

Information Packet for
Interested Students &
Schools



NAMI California
www.namica.org

NAMI on Campus High School Club Program

NAMI on Campus High School (NCHS) Clubs are student-led groups on high school campuses, where students can talk openly about mental health and wellness, learn ways to support friends or family members who have a mental illness, and educate others on campus about mental health and wellness. The goal of NCHS Clubs is to end stigma by raising awareness that mental illness is not rare and should be treated like any other kind of medical condition.

Student Leaders will be empowered with toolkits, materials, templates and resources to make running the club a fun and educational process.

The Club is open to all students-those with mental health conditions, those with family members with a condition, or students who are interested in the field or in advocacy.

Club leaders and members become advocates within their school and local community, and work towards creating a more positive and mental health-supportive school environment.

About NAMI CA

The National Alliance on Mental Illness California (NAMI CA) is part of the nation's largest nonprofit, grassroots organization that provides support, education and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families and friends. Founded in 1979, the NAMI organization consists of a national office, 50 NAMI State Organizations, and more than 1,000 local NAMI Affiliates nationwide. California has 62 local affiliates with over 19,000 members comprised of family members and individuals with mental health conditions.

The purpose of NCHS Clubs is to:

- Educate and increase the awareness of students, teachers, faculty and school administration about mental health and wellness
- Be supportive of students who are living with mental illness
- Provide information on school and community resources
- Encourage people to recognize early signs of mental illness
- Encourage students who are having mental health issues to think about getting help
- Work to end the stigma that surrounds mental illness
- Create an inclusive, safe and supportive school environment
- Let students know there is help available if they need it

What is the program format?

Interested students and their adult advisor complete the steps outlined in the NCHS Online Process document (page 6). Once they have completed all 6 steps, they are officially approved as a NCHS club and can begin club activities. Until they are officially approved, students and schools may not use the NCHS or NAMI California (NAMI CA) logo, name or other related elements of the club.

NAMI CA will offer full-day trainings throughout the year in different parts of California for clubs that are interested in learning more about mental health, stigma, and planning awareness campaigns for their club. The trainings are a very engaging and fun day where clubs get to meet other clubs from the area. For more info on scheduled trainings, please contact NAMI CA.

What kinds of activities does a NCHS club do?

All kinds! Whatever a club can think up that promotes mental health awareness and aims to reduce stigma is a good place to start. Some ideas that other clubs have done are below:

- Passing out green ribbons for mental health awareness
- Baking lime green ribbon cookies



- Creating and displaying posters showing celebrities and other public figures who have mental health conditions
- Bringing an Ending the Silence presentation to campus with help from the local Affiliate
- Screening a movie on campus with a mental health theme
- Coordinating stress-relieving activities like yoga on campus during finals week
- “Dodge the Stigma” dodgeball tournament
- Lime green tie-dye activity
- Green fuzzy sock sale each winter to promote warmth and kindness
- Creating posters to hang around campus that have facts about mental illness and info on how to get help if you or someone you know needs it

Resources and Support for Clubs

NAMI CA spent over 2 years developing the materials, resources, manuals and toolkits to help clubs get off the ground. Once your club has completed the Start Up process, you will gain access to the electronic versions of the manuals which have in-depth info on mental health, mental illness, campaign ideas, talking points, templates, and much more. We are also always here to help—please give us a call to brainstorm, share a great idea, or troubleshoot!

Your local NAMI Affiliate is a fantastic resource, which is why we make sure each club gets introduced to their local Affiliate early on in the process. They can let you know which programs and services are available to those who need them in your community.

Advisors - if there is interest from Advisors, we would be glad to host monthly webinars just for Advisors to share successes and challenges, and learn from one another’s experiences. Please stay tuned for more info!

Trainings

NAMI CA holds regional trainings for NCHS throughout the state. The trainings are dependent upon funding, schedules, and areas that have the most interest. The trainings are one full day where clubs from an area get to meet other clubs, learn more about mental health and stigma, and engage in advocacy and awareness activities.

Clubs are not required to attend trainings, but we do encourage it when it’s possible for your club to come.

