

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland (NAMI) and our 11 local affiliates represent a statewide network of more than 50,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations and service providers. NAMI is dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community. The following are the public policy priorities for NAMI Maryland for 2021.

Intervene Early

By age 24, 75% of all mental illnesses are diagnosed or present. Early intervention can get people on the path of recovery, but there are typically long delays before starting treatment. Accelerating research and making mental health care more accessible are key strategies to ensuring early intervention. Critical components of early intervention are:

- **Integrating Behavioral and Physical Health.** NAMI supports coordinated care models that integrate physical and mental health services. Physical and mental health integration improve patient outcomes, save money, and reduce mental health stigma.
- **Mental Health in Schools.** NAMI believes that public and private elementary, middle, and high schools should provide and/or facilitate the provision of appropriate mental health services to our nation's children.
- **Mental Health Screening.** NAMI strongly supports early mental health screening that should take place in a primary care doctor's office or in schools.

Improve Care

Getting the best possible care includes expanding access to health insurance, requiring parity coverage of mental health care, and ensuring that the right services are available at the right time.

- **Protecting Veterans' Access to Mental Health Care.** Veterans' health care is a public trust, a national responsibility, and a NAMI priority. Ensuring America's veterans have timely access to high-quality mental health care is imperative to reduce the high rate of suicide among veterans and to provide quality of life after service.
- **Medicaid Supports and Funding.** Medicaid is the single most important financing source of mental health services in the U.S., covering nearly 27% of all mental health care and nearly half of public mental health spending. NAMI supports fully funding and access to Medicaid for Marylanders.
- **Parity for Mental Health Coverage.** NAMI supports state and federal laws and policies that ensure parity between mental health and physical health services in all forms of insurance coverage.

Divert From Justice Involvement

NAMI fights for policies to get people help, not handcuffs. This includes expanding access to crisis services, promoting best practices in de-escalation, and diversion of people experiencing psychiatric crises to treatment.

- **Crisis Intervention Teams.** The lack of mental health crisis services across the U.S. has resulted in law enforcement officers serving as first responders. A Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program is an innovative, community-based approach to improve the outcomes of these encounters. Last year, NAMI passed legislation that created the statewide CIT Center of Excellence. Surveying current state and local programs and resources through Sequential Intercept Mapping, and fully funding the Center of Excellence is a top priority.
- **Strengthen State Supports for the Hardest to Treat.** Caring for those who are unwell enough to care for themselves and reducing the revolving door cycle of treatment for individuals who cannot stay on their treatment plans is a NAMI priority. We will advocate for programs that mobilize appropriate treatment resources, enhance their effectiveness, and improve an individual's adherence to the treatment plan.