

"This Half-way Home is yet another step closer in delivering a comprehensive and integrated continuum of services to our clients."

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VIEWS AND VOICES

Half-way Home

For many people who have just completed residential rehab, living in a Halfway Home that offers a positive, drug and alcohol-free, group living environment is the best way to transition back to normal life. Ensuring that you attend an effective addiction treatment centre is the key to overcoming your addiction, but for many that is just the beginning of a long and winding journey to recovery. In many cases, living in a Halfway Home after rehab is the best way to transition into a new, sober life.

Whether referred to as a sober living home, halfway home or sober house, all of these names refer to a drug and alcohol-free, community living environment intended as a transitional living phase for those who have attended a residential rehab facility for drug or alcohol addiction.

Those in recovery who have lost a lot during active addiction would definitely benefit from having a transitional period to ensure that they are stable in their recovery before going home to deal with the stressful situation left behind. Especially those coming to Sankalp, most of whom are street drug users and need to start life from scratch. Spending time at a Halfway Home can increase the chances of long-term recovery because it further prepares a person for dealing with real-life situations once again.

One study showed that living in a Halfway Home increased the likelihood of employment after rehab, while decreasing the chances of alcohol and drug abuse, arrests and psychiatric episodes. Other benefits of living in a Halfway Home after rehab include easier the transition to 'normal life', peer support, accountability, building a sober support network, additional therapy and support.

Keeping in mind this need, it was decided that we would utilize additional space above our Detoxification Centre premises as a Half-way Home to support those in treatment, who are without a home in Mumbai. A top floor has been constructed which houses 6 beds for these clients.

The Half-way Home was inaugurated on the occasion of our 22nd Anniversary. For this special occasion, all

Sankalp Staff were invited to the Detoxification Centre. Trustees from both Sankalp and Nirashritashramata Trust were also invited. Ms. Joyce Miranda did the honours of cutting the ribbon and was accompanied by Mr. Joe Fernandez and Mr. William Mendonca from Nirashritashramata Trust. Sankalp Trustees Mr. B.N. Bhagwat, Dr. Saroj Jha, and Ms. Sujata Ganega were pleased to conduct the ceremonial lighting of the lamp.

The Half-way home will look at catering to a maximum of 6 residents for a period of 4-6 months. This Half-way Home is yet another step closer in delivering a comprehensive and integrated continuum of services to our clients.



Trustees of both Sankalp and Nirashritashramata Trust inaugurate the Half-way Home with ribbon cutting

Client Story: Vicky Sharma

I am Vicky Sharma born and raised in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. I am 36 years old and am the eldest among five siblings. I have one brother and three sisters. My father was the bread winner of the family; he was a scrap dealer while my mother was a typical house wife, trying to raise us all and keep up with the house work simultaneously. Everyone around me was struggling daily just to survive. I barely made it to high school. I wasn't interested in studies and was more curious about various other things. I wanted to escape from poverty and wanted to somehow get rich quick. One fine day I caught a train and came to Mumbai. I thought I could make my dreams come true, but how I was wrong.

I was barely 14 years old and with no idea of what I wanted. I got off at Kalyan station and literally starved for 2 days, until I met a couple of guys who were earning a living by polishing shoes. One of them turned out to be a good Samaritan and helped me out by letting me stay along with him. He taught me how to polish shoes in trains. We used to work in trains to and fro on the Mumbai-Pune Express line which I really enjoyed.

Eventually, I started smoking and drinking with him. However, couldn't yet afford a rented place in Pune. Gradually, I started consuming Cannabis. Since, I wasn't making a lot of money with the job at hand; I started stealing, pick-pocketing from commuters asleep at the railway station. It was a thrill. I started getting kicks of robbing others and it sufficed my daily expenses as well.

A few years down the line, I witnessed someone chasing brown sugar in one of the dingy slums. It immediately caught my eye and my curiosity got the better of me. I found it extremely amusing how the powder turned to liquid and rolled down the foil as the person chased the smoke emanating from the melting liquid. I asked him for a line. That chase was one of the greatest feelings I ever had. Little did I know I would be stuck chasing that high the rest of my life, imprisoned in the vicious cycle of addiction. I turned into a thug and would very frequently be incarcerated by the police. They would catch me red handed, beat the heck out of me or and put me behind bars for a couple of weeks.