For more info on our training schedule, please contact Beth Wolf at beth@namica.org

Benefits of NCHS

Students Will Benefit By:

- Expanding their awareness of mental health and wellness
- Learning about the various mental conditions
- Meeting and working with other students on campus and students from other NCHS Clubs in your area
- Developing leadership skills
- Learning how to run meetings, prepare agendas, promote campus activities and hold events
- Having a positive impact on their peers
- Reducing stigma and discrimination against mental illness on campus
- Knowing that they have helped make having a mental illness more acceptable in their school
- Being a positive role model to other students
- Participating in an extension of NAMI, the largest grassroots nonprofit organization that provides support and resources to people with mental health conditions and their families
- Gaining valuable experience in working with other people and adults
- How to identify and develop resources
- Requirements of a NCHS Club

Teachers and School Administration Will Benefit By:

- Gaining access to a network of volunteers and resources, on a national and local level, to help with projects, classroom presentations and education
- Bringing lived experience presentations to your school to help provide students with face to face personal contact with someone who is living well in their recovery from a mental health condition
- Having personal contacts at NAMI who can help or provide direction to additional mental health resources
- Having access to full NCHS curriculum and manuals
- Networking with other teachers and administration who also have a focus on mental health in their schools and who have brought NCHS to their schools
- Creating a safe, supportive school environment for students with mental health conditions or who have family or friends with mental health conditions
- Having more information on mental health resources available to students and staff

High School Campuses Will Benefit By:

- Having a Club on campus that is open to all students, where the focus is on raising awareness of mental health and wellness and on reducing stigma and discrimination against mental illness
- Creating a more accepting environment for students with a mental health condition or who family members or friends with mental health condition
- Establishing themselves as a school that values the mental wellness of their students and takes a proactive approach to early prevention and intervention of students in need of services or support
- Creating an environment that is accepting of all students and one that discourages the bullying of and by students with mental health conditions



Requirements of NCHS Clubs

Please review the following items to see if your school is ready to meet the requirements of running a NCHS Club.

Uphold the Mission of NAMI CA's NCHS Program and Protect the NAMI CA and NAMI name

Maintaining the high quality, positive outcomes and the name of NAMI CA and NAMI are the responsibility of each student leader in a NCHS club. Part of how NAMI CA ensures that the program operates safely and properly is to address any variances to club operations (such as misuse of logo; conducting activities that don't align with the goal of the club; misuse of incorrect information or not demonstrating stigma-free behavior).

It is the responsibility of each club, their advisor and their school to ensure that the club is operating safely and in accordance with all school rules and policies.

Complete the Start-Up Process

Each school that is interested in starting a club must go through the same process. For more details on that process, please see the section in this document titled "Ready to Get Started?"

Maintain Communications with Your Local Affiliate

Your local Affiliate is a wonderful resource for you about mental health info, programs, and services. It's important for your Affiliate to know your club and know what's going on with activities and events, so they can show their support and be in the loop of what's happening in their community.

Club Update Reports

In order to be in “good standing” as a NCHS Club, twice a year (December and May/June) clubs must complete an online Club Update Report for NAMI CA to collect data. Advisors will have their own reports to complete at the same time. NAMI CA will send the links out for these online reports twice a year through email.

Don't worry-it's just a few questions about how things are going and how we can improve. You will need to keep track of how many meetings and events you've had, and attendance at those.

Re-registering Existing Clubs

At the start of each school year, clubs must re-register so NAMI CA knows they are active. NAMI CA will begin sending out re-registration forms in August each year to the clubs to have them renew their status, provide updated contact information, etc. Once we get your re-registration, we will send you an updated electronic manual and new resources for the school year.

NAMI CA will also ask for links to any social media pages so we can stay in touch and follow along as your club grows!

Fundraising

Fundraising is not a required part of running a NCHS Club. If your club does choose to fundraise, the funds must be spent in the following ways only:

- To support future activities, events or materials for your NCHS Club
- To be donated to your local NAMI Affiliate
- To be donated to NAMI CA

Each club can determine how best to utilize any funds that are raised, but they must be spent in the above ways only.

Club Structure

NCHS is flexible in how each club decides to be structured, and we support you in finding the way that works best for your school. At a minimum, your club will need a President, a Vice-President, a Treasurer, and a Secretary. Some clubs like to have multiple people in each role, or have roles switch each quarter. When changes do occur, please send those updates to NAMI CA (namioncampusclub@namica.org).

