



National Alliance on Mental Illness

# **NAMI** | New York State

## **2014 Legislative Action Agenda Reinvest in Community Services**

**NAMI-NYS is against the closures of state psychiatric hospitals.** Mental illness is not a single definitive illness. Most people with a mental illness are nonviolent, exercise good judgment, move about freely in the community, and are willingly treated in office settings. Some persons with "mental illness" however, experience hallucinations and delusions. This group of persons with serious mental illness may not endorse the benefits of treatment. Their high risk behaviors are informed by their voices and false beliefs. They do not want to be symptomatic, but a brain disease affects them in ways that leads to impaired ability to care for themselves safely in the community. Our society fails to meet the needs of these people. They need and will benefit from intensive, state-of-the art treatment that is available only in hospital settings

**However, if hospitals are to be closed and psychiatric beds reduced, than NAMI-NYS strongly believes that the savings from this reductions be reinvested into services that would afford those living with a mental illness the best opportunity to advance their recovery in a community setting.**

**NAMI-NYS believes that it is the responsibility of government at all levels to develop and maintain comprehensive community support systems that include treatment and services for all adults with serious mental illnesses.**

NAMI-NYS wants to see a dollar-for-dollar reinvestment to create a community support services that are aligned with our belief **that all publicly funded community service providers must offer practices and services that have proven effective results.**

**NAMI-NYS wants to see community support services in New York State which ensure:**

- Practices and services that are recovery, resiliency and wellness oriented, culturally competent and readily accessible
- Safe and affordable housing
- Residential support services with transportation services and intensive case management
- The availability of all appropriate and effective medications
- Access to both inpatient and outpatient treatment options
- Vocational Training
- Wellness
- Round-the-clock services that are available seven days a week
- That no one would have to travel more than an hour to get to a psychiatric emergency room or crisis service unit.



## **2014 Legislative Action Agenda**

# **The Need for Safe and Affordable Housing for People With Mental Illness**

Ever since NAMI-NYS was incorporated in 1982, safe, affordable housing has been an ongoing priority of ours. A stable environment is vital and fundamental to people living with serious mental illness. In 2005, the Campaign for Mental Health Housing estimated a need for 35,000 additional housing units to be built in New York State. While more than 14,000 units have been developed or planned since then, an additional 21,000 are still needed.

**Safe and affordable housing with the availability of support services is the cornerstone of successful recovery from a mental illness within the community setting. Access to decent, safe, and affordable housing remains a tremendous challenge for adults with serious mental illnesses. It is important that appropriate services and supports are also provided so that our loved ones have the best chance possible to live in a residence that provides them with dignity and as much independence as possible.**

Mentally ill people transitioning out of jail and forensic units at state hospital facilities are also in dire need of supervised housing. Without appropriate housing in place, recidivism is especially high within this population.

We ask Governor Cuomo and our legislators to please maintain funding to provide housing and services for the seriously mentally ill who do not have the financial resources to afford the most basic human need...that of a safe, accessible, stable and affordable place to call home.



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## **2014 Legislative Action Agenda**

### **The Need for Government Sponsored Research of Mental Illnesses**

For those living with serious mental illness and for their families, research into finding the causes of these devastating brain disorders--and eventually figuring out how to prevent them--has always been a top priority of NAMI-NYS. As scientists work to develop a better understanding of the brain and how it works, **it is imperative to continue to support research that leads to better treatments and improved medications.**

**According to the World Health Organization, four of the top ten causes of disability worldwide are severe mental illnesses.** Major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and obsessive-compulsive disorder account for an estimated 20 percent of total disability resulting from all diseases and injuries. **Based on the National Institute of Health's own estimates, for every research dollar spent, 15 cents is allocated to AIDS, 10 cents on cancer, two cents on heart disease, and less than one cent on schizophrenia and other severe mental illnesses.** In contrast, the total cost of schizophrenia to society, per research dollar spent, is \$161.26, compared to only \$65.65 for heart disease, \$9.96 for cancer, and \$6.86 for AIDS.

**New York is fortunate to have two of the leading research institutes in the world right here in our own state: New York State Psychiatric Institute (NYSPI) and Nathan Kline (NKI) Institute.** These institutions have been ranked in the top 1% of the world's research facilities.

**It is vital that New York State continues to support funding for NKI and NYSPI** so better treatments can be found and, eventually, a cure discovered for brain disorders.

**Supporting research is economically beneficial to New York State** in terms of grant monies brought in, job creation and opportunities, and the potential to ease health care costs by improving and saving lives.