As my tolerance to brown sugar increased, I started injecting it by using in a group. I soon began sharing the injecting equipment although Sankalp peers warned me against it. A glimmer of hope came, when I finally accepted that I have a problem and spoke with outreach workers from Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust after a lot of persistence from them.

For the first time in a long while I was treated well and with respect at the centre. That obligated me to at least listen to what they had to say, after all they were right about not sharing needles. They recommended I start the Opioid Substitution Therapy which I did. They also recommended I get myself tested for HIV. I never in my wildest dreams thought that I would be positive but I did the test anyway. So there I was, standing there in almost disbelief at what I was hearing. Yes, true that I had pretty much asked for it by sharing needles and syringes but I always thought, it could never happen to me.

This shock gradually mutated into anger. It was quite unlike any anger I'd ever felt before and quite literally consumed me.

I was angry at the world, at God and most of all at myself. My diagnosis with HIV provided an opportunity to beat myself up even more. It seemed the perfect excuse to get back into using and I got really sucked in this time.

I started using again, but this time I was using double doses. I was taking Buprenorphine and at the same time I was chasing brown sugar. This made me mentally and physically very sick. I lost weight; my skin was looking pale and started having blackouts. Every time I used to go for my daily dose of Buprenorphine I would purposefully avoid talking to the counsellor or the doctor and nurses but I couldn't avoid them for long. The staff spoke to me extremely kindly and with their persistence and counselling I started to come out of my depression and accept reality. I took a long hard look at my condition and what I wanted my future to be like. I knew had to do something, I just didn't know or didn't want to know how and where to start. I knew about my HIV status and that if I didn't take the advice given to me by Sankalp I would not last very long. I would come to the DIC daily and hang around there. I liked it there. I started taking care of myself, taking my medicines every day.

In time, I met Mr. Eldred Tellis, the Director who gave me my very first job in recovery at his Neral farm house. A year later I became a peer educator and eventually got promoted to Outreach Worker (ORW) with the D.I.C. Every day, twice a day my job was to visit hotspots where Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) would be using. I was part of the Needle Exchange program wherein I used to provide new needles, replacing old ones and motivating addicts to join the program and get treated. This followed for a year when I got carried away on one of the field trips and started using again. This time it didn't take long for me to get back into the cycle of addiction. This last relapse hit me hard. No matter what, I couldn't run away from the fact that I am an addict. Mr. Eldred Tellis gave me another chance and this time wanted to see my recovery again from scratch. With a lot of hard work and counselling finally, here I am almost a year and a half in recovery and full time Night In-charge at Sankalp's (Niwara). I owe my life, dignity and self-respect to Sankalp.



Vicky along with Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust Staff at a Community Based Testing Camp

‘Udta Punjab’ – A Reflection of Truth



Lighting of the Lamp by Mr. Eldred Tellis with Udta Punjab Director - Abhishek Chaubey (right) and Writer - Sudip Sharma (left)

Whistling Woods International (WWI), Asia's largest Film, Communications and Media Arts institute inaugurated the 5th edition of its annual property, Celebrate Cinema. Like every year, the 5th edition of the festival was also inspired with a social cause; this time the theme being "Drug and Alcohol Abuse".

The NGO partner was none other than Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust. The event saw a good response of students of film, fashion, animation and media and communication aspirants with a 2500 people foot-fall on the first day of the event. The glamorous yet educative event included multiple workshops by industry experts, celebrity-studded panel discussions, movie screening and masterclasses.