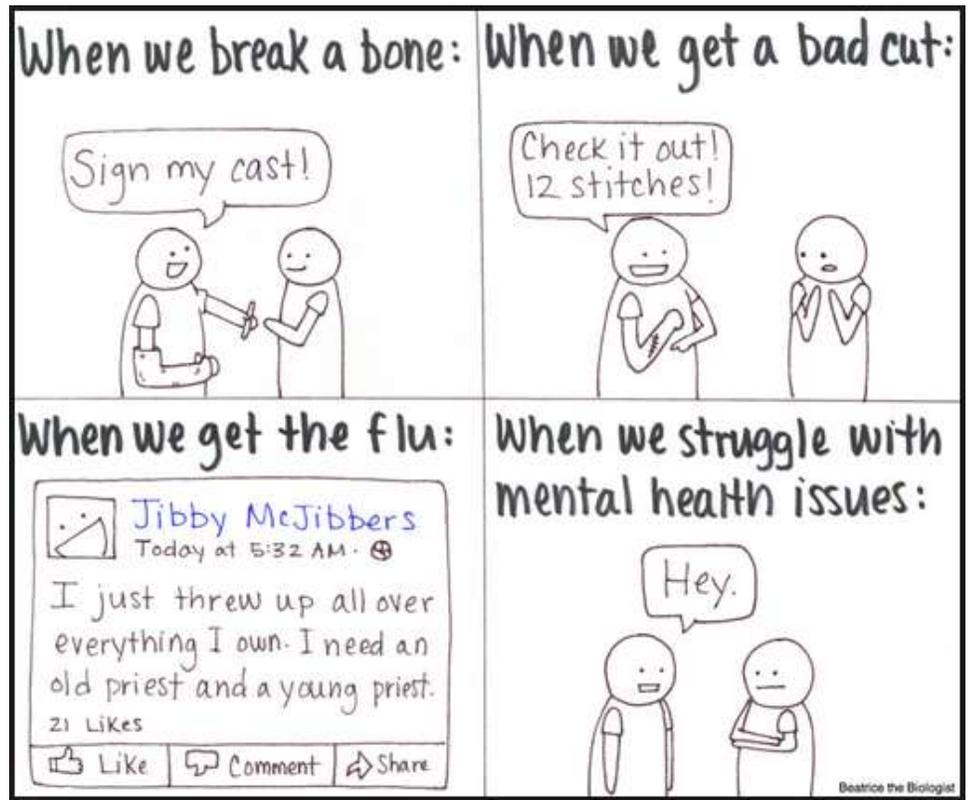
To summarize, the requirements for Clubs are:

- ✓ Uphold the mission of NCHS
- ✓ Complete the Start-Up Process
- ✓ Maintain communications with your local Affiliate
- ✓ Complete 2 Club Update Reports each year
- ✓ Re-register your club at the beginning of each school year
- ✓ Maintain, at a minimum, President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary roles
- ✓ Any funds raised must be spent appropriately

What is stigma- and why does it matter?

Stigma is a negative and degrading attitude towards others, usually based on lack of information and understanding. Stigma is what happens when a person is treated differently because they have a mental illness or have a friend or a family member with a mental illness. Some examples of stigma are below:

- Words like “crazy”, “lunatic”, “psycho”
- Telling someone with a mental illness to “Get over it” or “Try harder”
- Not wanting to spend time with someone because they have a mental illness or a family member of theirs has a mental illness
- Treating someone differently because they have a mental illness or have a family member with a mental illness
- The belief that people with mental illness are dangerous or violent (actually, data shows that people with a mental illness are more likely to be the victim of a violent act, than to be the one committing a violent act).



Why does stigma exist?

Stigma exists mainly because some people don't understand mental illness and don't have the real facts about it. Also, the media can play a huge role in how our communities view mental illness and the portrayals of mental illness we see in TV shows and movies can often reinforce stigma.

For example, if a show portrays a haunted house that used to be an “insane asylum” and shows characters that suffered with mental illness as being scary, dangerous and violent, this reinforces the myth that all people with mental illness are dangerous. In fact, studies show that people with mental illness are more likely to be victims of a violent act than they are to commit a violent act.