**RESEARCH IS OUR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE**



## **2014 Legislative Action Agenda**

### **The Expansion of Crisis Intervention Teams**

**Contacts between law enforcement officers and individuals experiencing mental illness can be deadly, dangerous or result in poor outcomes for the individual.** NAMI-NYS supports the expansion of Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) which would save lives, reduce harm, and result in better outcomes for the individuals.

**Crisis Intervention Teams consist of trained law enforcement officers and mental health professionals working together as first responders to deescalate situations and take appropriate action to assist an individual in the midst of a mental health crisis.**

**NAMI-NYS supports the expansion of CIT using the CIT Core Elements program** which was developed in Memphis, Tennessee in 2007 and it provides solutions to assist individuals experiencing a mental illness. Besides saving lives, the CIT Model reduces both stigma and the need for further involvement with the criminal justice system. CIT provides a forum for effective problem solving regarding the interaction between the criminal justice mental health care systems.

**The basic goals of the CIT Core Elements program are:**

- **Improve officer and consumer safety**
- **Redirect individuals with mental illness from the judicial system to the healthcare system**

**Research has shown that CIT saves lives and reduces injuries to individuals and law enforcement officers. It also significantly reduces the arrests and rearrests of people experiencing mental illness.** Individuals diverted by CIT receive more counseling, medication and other forms of treatment than individuals not diverted by CIT. CIT currently functions successfully in a few areas of NYS and this model needs to be expanded to serve all communities across the state by addressing the special challenges posed by persons with mental illness to law enforcement officers.



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## **2014 Legislative Action Agenda Support Veteran's Mental Health**

**Supporting those who have served our country must be a top priority.** We call on the Legislature and the Governor to assist veterans on all issues, but specifically those relating to mental health; our veterans deserve nothing less.

**Returning combat veterans are experiencing very high rates of serious mental illness, suicide, addiction, homelessness and incarceration related to posttraumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.** More must be done in New York to provide services to America's returning heroes of combat.

- Nationally, 20 percent of returning veterans live with post-traumatic stress disorder, but only half seek and receive treatment for this condition.
- This means of the almost one-million veterans living in New York State, approximately 100,000 are not receiving necessary treatment. Clearly, this is not acceptable, and reform must take place to improve the access and affordability of mental health services for veterans.
- The VA estimates that nationally there are 107,000 veterans homeless on any given night. Most of these suffer from PTSD or another serious mental illness. (Of all homeless men, it is estimated that 40 percent of them served in the armed forces).

Although New York State has taken tremendous strides and funding for mental health treatment has increased in recent years, significant numbers of veterans with serious mental illness are still falling through the cracks because they are not getting the services they need. We must increase funding for mental health and medical treatment for veterans with serious mental illness. Ensure that monies designated for mental health and substance abuse treatment for veterans are allocated to Veterans Medical Centers, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and other programs serving veterans with mental illness and utilized for the treatment of these individuals.

**We have a moral obligation to provide our veterans the best and most readily available services we can offer**



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## 2014 Legislative Action Agenda

### Mental Health Education in Schools

**Education, early intervention and working on prevention are keys to minimizing and hopefully, eventually eradicating mental illnesses.**

It is vital that New York's education system does a better job of creating a true comprehension of mental illness and mental health issues. **Proper mental health is crucial to overall wellbeing, which is why it is necessary that mental health is incorporated into health education curriculums. Administrators, teachers and students must be given the tools to identify the potential warning signs of mental illnesses which are prevalent in children and adolescents, as well demonstrate the harmful and potential long-term mental health effects of bullying.**

The integration of mental health into our educational curriculums is long overdue. Including mental health education will lead to our children getting the proper support they need; this will also lead to a reduction in harassment and bullying which can contribute to an already high suicide rate in adolescents.

- 10% of American youth suffer from serious mental health conditions
- 50% of mental illnesses develop by age 14, 75% by age 24
- 70-80% of children living with mental illness do not receive needed treatment. This leads to decreased performance in schools
- 2.2 million adolescents aged 12 to 17 have experienced a major depressive episode in the past year, and nearly 60% of them did not receive any treatment
- The dropout rate for children with severe emotional health and mental health issues is twice that of other students
- Expanded school mental health services in elementary schools have been found to reduce special education referrals, improve aspects of the school climate and produce declines in disciplinary referrals, suspension and grade retention

NAMI-NYS has partnered with three other organizations, the Mental Health Association in New York State, Families Together in New York State, and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to promote legislation that would formally introduce mental health education into our state's health education curriculum. This important step would significantly raise awareness of mental health issues.