The highlight of the day included screening of three short films on Drug Abuse, which received thundering applause. This was followed by a screening of the movie Udta Punjab which portrays drug addiction in India's North West. The screening of

the film was then followed by a panel discussion with Executive Director of Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, Mr. Eldred Tellis, the Director - Abhishek Chaubey and Writer - Sudip Sharma, Udta Punjab and moderated by Subhash Ghai,

The panel discussion highlighted the sudden surge in drug abuse in Punjab. The proximity with Pakistan also figured in how the drug was cheaper and of higher quality. As Mr. Tellis was involved in an assessment of the drug situation in Punjab, he was able to authenticate facts based on interviews taken with local sarpanches of villages and families affected.

Also on the panel was a beneficiary of Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, Mr. Jamshir Bagwadia, who shared his story on addiction and recovery and his learnings throughout this journey. This was followed by an interactive Q&A session with the students which saw a great number of issues and questions being raised around the problem of substance abuse. A session of media interviews followed.

Activists of MAF urge amendment of HIV/AIDS bill through 'No-Show' on World AIDS Day

This World AIDS Day, Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust along with members of the Mumbai AIDS Forum (MAF), a network of individuals and Civil Society Organizations working on HIV/AIDS in Mumbai decided to hold a unique protest on Thursday 1st December 2016 to convey its concerns about the current HIV/AIDS Bill deared by the Union Cabinet that renders - the right to life saving antiretroviral therapy (HIV medicines). and opportunistic infections - weak and subject to interpretation

At a meeting held by the Mumbai AIDS Forum, it was decided that on World AIDS Day, all NGOs will conduct **'zero activities'** as a mark of protest against the HIV/AIDS Bill deared by the Union Cabinet. A Press Conference was also organized a day prior to convey our concerns to the media. Addressing the media was Mr. Eldred Tellis along with Poonam Patkar from CCDT, Mr. Manoj Jani, Program Officer with Humsafar Trust and Ms. Nitu Sandya former Senior Legal Officer with Lawyers Collective.

The protest was to primarily underline our reservation of four words included in the HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Bill i.e. the words **"as far as possible"** (with reference to treatment).

The current version of the HIV Bill dilutes rights to access treatment. The Bill was approved by the Cabinet in October and was expected to guarantee the rights of India's 2.4 million HIV positive community. Instead, the version that has been put in public domain reveals that the Bill has been amended to state that governments are required to focus on prevention — and not on treatment — that too, as far as possible. The words 'as far as possible' included in the Bill's chapter seem to indicate that the government will have the

power or right to decide whether to provide treatment or not. This clause dilutes the government's obligation to provide free treatment to all patients.

The Minister of Health was set to move the Bill for consideration and passing in the Rajya Sabha in the last winter session and also had plans to introduce several amendments. Members demanded that the term 'as far as possible' be deleted from clause 14(1), chapter of treatment before the Bill is passed in Rajya Sabha.

According to protocol, every PLHIV should receive a regular viral load test, which is the gold standard in treatment monitoring and if needed the treatment regimen can be changed. Currently viral load is available for the limited number of PLHIV and patients are switched on different regimen without viral load. If effective antiretroviral therapy is not continued life long, there is a strong likelihood of drug resistance that is not only detrimental to patients themselves but to public health at large. Latest scientific evidence shows that antiretroviral therapy contributes to prevention of HIV in the community as the virus becomes 'undetectable', dramatically reducing the risk of transmission. The act will help in addressing these gaps in current operations.

In addition, India as the pharmacy of the developing world has the technical capacity to produce any HIV drug and lower the prices dramatically. The clause 'as far as possible' is a defensive provision and highlights a lack of self-belief in the 'Make in India' campaign that the Prime Minister has launched in the country.



Mr. Eldred Tellis along with Poonam Patkar, CCDT (left), Mr. Manoj Jani, Program Officer, Humsafar Trust (right) and Ms. Nitu Sandya, Senior Legal Officer with Lawyers Collective (middle) addressing the media at a Mumbai AIDS Forum Press Conference

Awareness and Education for Prevention of Drug Abuse & Alcoholism



Anjuman-I-Islam High School



Shri MD Shah Mahila College of Arts & Commerce



National Cadet Corps



Gilder Path L. B. E. P. School



Addressing parents of Our Lady of Health High School



Our Lady of Health High School

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