How does stigma hurt people?

Stigma is a problem because it prevents young people from getting the help they need for a mental health condition out of fear- fear of being treated differently, of losing friends and relationships, and of how others will think of them. Stigma isn't something that only happens to young people or students- people of all ages experience stigma relating to mental illness and it's one of the biggest barriers to adults seeking help.

The average delay between the onset of symptoms of a mental illness and when a person seeks help is 8-10 years. That's a very long time to be suffering and not getting help for something that is treatable, and many of those people do not seek help because of stigma.

What can I do?

Ending stigma relating to mental illness is a main goal of the NCHS Clubs, and something you can start to work on right away. Below are a few ways you can fight back against stigma:

- Use person-first language, like “Demi Lovato has bipolar disorder” (person before the illness), instead of “Demi Lovato is bipolar” (we never want to label someone as their illness; you wouldn’t say “John is cancer” or “Sarah is heart disease”).
- Show kindness and respect to everyone- you never know what someone is dealing with or experiencing within their family and your kindness can mean the world to them
- If a friend discloses that he or she has a mental illness or has a family member with a mental illness, offer your friend reassurance, support and compassion
- Learn as much as you can about mental health and mental illness, so you are equipped with the facts and can promote accurate information instead of myths

NCHS Club Members are role models and leader in mental health awareness, stigma reduction and acceptance. Each member is required to uphold the NCHS mission and be a role model for others for what it means to be stigma-free.

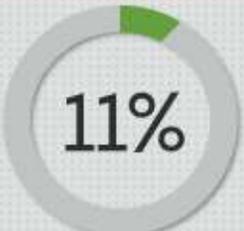
Mental Health Facts

CHILDREN & TEENS

Fact: 1 in 5 children ages 13-18 have, or will have a serious mental illness.¹



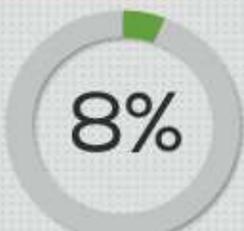
20% of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition¹



11% of youth have a mood disorder¹



10% of youth have a behavior or conduct disorder¹



8% of youth have an anxiety disorder¹

Impact



50%

50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.¹



10 yrs

The average delay between onset of symptoms and intervention is 8-10 years.¹

37%



37% of students with a mental health condition age 14 and older drop out of school—the highest dropout rate of any disability group.¹

70%



70% of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness.¹

Suicide

3rd



Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in youth ages 10 - 24.¹



90%

90% of those who died by suicide had an underlying mental illness.¹

Ready to Get Started?

Here's what you'll need before you can officially submit your Club Application.

Check into your school's policies on clubs

Some schools only have certain times of year that clubs can form, or require students complete certain paperwork. The first place to start is with checking in with your school principal.

Find an Advisor

Each club needs an adult advisor that works on campus (at this time, parents or family members aren't permitted to act as an advisor). The advisor must be an adult that is on campus, and either has a mental health background (like counselor) or is very comfortable with and knowledgeable about mental health and mental illness. Since some topics may come up in the club that need to be handled sensitively, or a student may come to the advisor for help with a mental health concern, the advisor should be well-versed in what to do.

Your school administration will also want to make sure the advisor is someone who is knowledgeable of school rules and policies, and someone who will do a great job of helping oversee the club.

Recruit Club Leaders

Getting others involved in the early stages is the best way to ensure club success. Finding a core group of students that feel passionately about mental health and fighting stigma on campus will help you with leadership responsibilities, and will help continue the club after you graduate.

