to Special Care Unit residents?**

**A.** Yes. Sherrill House has a full-service salon, and offers hair and manicure services to all residents.

**Q. Does Sherrill House offer pet therapy services?**

**A.** Yes. In conjunction with the not-for-profit PetPals program at FriendshipWorks, certified pets and trained volunteers visit throughout the facility each week. In some cases, families are able to bring their own pets in for visits; arrangements can be made in conjunction with the unit's Program Director.

**Q. Are psychological supports available to residents?**

**A.** Yes, a psychologist is available 4 times each week, and can be paged at any time. In addition, psychotherapy services are available as needed, and consultations with a neuropsychologist or psychiatrist can also be arranged.

**Q. If a resident requires end-of-life or hospice care, will he/she have to be moved or transferred to another unit?**

**A.** No, residents can remain in the same room on the Special Care Unit, even if they require end-of-life services.

**Q. Do family members meet regularly to provide feedback to administrative and other staff members?**

**A.** Yes. The Sherrill House Family Council meets quarterly, and family members are welcome to attend.

**Q. Does Sherrill House offer any support groups for families?**

**A.** Yes, a support group for families and friends whose loved ones are afflicted with dementia meets monthly, as does a support group for caregivers of persons with Lewy Body dementia.

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**Q. What is the history of Sherrill House's Special Care Program?**

**A.** Established in 1986, Sherrill House's program is the oldest one of its kind in Boston. The Special Care Program is based on the knowledge that people continue to change, grow and adapt, even with a chronic illness. While originally conceived as a program for persons with Alzheimer's disease, in recent years Sherrill House has developed a pioneering relationship with the Lewy Body Dementia Association, and now leads the way in the differential diagnosis and treatment of Lewy Body dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other neurological disorders.

**Q. What company owns and operates Sherrill House?**

**A.** Sherrill House is an independently-owned not-for-profit organization.