



National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI New York State

2018 Legislative Action Agenda

The Need for Safe and Affordable Housing with Wrap-Around Services for People with Mental Illness

A stable environment is vital and fundamental to the recovery from psychiatric disorders. Safe and affordable housing programs which incorporate recovery oriented support services are the cornerstone of successful recovery from serious mental illness (SMI) within the community setting, yet accessing these essential programs remains a tremendous challenge.

The \$10 million proposed in the Governor's budget, falls way short of what is needed to have the community based mental health housing system adequately meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. We want to see the legislature address the lack of funding for this crucial initiative. The Bring it Home coalition recommends that the Governor's \$10 million investment be moved to the fourth quarter of the budget cycle, have the Legislature contribute to this funding and have it annualized.

In recent years, the Office of Mental Health (OMH) has focused on reducing the number of people in the most expensive housing environments such as in-patient beds at state psychiatric hospitals, state operated supervised community residences, and other state funded residential settings. To achieve this, OMH has given priority status in access to housing to individuals residing in these settings. While we acknowledge the necessity to reduce costs, **we must ensure that housing opportunities are made equally available to individuals who do not come from these priority populations but are still in need of the housing supports and services.**

Additionally, we need to ensure that individuals who are being transitioned from these highly supervised settings are being moved to residential settings that adequately meet their high level of need for supports and services in order to maximize their recovery, avoid future hospitalizations, and ensure the best possible quality of life. **This is why NAMI-NYS believes that a large part of the savings from hospital bed reductions must be invested in more beds and staffing support in the community based mental health housing system.**

NAMI-NYS recognizes that in order to provide adequate services, providers must be able to recruit and retain qualified staff. This is not possible when staff is not properly compensated. The work these staff do is challenging and requires a high degree of training, experience and education that is crucial to the success of the people they serve. Because of the low rate of pay and lack of cost of living increases, programs are not able to retain these qualified staff members. **It is imperative that we provide staff with a living wage that keeps up with the increases in the cost of living so that our family members have well trained and qualified people to provide their support and services.**