Talk to Your School Administration

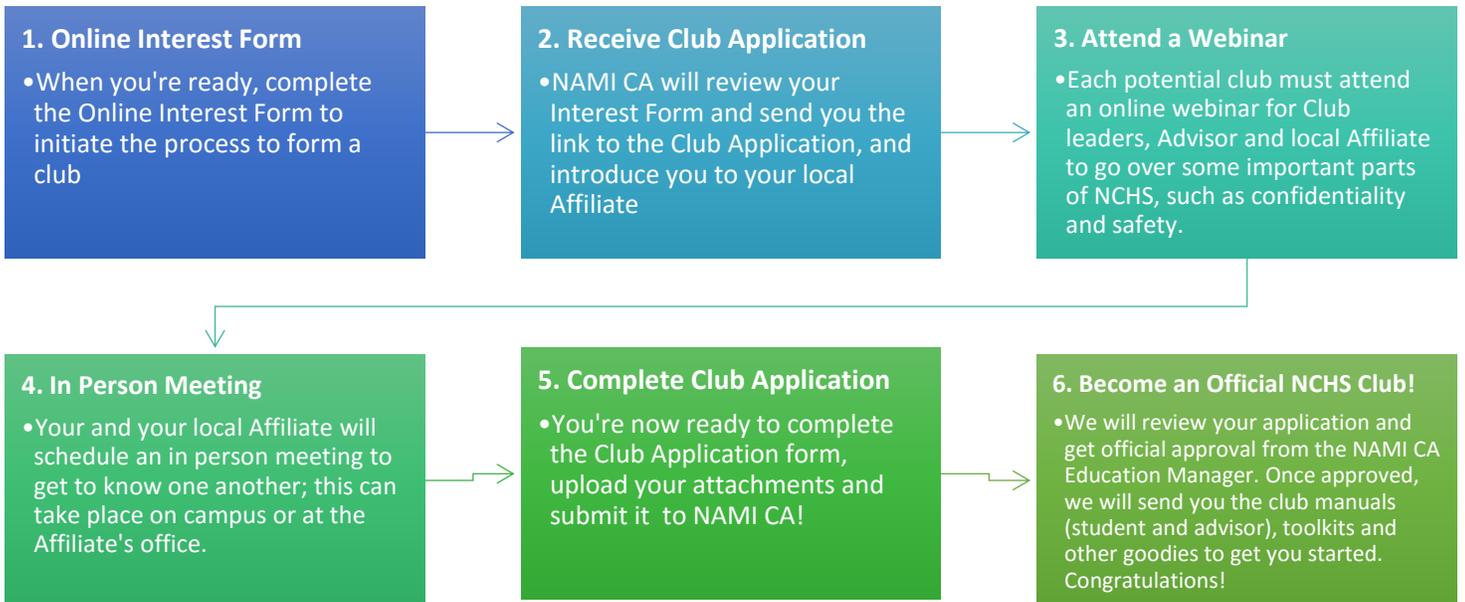
Your advisor and principal can help you find the right people in administration to speak with about why you want to form an NCHS Club. Getting support from administration can be an incredible tool for running your club, and helping it to have a large and lasting impact. Some clubs have even been able to present to their school board about why mental health and stigma is an important topic for them to bring to campus, and gotten the school board to help them. Part of NCHS is becoming an advocate, so start early with getting your school administration involved.

Once you've gone through these important preparations, you're ready to move ahead – see the following page for next steps!



NAMI on Campus High School (NCHS)

Start-Up Process



NAMI CA is here for you every step of the way!

Each Club receives the following:

- Electronic access to the manuals and toolkits/templates
- Subscription to the NCHS Newsletter
- Special registration discounts to the NAMI CA Annual Conference
- Opportunities to apply for funding for club activities



The following forms will need the required signatures and be uploaded when your club completes the Club Application.

Club Commitment to Being Stigma-Free

As a NCHS Club, you are role models and leader in mental health awareness, stigma reduction and acceptance. Each member is required to uphold the NCHS mission as well as the mission you create for your own club, and be a role model for others for what it means to be stigma-free. This means:

- ✓ Not using stigmatizing language like “crazy”, “schizo”, or “lunatic”
- ✓ Respectfully explaining to others when they use stigmatizing language why that hurts
- ✓ Being accepting of others
- ✓ Helping people find resources and services if they need help
- ✓ Being a friend to anyone experiencing a mental health condition or to anyone with a family member with a mental health condition

Please sign below if you agree to the above Club Commitment

Club President: _____

Club Advisor: _____

School Principal: _____

As a Club, you agree to:

- Follow all guidelines that your school has in place for clubs
- Complete a report for NAMI CA each December and May (don't worry, we are keeping it short!)
- Have the person responsible for student wellness on your campus (this could be the same person as your Advisor but could be someone different) complete a Student Mental Health Awareness evaluation each May
- Re-register your club at the start of each school year (so we know you're still a club)
- Update NAMI CA anytime your Advisor or one of your Club Leaders (President or Vice President) change, or if contact information changes
- Register any club events and complete the follow-up survey after the event so we know how it went!
- Let NAMI CA know how we can help your club be all that you want it to-we are here to help!
- Immediately get help or call 911 if someone you know shares that he or she is hurting themselves or has plans to hurt themselves or others

Club President: _____ Date: _____

Club Advisor: _____ Date: _____

School Principal: _____ Date: _____

Continued on to next page

Endorsement Signatures

Signatures from the school principal, advisor and affiliate are needed for NAMI CA to officially approve this application.

Please have those individuals sign below to show their support of this NAMI on Campus High School (NCHS) Club being formed on your school campus.

Club President Signature: _____ Date: _____

Club Advisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

School Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

Affiliate's Signature: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

Liability

It is critical that the Principal and Advisor understand that NAMI California assumes no responsibility or liability for student's safety and activities while they are participating in the NCHS Club. We always defer students to follow the rules of their school, and to know the policies and procedures regarding what to do in case of an emergency or crisis. Please sign below as acknowledgement of liability.

Club Advisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

School Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Family Letter

We ask that you please find a way to distribute this information as part of your club's start up process. Depending on what methods of communication your school uses, this could be by mailing a letter to each family, putting the letter in a school/parent newsletter, posting it to social media, or on your school's website.

The goal of the letter is to inform all families from your school that the NCHS Club is starting, and that resources and services for mental illness are available in your community. It's also important that parents and family members are aware of the signs and symptoms of a mental illness in a teenager, as those symptoms can appear differently in adults.

We know that the earlier a person gets treatment for a mental health condition, the better-so this is one way of helping to ensure all families have some information and facts.

If you have a concern or issue with distributing this letter, please reach out to us and we can brainstorm together.

Thank you!

NAMI CA NCHS Club Team

916-567-0163

namioncampusclub@namica.org

Date

Dear Parent,

_____ is thrilled to announce that we are forming a NAMI on Campus High School (NCHS) Club! NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and NCHS is a program designed by NAMI California (NAMI CA). NAMI CA provides support, advocacy, education and services to families and loved ones whose lives are touched by mental illness.

NCHS is a mental health awareness club for students and teachers on high school campuses. The purpose is to create a dialogue on campus about mental health and well-being to help eliminate the stigma of mental illness. **It is not a support or therapy group.** Students are encouraged to join and learn more about mental health, warning signs of mental illness, how to seek help for themselves or others, and how to be a supportive friend to someone experiencing a mental illness.

Research shows that 1 out of every 5 U.S. adults have a diagnosable mental illness, and that 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24. With these statistics in mind, we wanted to take the opportunity to share with you information on **First Episode Psychosis (FEP)**, so your family is aware and prepared, should a teen family member ever begin exhibiting symptoms. It is also important to remember- **mental illness is NOT rare, it IS common, and it IS treatable!**

Below are some warning signs of FEP. If you notice these in your child, contact a healthcare professional right away, as early intervention helps recovery.

These warning signs may signal early psychosis:

- Hearing, seeing, tasting or believing things that others don't
- Suspiciousness or extreme uneasiness with others
- Persistent, unusual thoughts or beliefs
- Strong and inappropriate emotions or no emotions at all
- Withdrawing from family or friends
- A sudden decline in self-care (not showering, not caring about appearance, etc.)
- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating

For more information on FEP, please visit <https://www.nami.org/earlypsychosis>

Each Mind Matters (EMM) is California's mental health movement and another organization that NAMI CA has partnered with to help spread mental health awareness. Their goal is to unite people wanting to stand up to stigma and create a community that feels safe and supported in reaching out for help. For information about EMM, please visit www.eachmindmatters.org

For local resources and support, your local NAMI Affiliate can help connect you to services in your community.

NAMI Affiliate

Affiliate Contact Number

If you have any questions about NCHS, NAMI CA or FEP, please contact NAMI California at (916) 567-0163.

Thank you for your support!



Jessica Cruz, MPA/HS
NAMI CA Executive Director